

# THE PRIVILEGES OF THE FAITHFUL.

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### NOTE.

'The Privileges of the Faithful' forms the second half of the little volume entitled 'Yea and Amen. For the title-page and relative note, see Vol. IV. page 114.

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*Also we know that all things work together for the best to them that love God, even to them that are called of his purpose.*—ROM. VIII. 28.

THERE are three things especially that trouble the life of a Christian, or at least should trouble the same.

1. The first whereof is *sin*, with the guilt and punishment thereof.
2. The second is the *corruption of nature*, which still abides in him, even after his vocation and conversion to Christ.

3. The third is, the *miseries and crosses of this life*, which do follow and ensue both upon sin and the evil thereof, as also by reason of that corruption of nature still remaining in him, after his recovered estate in grace.

For the first, the guilt of sin, which doth bind men over to death and damnation, that is forgiven to all believers in Christ Jesus, the ‘second Adam.’

The second, which is the corruption of nature, which cleaves so fast to us, that is daily mortified and crucified in the saints by the word and Spirit of God.

For the third, which is the grievous crosses and afflictions, which do accompany and follow the guilt of sin and the corruption of nature still remaining in God’s children; however they are not taken away, yet they are made to have an excellent issue, ‘for all things work together for the best unto them that love God.’ So that these words of the apostle do afford us,

1. *A ground of patience.*

2. *A ground of comfort.*

In the former part of this chapter, the apostle had told us, ‘that we know not how to pray as we ought, but that the Spirit itself doth teach us how to pray, and makes requests for us with sighs that cannot be expressed.’ And therefore however our corruptions and miseries in this life are not quite taken away, yet the evil of those evils is removed, God teaching and directing us by his Spirit to seek, by prayer unto him, for grace to profit by them. And this is the coherence of these words with the former.

The parts here to be handled may be these.

1. *An excellent prerogative:* ‘All things work together for the best.’<sup>1</sup>

2. Secondly, *The persons to whom this prerogative belongs:* ‘To them that love God,’ and ‘whom he doth call.’

3. Thirdly, *The main cause of this blessed prerogative.*

Those that 'love God' have this privilege belonging to them, because they are 'effectually called' by his word, 'according to his purpose.' We know, saith the apostle, 'that all things work together for the best to these.' He doth not say, 'we hope,' or 'we conjecture,' but 'we know it assuredly.'

We have the Scriptures of God for it. David saith, that 'it was good for him that he was afflicted,' Ps. cxix. 67, for thereby he had learned to reform his ways; he knew by observation that all things would tend to his future happiness. For he had seen in the example of Job, that notwithstanding his sore afflictions, yet he had a blessed issue out of all. He knew this many ways. He knew it by faith, as also by experience, that every thing should further the saints' well-being.

We know, that is, we only know it, who are 'led and taught of God,' and none but we can be assured hereof, which excludes the wicked, who shall never know any such thing. But what is it that Paul is confident of here? Namely, 'that all things work together for the best to them that love God.'

And this may serve to be a prevention of a question, which weak Christians might move in their troubles, and say, 'Never was any more afflicted than I am.' Why, saith the apostle, be it so. Yet, nevertheless, *all things whatsoever*, all thy crosses, vexations, and trials, 'shall work together' and join issue. Though they be averse one to the other, and opposite to the good of God's children, as Herod and Pilate were, yet all things thus contrary notwithstanding shall work for the best unto them. There is,

1. *A good of quality.*

2. *A good of estate.*

*Quest.* Now therefore what kind of good is this the apostle meaneth?

*Ans.* He doth not here mean the natural or civil good estate of them that love God, but their spiritual condition in grace, and their glorious estate for the life to come; for the furthering whereof, whatsoever befalls them in this life shall help forward still.

And thus much for the words themselves.

*Doct.* The first point to be spoken of is, *the excellent privilege of God's children*, 'that all things shall work together for the best;' both good and evil shall turn to their happiness. The reason stands thus: 'All things shall work together for the best to them that love God.' Therefore all afflictions, crosses, and vexations whatsoever, that betide such persons, shall work together for their good; and for this cause all God's servants must learn patiently to bear, and cheerfully to undergo poverty or riches, honour or dishonour, in this world.

That all good things do work for the best to God's servants, is most apparent by daily proof and experience.

1. To begin with the first chief good of all, which is *God the Father*, who is goodness itself, and unspeakably comfortable to all his. Do not all God's attributes conduce to our eternal welfare? Is he not set forth in Scripture under the sweet name of a 'Father,' of a 'Shield and Buckler,' of a 'Tower of defence,' of an 'all-sufficient and almighty God,' 'just, wise, provident, merciful,' full of boundless compassion, and all to support his poor creatures from failing before him?

As he is our 'Father,' he is careful of us above the care of earthly parents to their children; as he is a 'Shield,' so he shelters us from all wrongs; as he is 'God almighty and all-sufficient,' so his power and bounty serve to

sustain us in this world, and reserve us for ever safe in the world to come. His 'wisdom' makes us wise to prevent the politic plots of the devil or wicked men; his justice and providence, they serve to defend us in our right, to provide for us in all our wants, and prevent the evils of the ungodly intended against us; his power is ours, to keep us; his providence, to dispose all things for our advantage. Everything in God shall co-work to provide and foresee all good for us, and mercifully to impart and bestow whatsoever is behoveful upon us. So that God being our Father, we have right and title to his love, mercy, power, justice, truth, faithfulness, providence, wisdom, and all-sufficiency: all which 'shall ever work together for the best to them that love his appearing.'

2. So for *Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God*. All his glorious titles and attributes serve likewise for the everlasting comfort of his poor saints on earth. He is called the 'husband of his church,' to cherish and maintain the same. His love unto his church is far above the love of any husband to his wife. He is called the 'Saviour of the world,' because he 'so loved the world, that he gave his life for it,' Gal. ii. 20, and hath promised, 'that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish,' 2 Peter iii. 9. He is called the 'Fountain of life,' the 'Well of life,' the 'Water of life,' the 'Bread of life,' the 'Way, the Truth and the Life,' because that in him is our life, and by him we are fed and nourished to eternal life. Here in him we obtain the life of grace, and in the world to come shall for ever enjoy the life of glory.

3. So likewise for the *Holy Ghost*. What heavenly attributes are ascribed to him in the Scriptures! He is called 'the Comforter' of God's servants; the 'Sealer of the redemption of God's children in their hearts. He teacheth the elect to call God Father; he 'beareth witness with their spirits that they are the sons and daughters of God;' he teacheth them 'to pray as they ought;' 'he fills them with peace that passeth all understanding,' and refreshes their spirits with such unspeakable joy as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the like.\* He that is instructed by the Spirit knoweth the things of God, which a natural man is ignorant of. The Holy Ghost doth call to remembrance the doctrine of God taught unto his servants, and writes the same in their hearts;† so that the operations of the blessed Spirit are all appropriated to them that 'love God,' and they alone have their right in them. The direction, comfort, teaching, and guiding of the Spirit of God do serve entirely and peculiarly to order and work all things together for the best to the godly.

4. Yea, the angels themselves are called 'messengers and ministering spirits,' appointed by God to attend and wait upon his servants. 'He gives his angels charge over these, to serve them in all their ways, and to pitch their tents round about them,' Ps. xxxiv. 7. Whensoever God pleaseth to call any of his out of this world, the angels are a safe conduct, to carry their souls into 'Abraham's bosom.' And at the 'last judgment,' the Lord shall send forth his angels 'to gather his elect,' Mat. xxiv. 31, from one end of the world to the other, that they may fully enjoy that which they have long waited for, even eternal bliss and glory.

5. Under the angels *all other creatures are likewise made serviceable for his people's good*. Princes in authority are called in Scripture 'nursing fathers

\* It has not been thought necessary to encumber and confuse the text with specific references to these and like fragmentary citations of familiar titles and designations from Holy Scripture.—G.

† Cf. John xiv. 26, Jer. xxxi. 33.—G

and nursing mothers' unto the church of Christ, Isa. xlix. 23, the end of all magistracy being that we might live religiously and peaceably in all the ways of God.

6. *Ministers also are styled in the word by the names of 'watchmen and seedsmen,' and 'spiritual fathers,' to beget men again to the kingdom of heaven. They are called 'God's husbandmen,' to manure and till his ground. They are called 'God's lights,' and 'the salt of the earth,' both to enlighten the church with the light of the glorious gospel whereof they are ministers, and to season them with such savoury and sweet instructions as may make them wise to salvation: this being the very end of all God's giving gifts to men, that they might build up the church of Christ here below.*

7. So also *the word of God* is called the 'savour of life, and 'the power of God unto salvation.' It is 'the seed of God,' which being sown in the hearts of God's children, springeth up in them to everlasting happiness. God's word is a 'light and a lantern' to guide and direct us in all his ways.\* It is the sword of the Spirit, to arm us against sin and to maintain us in grace.

8. *The sacraments likewise are the seals of life and pledges of our salvation in Christ; and excommunication, though it be rough, and the extremest censure of the church (and therefore ought to be undertaken upon weighty grounds), yet the end of it is, to save the souls of God's people, and to make them by repentance turn unto him.*

9. *So all outward gifts, as beauty, strength, riches, and honours, these are given by God to serve for the good of his children. As the beauty of Esther was an instrument of her preferment, whereby she became a preservation to God's children, and an overthrow of her and their enemies: [and as] Joseph's outward honours and wealth were made by God's disposing hand a means of the preservation and nourishment of the Israelites, in the time of their great extremity and famine; the like may be said of learning and other natural acquirements, all which do often tend to general and public advantages.*

10. *Yea, the outward gifts of God, which are bestowed upon reprobates, are still for the good of his; for they who had skill and knowledge to build Noah's ark, though they themselves were not saved therein, yet were they the means of Noah's preservation;† and so it many times falleth out, that men of excellent parts and great abilities without grace, though themselves are not profited thereby, yet God so useth them as their gifts much conduce to further and build up the church of Christ.*

11. *Even, outward favour of princes oft tend to God's servants' good. 'A just man,' as the heathens could say, 'is a common benefit.' And so a true Christian, whatsoever good he hath, it is communicable to all the faithful; and therefore St Paul saith of himself that 'he was a debtor to all men, both Jews and Gentiles,' Rom. i. 14; and that he 'became all things to all men, that he might win some,' 1 Cor. ix. 22.*

But here the main question will be, and the difficulty arises, how all ill things can work together for the best to God's children. I shall therefore demonstrate,

1. The truth of this, *how it can be so.*

2. The reasons *why it is so.*

\* Cf. 2 Cor. ii. 16, Rom. i. 16, Luke viii. 11, Ps. cxix. 105.—G.

† This thought has been enlarged upon very effectively, in a popular American tract entitled 'Noah's Carpenters.'—G.

3. Observe a *caution*, that it be not abused.

4. Let us see the *sweet and comfortable use* of this doctrine.

That this may the better appear, we must know that all evil things are either—

1. *Spiritual evil things.*

2. *Outward evil things.*

And for spiritual evil things, they are either, first, sin; secondly, that which hath a reference to sin, as being evils following after sin.

1. *The first sin of all*, which hath gone over whole mankind, and is spread abroad in every one of us, this by God's mercy and our repentance proves to all believers a transcendent good; for the fall and sin of the first Adam caused the birth and death of the 'second Adam,' Christ Jesus; who, notwithstanding he was God, took upon him the nature of man, and hath made us by his coming far more happy than if we had never fallen. Neither would God have suffered Adam to have fallen but for his own further glory, in the manifestation of his justice and mercy, and for the greater felicity of his servants in Christ their mediator.

2. The next spiritual evil is the *corruption of nature* remaining in all mankind; howsoever broken and subdued in the Lord's dear ones. This worketh for the best to them after this manner.

(1.) First, *It serveth to make us see and know we are kept by God*; how that we are not the keepers of our own selves, 'but are kept by his power through faith unto salvation,' 1 Pet. i. 5. For were it not that God upholds and sustains us, our corruptions would soon overturn us; but the sight of corruption being sanctified to the soul, causeth us to ground our comfort out of ourselves in Christ, and no whit to rely on anything that is in us.

(2.) Our corruptions are also good *to abase the pride of our natures, and let us see the naughtiness of our spirits, that we may be humbled before God.*

(3.) And it is good we should have something within us *to make us weary of the world*; else, when we have run out our race, we be unwilling to depart hence. Now our bondage to this natural corruption serves exceedingly to make us mourn for our sinful disposition, and hunger after our God, to be joined with him; as we see in St Paul's example, Rom. vii. 24, where, finding the rebellion of his nature and the strife that was in him, the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, he cries out, saying, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' and seeketh to God in Christ for mercy straight.

(4.) Sometimes God suffers corruption to break out of us, *that we may know ourselves the better*: and because corruption is weakened, not only by smothering, but many times by having a vent, whereupon grace stirs up in the soul a fresh hatred and revenge against it, and lets us see a necessity of having whole Christ, not only to pardon sin, but to purge and cleanse our defiled natures. But yet that which is ill itself must not be done for the good that comes by it by accident; this must be a comfort after our surprisals, not an encouragement before.

(5.) It is our great consolation *that our nature is perfect in Christ*, who hath taken our nature upon him, and satisfied divine justice, not only for the sin of our lives, but for the sin of our natures, who will finish his own work in us, and never give over till by his Spirit he hath made our natures holy and pure as his own; till he hath taken away, not only the reign, but the very life and being of sin out of our hearts. To which end he leaves his Spirit and truth in the church to the end of the world, that the seed of

the Spirit may subdue the seed of the serpent in us, and that the Spirit may be a never-failing spring of all holy thoughts, desires, and endeavours in us, and dry up the contrary issue and spring of corrupt nature.

(6.) Lastly, It is good that corruption should still remain in us, *that the glory of God may the more appear, whenas Satan, that great and strong enemy of mankind, shall be foiled and overturned by a weak and poor Christian, who is full of corruptions*; and that through the strength of faith, though mixed with much distrust. For a Christian in the state of sin and corruption to overcome the great adversary of mankind, what a wonderment is it! It tendeth much to the shame and dishonour of that 'fiery dragon,' that weak and sinful man should be his conqueror. Oh how it confounds him, to think that 'a grain of mustard seed,' Mat. xiii. 31, should be stronger than the gates of hell; that it should be able to 'remove mountains of oppositions and temptations cast up by Satan and our rebellious hearts between God and us. Abimelech could not endure that it should be said 'a woman had slain him,' Judges ix. 53; and it must needs be a torment to Satan that a weak child, a decrepit old man, should by a spirit of faith put him to flight.

3. A third kind of spiritual ill of sin are *the things that issue out of this cursed stock*; and those are either inward or outward. For inward sins, they are either errors or doubtings, or pride or wrath, or such like.

1. And first, *for doubtings of the truth*. This makes God's servants often more resolute to seek and search out the same, and to stand afterwards more firm and courageous for it. For if we doubted not of things, we should not afterwards be put out of doubt, nor seek to be better grounded and instructed in them. The Corinthians doubted once of the resurrection, but were ever after better resolved in that doctrine, the benefit whereof hath much redounded to the church's good ever since. Thomas had the like wavering disposition, but this doubting more manifested the truth. Luther being a monk at the first, and not fully grounded in the doctrine of the gospel, did therefore suspect himself the more, and wished all men after him to read his writings warily (a). The doctrine of the Trinity hath formerly been much doubted of, and therefore hath been with the greater pains and study of worthy men then living in the church more evidently proved. And when the Pelagians grew into heresies, they were by St Augustine gainsaid, and very strongly withstood. So the doctrine of the Church of Rome, being branched into divers erroneous opinions, and broached to the great hurt and prejudice of Christians, hath occasioned the truth of God against them to be the more excellently cleared and made known. For when religion is oppugned, it is time then 'to hold fast,' as the apostle St Jude saith, 'with both hands the word, and to fight for the faith' (b), that so we may know both what to hold, and upon what ground we oppose heresy.

2. Now for *inward sins*, as anger, covetousness, distrust, and such like, these often prove advantageous to the saints. Their corruptions are a means of their humiliation. Paul and Barnabas having a breach between them, were so exasperated that they forsook each other's company, by which means it came to pass that the church was more instructed than before.\* And hence we may see what the best men are in themselves. If Luther had had no infirmities, how would men have attributed to him above measure? As we see, they were ready to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas; which shews us that even the distempers and weaknesses of God's servants are disposed by divine providence to their eternal welfare.

\* Cf. Acts xv. 39 with 2 Tim. iv. 11.—G.

3. Yea, God often suffereth his children to fall into some *outward gross sins*, that by means thereof they might be humbled and abased, and in the end be cured of that provoking sin of being proud in spirit.

4. *The falling of God's children doth much deject them, and bring them upon their knees with shame.* It makes them gentle and meek in the reprehension of their brethren ; for having slipped out of the way themselves, and being by repentance recovered, they learn to 'restore others with the spirit of meekness,' as the apostle speaks, Gal. vi. 1. A man humbled by experience of sin in himself will soon relent at the fall of others. Those oftentimes prove the most excellent instruments in the church who have formerly been overtaken with some gross sin, by means whereof they have ever after been much abased in their own eyes.

We see David, Paul, and Peter fell grievously, but being afterwards raised again and finding comfort themselves, they were a great means of strengthening others ; for he which teacheth out of his own experience and feeling, is the fittest and best teacher of all. So it was with Jonah : when by casting him into the sea God had humbled him, he was fit to preach repentance to Nineveh. This is a most certain truth, that never any of God's elect fell grievously, but he was the better all the days of his life for his fall. David having been thoroughly humbled for sin, when Shimei his subject cursed him to his face, how patiently did he bear the same, 2 Sam. xvi. 13, *seq.* So Peter having denied his Master, and afterwards recovering himself again, we see how zealous he was for his Lord Christ, and suffered death for him.

5. Furthermore, not only the sins of God's children, which they themselves commit, do work for their best, *but also the sins of others of the saints with whom they converse and live*, do much tend to their good and welfare. Do not the falls of David, Peter, Manasseh, and Paul comfort the distressed and despairing souls of such as languish and are ready to faint under the burden of their sins ? And do not the registry of their sins in Scripture give hope to us that God will be merciful to our sins also ? We may not think it is God's will to set upon perpetual record the sins of his servants for their shame, disgrace, and punishment, but for our comfort, who live and remain to the end of the world. And the faults of the saints have two excellent uses, whereof the one is for comfort, the other for instruction.

*Use 1.* The use in regard of comfort is this. *God hath shewed mercy to David, Paul, Peter, and others, sinning grievously against him, and repenting of the same.* Therefore if I also shall sin and truly repent as they did, surely God is where he was, as full of mercy and readiness to forgive now as ever.

*Use 2.* The second use for instruction is this : *If such excellent and eminent saints by sin have fallen grievously, how then much more are we poor weak souls subject to fall if we neglect watchfulness over ourselves !* If a weak Christian, oft assaulted with temptations, should not see the falls and slips of God's worthier servants, he would be in a wonderful desperation, and cry out of himself, saying, Alas ! what shall I do ; never was any so assaulted and tempted, so cast down and overcome in temptations as I am ; and therefore my case is more fearful and worse than ever was any. But when he considereth the grievous falls of God's special servants, how they have stepped aside foully and yet obtained mercy, by their examples he beginneth to be revived and receive inward comfort, whereby it is evident that all sins whatsoever of God's elect, as vile and as loathsome as they are, do by

God's providence and our own serious repentance turn to their good, and the good of those with whom they live.

4. The next spiritual evil is that which followeth after sin committed, viz., *God's desertion* or forsaking of us, when he seems to hide his favour from men after they have sinned against him. When God manifests himself as an enemy to his people, this grieves them more than anything else in the world beside. We see David, how he calls upon God not to 'rebuke him in his wrath, nor forsake him in his displeasure,' Ps. vi. 1, where he sheweth how grievously he was afflicted with the anger of the Almighty.

But albeit that God doth seem sometimes to forsake his servants, it is not for their confusion, but for their consolation; for by this means they come to be poor in spirit, and wonderfully emptied of themselves. And it is very observable that when such as are thoroughly wounded and afflicted inwardly come to recover strength and peace again, they often prove the most comfortable Christians of all others, walking with more care to avoid offence all their lives after.

Christ Jesus himself, though he never sinned, but only stood as a surety in our room to pay the ransom of our debts, seemed to be forsaken of God his Father; and because he was thus humbled, therefore he was after most highly exalted above all, both in heaven and in earth. So Job seemed to be forsaken, and doth grievously bemoan his miseries; but this was not because he had sinned against God more grievously than others had done, but for the trial of his faith and patience, to give him experience of God's love to him in the cross, that he might cleave the closer to his Maker all his time after.

5. Another evil arising from the guiltiness of sin is *anguish of mind* and a *wounded spirit*, 'which,' saith Solomon, 'who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. But for all this, grief for sin is an happy grief, yea, a grief never to be grieved for. This wound in spirit breedeth afterwards a sound spirit. Repentance is good, and faith in Christ is good. But what doth prepare us to these happy graces? Is it not a wounded spirit? Who would ever repent of his sins, and lay hold on Christ for remission of the same, if he were not pricked and pierced in the sense thereof. Christ professeth himself to be a physician, but to whom? 'To the lost sheep of Israel,' Mat. xv. 24. He promiseth ease and refreshment, but to whom? 'To them that are weary, and laden with the burden of their sins.' 'The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, that he might preach the gospel to the poor,' Isa. lxi. 2, and 'he was sent to heal the broken hearted, that he might preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised,' Luke iv. 18.

6. Again, Divers Christians do walk very heavily and uncomfortably, by reason of *inward tentations*, and *blasphemous imaginations*, which oft are suggested and enter into their minds; but these sins which so vex the souls of poor Christians, are a means of their humiliation, causing them to sue more earnestly to God for pardon. And these sinful corruptions do further serve for a testimony to themselves, that they are not under the power of Satan, but live in the kingdom of grace; for if they were captived to the devil, and under his government, then would he never molest and vex them, but suffer them quietly to live and die in their sins; but because they are from under his rule and jurisdiction, therefore he perplexeth and troubleth them all he can. By which it is evident, that all sins, by God's mercy and our repentance, 'do work together for the best unto us.'

7. Yea, the circumstances of sin, as *continuance therein*, which much

aggravates the sin ; when such a one truly repents and is restored to Christ, it maketh him more zealous and watchful ever after ; as we see in Paul, and the thief on the cross, who finding favour, acknowledgeth his worthiness of punishment, reprehendeth his fellow on the cross, and justifieth Christ to have done all things well ; and so giving glory unto God, and crying for mercy, receiveth a comfortable promise of an heavenly kingdom, Luke xxiii. 43. All things are possible to God. We can never be so ill as he is powerful and good ; God can bring contrary out of contrary. He hath promised to pour clean water upon us, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, which faith sues out, and remembers that Christ hath taken upon him to purge his spouse, and make her fit for himself.

8. Further, *the very relapses and backslidings* of God's servants into sin do not argue no repentance, but a weak repentance ; and therefore when they are again rebuked and turned from sin, their relapses do make them set upon the service of God more strongly, and run more constantly in his ways. Where true grace is, sin loses strength by every new fall ; for hence issues deeper humility, stronger hatred of evil, fresh indignation against ourselves, more experience of the deceitfulness of our hearts, and renewed resolutions till sin be brought under. Adam lost all by once sinning, but we are under a better covenant, a covenant of mercy, and are encouraged to go to God every day for the sins of that day.

For it is not with God as it is with men, who being offended will scarce be reconciled, but God offended still offereth mercy. He is not only ready to receive us when we return, but persuades and entreats us to come unto him ; yea, after backsliding and false dealing with him, wherein he allows no mercy to be shewed by man, yet he will take liberty to shew mercy himself, as in Jeremiah, 'If a man have an adulterous wife, and shall put her away, and she become another man's, he will not receive her any more to him.' But saith the Lord, 'Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet turn again unto me,' Jer. iii. 1 ; 'for I am merciful, and my wrath shall not fall upon you : I will not always keep mine anger,' ver. 12. 'Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be white as snow, and though they be red like scarlet, they shall be as white as wool,' Isa. i. 18 ; 'if ye will turn to me, and wash ye, and make ye clean, and cease to do evil, and learn to do well,' ver. 16, 17. So Rev. ii. 4, Christ speaking to the church of Ephesus, saith, 'She hath fallen from her first love ;' but saith he, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, and I will receive thee to favour ;' by which we see that the relapses of God's elect, as they do not finally hinder mercy from their souls, so notwithstanding the same, they are still encouraged to return to God, to renew their covenant by faith and repentance, and cleave more strongly to him.

8. As for *outward evils*, they are, first, evils of *estate*, as want and poverty, which oft falls out to be the portion of God's children, yet are they not any whit the worse hereby, but rather the better in their inner man ; for the less they have in this world, the greater and larger happiness shall they partake of in another world. What they lose one way is supplied another. Whatsoever comfort we have in goods or friends below, it is all conveyed from God above, who still remains, though these be taken away. The saints see, that if to preserve the dearest thing in the world, they break with God, he can make it a dead contentment and a torment to them ; whereas, if we care to preserve communion with God, we shall be sure to find in him, whatsoever we deny for him, honour, riches, pleasures,

friends, all ; so much the sweeter, by how much we have them more immediately from the spring-head. Our riches, and friends, and life itself, may soon depart. But God never loseth his right in us, nor we our interest in him. Every thing beneath teaches us, by the vanity and vexation we find in them, that our happiness is not there ; they send us to God ; they may make us worse, but better they cannot. Our nature is above them, and ordained for a greater good. They can but go along with us for a while, and their end swallows up all the comfort of their beginning.

Besides, none have that experience of God's goodness and faithfulness, as those that are in want and misery. God in his wisdom foreseeing what is best for his servants, knows that the more worldly wealth they do abound in, the less their estimation would be of heavenly things. He sees how apt the poor creature is to be carried away with present comfort, and to have his love drawn to the world from better contentments. The poorer they are in worldly riches, the more they seek to be rich in grace, in knowledge, faith, and repentance, which heavenly treasures incomparably surmount the most transcendent excellency which the creature can yield.

9. As for the evil of losing *a good name*, a thing oft befalling the children of God, to be slandered and evil spoken of, they upon every small disgrace take occasion to enter into themselves and try whether they be guilty of such hard imputations as are flung upon them.

And if upon a serious consideration he find himself disgraced for good things, he wears it as a crown and as a garland upon his head, 'rejoicing that he is accounted worthy to suffer for the Lord Jesus,' Acts v. 41, esteeming 'the rebukes of Christ greater treasure than the riches of Egypt,' Heb. xi. 26. A true believer resigns his good name, and all that he hath, to God. He is assured that no man can take away that from him which God will give him and keep for him. It is not in man's power to make others conceive what they please of us.

10. For the evils *of body*, such as sickness and diseases of all sorts, which daily attend our houses of clay, God by means hereof acquaints his children with their frail condition, and shews them what a little time they have to provide for eternity, thereby driving them to search their evidences, and to make all straight betwixt him and them. Outward weaknesses are oft a means to restrain men from inward evils. God usually sanctifies the pains and griefs of his servants to make them better. The time of sickness is a time of purging from that defilement we gathered in our health. We should not be cast down so much for any bodily distemper, as for sin, that procures and envenoms the same. That is a good sickness which tends to the health of the soul. Naaman, the Assyrian, if he had not had a leprosy in his body, had continued a leper, both in body and soul, all his days : his outward grievances made him inwardly sound. The very heathen could say, that we are then best in soul when we are weakest in body (*c*), for then we are most in heavenly resolutions and seeking after God. Yea, then it appears what good proficients we have been in time of health. Oh how happy were our conditions, if we were as good when we are well and in health, as we usually are when we are sick and ill.

11. *Even death itself*, which is the end of all, though it be fearful and irksome to nature, yet it is to God's servants a bed of down, easing them of all their miseries, and putting them in possession of an heavenly kingdom ; therefore saith Solomon, 'The day of death is better than the day of birth,' Eccles. vii. 1. God will be the God of his, not only unto death, but in death. Death is the death of itself, and not of us. It is a disarmed

and conquered enemy to all the faithful ; for which cause St Paul desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is best of all, Philip. i. 23. Death, albeit it seems terrible and dreadful, yet the sting thereof being taken away by the death of Christ, it brings everlasting joy along with it, and is only as a groom\* porter to let us in to a stately palace. Whither tend all the troubles we meet with in this world, but only to fit us for a better condition hereafter, and to assure the soul that when earth can hold it no longer, heaven shall.

12. *Yea, when friends forsake us, and are false unto us, ' God is a sure help in time of need,' Ps. xxxvii. 39.* He is our refuge from one generation to another. Do we not see that in the decay of worldly comforts, God then manifests himself most comfortably to his people ? Doth he not style himself ' the comforter of the comfortless, and the help of them that are in distress ; ' and do not ' with him the fatherless find mercy ? ' Ps. x. 14. If men were more fatherless, they would find more mercy at God's hands. As Christ makes us all to him, so should we make him ' all in all ' to ourselves. If all comforts in the world were dead, we have them still in the living Lord. How many friends have we in him alone, who, rather than we shall want friends, can make our enemies our friends ? Thus it appears that all miseries are a trial of us to God and to the world, what we are. They are a cure of sin past, and a preparation to endure further crosses. They have many excellent uses and ends, and all for the best to God's servants.

It is good we should be exercised with present crosses, to put us in mind of the evils we have done long ago, that so we may repent of them. Joseph's brethren, being afflicted and imprisoned, called to mind how hardly they had dealt with their brother long before, Gen. xlii. 21. It should be our wisdom, while we remain here, to consider our warfaring† condition ; how we are daily environed with enemies, and therefore ought to stand continually upon our guard against Satan and the powers of darkness, and as pilgrims and strangers go on in our journey to heaven : not starting at the barking of every dog, nor entangling ourselves in worldly things, whereby we should be stopped in our way.

It is for our best, not to be condemned with the world. Afflictions serve for this very end, to make us more prize God, and deny the creature with all its excellencies. Are our crosses great here ? Let us not be daunted, but bear them patiently : our comfort shall be the greater afterwards. It is not only good for us that we should have crosses, but that they should be continued upon us, that we may the better know ourselves. If all were well with a man wounded, and the sore clean healed, the plaster would fall off itself. So, were we thoroughly cured of our spiritual wants, and in a continual resistance of every evil way, these afflictions, which are the plasters of our souls, would soon cease and leave us.

13. Furthermore, *Satan himself and all his instruments, when they most set themselves against God's people, and seek their overthrow, then are they working their chief good.* The devil, when he thought to make an end of Christ by putting him to death, even then, by that very thing, was vanquished himself, and the church of God fully ransomed from hell and damnation. God suffers many heretics to be in the world ; but why ? Not that the truth should be held in darkness ; but that it might thereby be more manifested and known. It is Satan's continual trade, to seek his rest in our disquiet. When he sees men will to heaven, and that they have good title to it, then he follows them with all temptations and discomforts

\* Qu. ' grim ' ?—G.

† Qu. ' wayfaring ' ?—Ed.

that he can. He cannot endure that a creature of meaner rank than himself should enjoy a happiness beyond him ; but our comfort is, that Christ was tempted, that he might succour all poor souls in the like case. We are kept by ' his power, through faith unto salvation,' 1 Pet. i. 5.

Now, the causes why all things do work together for the best to them that love God are these, viz. :—

1. It is God's *decree*.
2. It is God's *manner of working*.
3. It is God's *blessed covenant*.
4. It is the *foundation of the covenant of Christ Jesus*.

1. *God's decree and purpose is*, of bringing all his elect unto eternal salvation ; and therefore all things in heaven and earth must conduce to bring his servants unto glory. The reason is this, God is infinitely wise and infinitely strong, provident, and good ; therefore by his infinite wisdom, power, providence, and mercy he turneth all things to the best for his. Whatsoever is in heaven, earth, or hell, is ordered by God, neither is there anything without him ; therefore nothing can hinder his decree. Satan himself, with all his instruments, yea, the worst of creatures, all must serve God's purpose, contrary to their natures, for the good of his children. The prophet saith, ' God hath commanded salvation, and he hath commanded deliverance to Jacob,' Ps. xlv. 4. When God hath determined to save any man, all things must needs serve him that overrules all things. As it was said of Christ when he stilled the seas, ' Who is this, that the very wind and seas obey him ? ' Mat. viii. 27. God commanded the whale to serve at his beck to save Jonah, and it obeyed. All creatures in the earth are at his disposing, and serve to accomplish his pleasure.

2. The second cause why all works together for the best to believers, *is the manner of God working in things*, which is by contraries. He bringeth light out of darkness, glory out of shame, and life out of death. We fell by pride to hell and destruction, and must be restored by humiliation to life and salvation. Christ humbled himself, being God, to become man for us, and by his death restored us to life. When our sins had brought us to greatest extremities, even then were we nearest to eternal happiness. Therefore saith the apostle, ' When we are weak, then are we strong in the Lord,' 2 Cor. xii. 10. When we are abased, then are we readiest to be exalted ; when we are poor, then are we most rich ; and when we are dead, then do we live. For God worketh all by contraries. He lets men see his greatness and his goodness, that so they may admire his works and give more glory to him. He worketh without means, and above means, and against means. Out of misery he bringeth happiness, and by hell bringeth men to heaven ; which, as it manifesteth God's glory to his creatures, so it serveth for the confusion of man's pride, that he may discern he is nothing in himself, but is all that he is in the Lord.

3. The third cause why all things work for the best to them that fear God is, *God's covenant with his church* : when once this gracious covenant is made, that ' he will be their God, and they shall be his people,' Lev. xxvi. 12 ; that he will ' be their Father and protector,' must not all things then needs serve for their good ? Whenas God tells Abraham, ' I am thy God, all-sufficient ; only walk before me, and be thou perfect,' Gen. xvii. 1, doth not this engage him to set his power and mercy, his wisdom and providence, all on work for the happy estate of Abraham ? When once God by his promise is become our God, there is a covenant betwixt us and the creatures ; yea, and the stones in the street, that nothing shall wrong

us, but all conduce to our good. The angels are ours; their service is for our protection, safety, and welfare. Heaven and earth is ours, and all things in them for our behoof. Christ himself, and together with him, all things else are become ours; in him we are heirs of all. What a wondrous comfort is this, that God hath put himself over to be ours; whom to enjoy is to possess all things, and to want is misery inexpressible. Had we all the world without God, it would prove a curse and no blessing to us; whereas if we have nothing and enjoy God, we have happiness itself for our portion. If we have no better portion here than these things, we are like to have hell for our portion hereafter. Let God be in any condition, though never so ill, yet it is comfortable. He is goodness itself. And, indeed, nothing is so much a Christian's as God is *his*; because by his being ours in covenant, all other things become *ours*, and therefore they cannot but co-operate for our good.

'When thou art in the fire and water, I am with thee,' saith God, Isa. xliii. 2. And 'Thou art my buckler, my glory, and shield; therefore I will not be afraid though ten thousand of people shall beset me round about,' saith David, Ps. xci. 7; for 'salvation belongeth unto the Lord.' And if God be on our side, who can be against us? 'If God justify us, who shall condemn us?' Rom. viii. 34. Can anything hurt us when he is become our loving Father? Neither 'death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor principalities, nor powers, nor anything whatsoever, can separate us from his love toward us,' ver. 35.

4. A fourth ground why all things fall out for the best to the saints is, *the foundation of this covenant of God with his church, which is Christ Jesus*, who by his blood hath purchased our peace. He being God became man, and is the sole author of all our comfort. Without Christ God is 'a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29; but in him, a most 'loving Father,' and 'ever well pleased.' God promiseth in Christ his Son 'to marry his people unto himself for ever; yea,' saith he, 'I will marry thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in mercy, and everlasting compassion,' Isa. lxii. 5, and liv. 8. Now upon this blessed contract made in Christ to his church, what followeth? 'In that day,' saith the Lord, 'I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth: and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Israel: and I will have mercy upon her that was not pitied; and I will say unto them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God,' Hosea ii. 22, 23. Where we see what is the reason of all their happiness; even this, that God will marry them to himself. So that this marriage worketh all our bliss; our conjunction with Christ, and reconciliation through his death, is the cause of all our comfort; in him we have the adoption of sons. Hence it is that we are at peace with God, and have freedom from all harms. Christ in his greatest reproach and deepest humiliation had his greatest triumph and exaltation. In his death on the cross he vanquished death, and entered into eternal life. When Christ came into the world, and took upon him our nature, even then the greatest monarch in the world, Augustus Cæsar, was at his command; whom he so ordered as that by his causing all the world to be taxed, Christ was manifested to be born at 'Bethlehem in Jewry,' Luke ii. 1.

How cometh it to pass that death, which is fearful in itself, cannot hurt us? The reason is, 'Death is swallowed up in victory' by his death, 1 Cor. xv. 54. It is Christ that sanctifieth all crosses, afflictions, and disgraces to the

saints' advantage. The evil of them all is taken away by him, and turned to his people's good. How cometh it to pass that the law cannot hurt us, which pronounceth a curse against every one that abideth not in all things written therein, to do them? The reason is, 'Christ was made a curse for us; he was made under the law, that he might redeem us who were under the law,' Gal. iii. 13; and thus is Christ a meritorious and deserving cause of procuring all good to us, and removing all ill from us.

He doth not only overcome evil *for* us, but also overcometh evil *in* us, and gives us his Spirit, which unites us to himself; whereby we have ground to expect good out of every ill, as knowing that whatsoever Christ wrought for the good of mankind, he did it for us in particular.

In outward favours grace makes us acknowledge all the blessings we have to be the free gifts of God, and invites us to return the glory to him.

God's servants take all occasions and opportunities of doing good, by those gifts and abilities wherewith they are endowed. When Esther was advanced to great honour, Mordecai told her that God had conferred that dignity upon her for his people's welfare, that she might be a means of their safety. Whereas, on the contrary, a proud heart, destitute of the Spirit of Christ, ascribes all to itself, waxeth more haughty, and grows worse and worse the more good he enjoys.

A gracious soul, upon the sight of the evil of sin in itself, is more deeply humbled before God, and with St Paul crieth out of his wretchedness, Rom. vii. 24. A heavenly-minded man being smitten for his wickedness, laboureth for subjection under the hand of the Almighty, and saith, 'I will patiently abide and endure thy correction, because thou, Lord, hast done it,' Ps. lii. 9. When the gracious man is held under the cross, and suffereth bitter things, he saith, 'It is good for me that I am afflicted, for thereby I am taught to know thee,' Ps. cxix. 67. In all troubles that befall him, he professeth that 'it is good for him to cleave unto God.' And the less outward wealth he hath, the more he seeks for inward grace, making a holy use of all things.

Upon these instructions hence delivered, let us take a view of ourselves, and try whether we in our afflictions are such as cleave to God, and are drawn nearer to him thereby. Call to mind the crosses wherewith God hath exercised thee, and the blessings which at any time he hath bestowed upon thee, and see how in both thou hast been bettered; see what profitable use thou hast made thereof for thy soul's comfort.

Let us see how we have followed the providence of God in his dealing with us; for if we have an interest in his goodness, then will we be careful, as God turns all things for our good, so to follow the same, together with him, for the good of our souls.

*Obj.* Now, because things do not *always* conduce to the good of God's children, as outward peace and prosperity oftentimes make them worse, therefore some may object, how can this be true which here the apostle saith, 'that all things do work together for the best to them that love God?'

*Ans.* 1. The answer hereunto is, *That for the most part the children of God do take the good of the blessings which God bestows on them, and avoid the snares of evil which accompany the same.* Job saith, 'The things I feared are come upon me.' By which we see, that Job in the midst of all his prosperity did fear and was jealous over himself, Job iii. 25.

2. But a more plainer answer of the objection is, *That if the good things of God, as peace, plenty, and prosperity, do fall out at the first to their ill, yet, nevertheless, they shall prove in the end a great gain unto them; for whereas*

by occasion of these they formerly fell (having too high an estimation of the creature, and overprizing the same), they see *now* more into their nature, and learn to condemn them.

3. Again, *The outward good things of this life shew the weakness of God's servants, and serve to try what is in them*; and therefore we read of Hezekiah, that God left him 'to try what was in him,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. The outward treasure which he had was a means to make known to himself and others the pride and vanity of his mind; the plenty and prosperity of the saints are greater triers of them than adversities and wants. For many that have comfortably gone through a low condition have yet foully failed in a full estate, their corruptions breaking forth to the view of others. Prosperity teaches men themselves. It tries their spirits, and lays them open to the world. Therefore it seemeth good to God to strip his servants of these outward things. They can acknowledge with patience his righteous dealing, knowing that man's happiness consists not in abundance of these things, but that the blessing of God is riches enough.

*Obj.* But some may object, and say, I have been long afflicted, and have had many crosses upon me, and little good do I find by them; I am never the better, but rather the worse for all.

*Ans.* This may be true thou sayest, but stay a little and consider the event. Howsoever, by reason of the bitterness and continuance of the cross, hitherto thou findest little good thereby, yet know that God is all this while but in hammering and working of thy unruly heart, thy good will follow afterwards. We see by experience, that sick persons, while they are in physic, are made sicker and sicker, but after that hath done working, then the party\* is far better than before. It is a folly to think that we should have physic and health both at once. It is impossible that a man should sow and reap both together. We must of necessity endure the working of God's physic. If trouble be lengthened, lengthen thy patience. When the sick humour is carried away and purged, then we shall enjoy desired health. God promiseth forgiveness of sin, but thou findest the burden of it daily on thee. Cheer up thyself; when the morning is darkest then comes day; after a fight victory will appear. God's time is best; therefore wait cheerfully.

Ofttimes God's servants under his cross are so sore wrought upon that they have hardly leisure of making a good use of the same, being distracted and dejected for the present, so as that they burst out rather into further evil than before. But afterwards, when their afflictions are thoroughly digested, then they begin to find the fruit of patience, humiliation, and obedience, and are better for the same ever after; therefore wait contentedly God's leisure; thou shalt surely find a sweet calm after the storm is over. Though we find little benefit by afflictions for the present, yet let us not conclude all is naught with us; for temptations being bitter, will not suffer men in them to lift up their hearts straight. After the extremity and vexation thereof is laid, then ensueth the 'quiet fruit of righteousness,' Heb. xii. 11.

*Obj.* 1. But if all things, yea, sin itself, shall turn to the best to those that love God, what need we then care for the committing of sin?

*Ans.* The apostle St Paul was in his days troubled with the like question. Therefore, observe with what detestation he answers, saying, 'God forbid, the damnation of such men is just,' Rom. iii. 8. But to answer more fully and plainly for the satisfaction of weak Christians.

\* Cf. Note, Vol. III. page 9.—G.

2. True it is, that all things, even the sins of God's servants, shall by God's mercy turn to their good; yet, nevertheless, the rule of God's word must ever be regarded, which is this, 'we may not do evil that good may come thereof.' That which is evil in itself must not be done, no, though for the doing thereof we might gain the greatest good, or avoid the greatest evil whatsoever; as if it were to win a world, we might not tell a lie, because it is a breach of God's law; Christ saith to the devil, 'It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,' Mat. iv. 7. We may not therefore by sin tempt God, so to set his goodness in working good out of our wickedness.

If, therefore, upon this ground of doctrine (that all things shall turn to the good of God's children, yea, even their sins themselves), any of us shall commit wickedness, and displease his Majesty, to try what mercy and wisdom is in him, to draw good out of our evil; this is a provoking of God's goodness, and those who thus do, turn the truth of God's word into poison, and make even that their destruction which should build them up in grace and holiness.

If we sin through weakness and frailty of our flesh, and through strength of temptation, upon repentance we may find grace; but if presuming that God will turn all things to our good, we break his law, what else do we but first of all make God the cause of our evil; and secondly, vex and scandal\* the saints on earth; thirdly, we sad† the blessed angels in heaven; and, fourthly, rejoice the devils and damned spirits in hell, putting darts and deadly weapons into their hands to work our ruin and overthrow; nay, fifthly, we grieve the good Spirit of God, who continually putteth us in mind of better things, if we would hearken to him, and by whom we are sealed up unto the day of redemption; sixthly, we slacken grace in our hearts, and whereas we should grow forward in virtue and holiness, we weaken the power of godliness exceedingly in us; seventhly, all willing sins do abate our affiance in God, and the feeling of his favour towards us; yea, oftentimes by so sinning, many of his dear children have walked heavily without spiritual joy all the days of their lives; for howsoever in regard the Lord hath elected us, we shall never finally fall away and perish, yet we may want the sweet sense of his favour, and remain afflicted in spirit all our life long. And then we shall know that the grief and trouble which we here undergo to avoid sin and subdue it, will be nothing so much as the mischief and sorrow that sin once committed and yielded to will bring on the soul.

Yea, there is no child of God but by experience shall one day feel that howsoever God by his wisdom and mercy can turn every sin to our good, yet it will prove bitter as wormwood in the end; the pleasure will never answer the smart and vexation that attends it. The contrition and breaking of thy heart for thy sins committed, if thou be God's, will more disquiet and trouble thee than possibly it can be a trouble to resist and forsake sin.

Nay, oftentimes God doth punish the very want of reverence in his servants to him, as also their slackness and unfitness in good duties, so as they may easily discern he is offended with them for the same. As we may see by the example of the Corinthians, who coming unpreparedly to the Lord's supper, for this very cause were so punished, 'that some of them were sick, and some weak, and some were stricken by death,' 1 Cor. xi. 30.

David's numbering of the people, and Hezekiah's shewing of his treasures

That is, scandalise.—G.

† That is, sadden.—G.

to the princes of Babel, howsoever by some they may be thought small sins, yet God scourged them for the same very sharply. And it is good that God's servants should a little know what it is to offend their Maker, for if they will be so negligent and careless in walking with him, it is fit they should reap the fruit of their own devices. It causeth much relapsing and backsliding from God, when men have never truly smarted for their sin. Having had knocks in our own ways, it establisheth us in God's ways. For we love to wander from ourselves, and bite\* strangers at home, till God by one cross or other brings us to himself, and then we think of returning to him. Nay, it is better for them a thousand-fold, that God should so school them, than that they should be let alone, and so go on without controlment from sin to sin till they come to desperation.

Howsoever therefore that God can and will turn the sins of his servants to the best advantage, yet better it were for them they had never sinned at all. Do we not think that David wished he had never fallen into that sin of adultery? And would not Peter have been glad that he had never denied his Master? The sin of David cost him many a cry for pardon: 'Mercy, Lord, mercy;' 'against thee have I sinned, forgive me this heinous crime;' and it cost Peter many a bitter salt tear, too, howsoever both David and Peter, after their recovery by repentance, were the better for it to their dying day.

As for all such as persist in sin, that God may turn all things to their best, let them know that all things shall work together for their bane and utter destruction for ever, which I now come to shew.

1. First of all, *God himself and his blessed angels* are at enmity with them. And therefore,

2. *All the creatures, both in heaven and earth, are against them.* In Pharaoh's ten plagues we see the creatures were all ready to execute the pleasure of the Almighty against him. And the 'bears out of the forest' were armed by God to devour those scoffing children, 2 Kings ii. 24. This is one part of the burden under which the creatures of God do groan, that they serve God against wicked men, and are his armies to punish the rebellious world.

3. *Even the good gifts of God are turned to the bane of the wicked.* Absalom's glory, his goodly long locks, were his halter to hang him up by. Ahithophel's wit† and policy brought him to that fearful end of being his own hangman. Haman's honour, what good did it to him, but only brought him to greater shame? His greatness made him swell in pride, and his pride had a sudden fall. What became of Herod's high mind in taking to himself the glory of God? which when foolish people ascribed it to him, was he not presently smitten, so as the 'worms consumed him,' Acts xii. 23, and he died a loathsome death? What became of Dives his riches? Did not his abuse thereof plunge him deeper into hell? Wicked men, though they abound in this world, yet not being in covenant with God, they have nothing with a blessing. The wicked are but as traitors before God; and oft it is seen that great traitors, who are by the prince kept in prison, are nourished very liberally until their time of execution come. So it is with all graceless persons. However for the present they have great allowances, yet as traitors, in the conclusion, they shall have an hard account to make unto God for all those things they have sinfully enjoyed. And not only so, but they abuse the very truth of God, as shall appear in divers particulars.

\* Qu. 'bide'?—ED.

† That is, 'wisdom.'—G.

(1.) First, *For the comfortable doctrine of justification by faith alone*: they pervert the same to their own destruction, saying, We are justified by faith only, what need we then care for doing of good works? Alas! they profit us nothing to our salvation. Therefore it is to no end to strive to do good.

(2.) Again, *For the doctrine of Christian liberty*. God having given us lawful recreations and plentiful use of his creatures, they turn all into licentiousness; and instead of moderate refreshment, they make a daily occupation of sports and games; instead of a lawful use of the creatures, they run into all excess of riot, in meat, drink, apparel, buildings, and delights.

(3.) And for the doctrine of *morality*, how do wicked men abuse it, saying, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we shall die,' Luke xv. 23. That which should put them in mind of spending of their time well, increaseth their sin.

(4.) Whereas *the longsuffering of God should lead men to repentance*, the wicked by means of God's patience run more securely on in sin, 'treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the declaration of God's just judgment,' Rom. ii. 5, which one day shall cease\* upon them. 'Because he doth not speedily execute his displeasure,' Eccles. viii. 11, therefore they grow worse and worse, those never considering the lamentable condition that sin brings them into; which did they thoroughly weigh, they would give the whole world if they were possessors of it, to have their spirits at freedom from this bondage and fear. God will take a course that his grace shall not be turned into wantonness. First or last, thou shalt find, whoever thou art, at what rate thou buyest the pleasure of sin. Those that have enjoyed long the sweet of sin may expect the bitterest sorrow and heart-breaking for it.

Nay, the greater good things they have, the greater evil they receive thereby by abuse of the same.

5. *The more they are illuminated by the word, their hearts become more rebellious against it*; and the greater authority, wealth, and health they enjoy, the more mischief they do with them. Those heavenly doctrines which should build up a good heart unto holiness, do they abuse to bring their souls deeper into wickedness; shewing themselves like to their father the devil, whose children they indeed are. God hath said, 'He would give his angels charge over thee,' Ps. xci. 11, which is a most comfortable place to a good heart. But how doth Satan abuse this to Christ? That he should fling himself headlong from the pinnacle of the temple; and as the devil, so every wicked man, by all his instructions of the word, takes occasion to tempt God the more; turning both grace itself, and the doctrine of grace, into wantonness.

Are there not many that hear the word and know God's mind, who yet profit nothing to amendment of life? Were it not better for these never to enjoy such means of heavenly wisdom, than now having the light still to live in darkness. Their knowledge only makes their damnation the greater if they continue in sin. What a lamentable condition is that man in, whose knowledge is only sufficient to damn his own soul! But let us see further how all evil things work together for the worst to ungodly persons.

(1.) And to begin with spiritual ill things, as *heresies and errors*. They serve but to ensnare the wicked; for instead of making them cauteloust† and diligent to search out the truth, they are carried away 'with every wind of doctrine.'

\* Qu. 'come'?—ED.

† That is, 'cautious.'—G.

So for the ill of *good men*, their falls and sins. The wicked of the world reap no benefit thereby, but encourage and hearten themselves the more in a sinful way, rejoicing thereat and making it their daily talk; neither do their own daily sinnings any whit better them, but are as so many punishments of their former transgressions: God in his justice suffering them still to run on to the fulfilling of the measure of their iniquities.

(2.) And for *outward evils in this life*, those that do turn to a good man's happiness fall out continually to their destruction. Pharaoh's ten plagues, which might have humbled his soul, made him but worse and worse. Therefore saith God, 'Why should I smite you any more?' for even since I punished you 'ye revolted still,' Isa. i. 5. The wicked are like to the smith's anvil, which by often beating is made harder and harder. So the more they are corrected, the sturder and stiffer in sin they grow. Their crosses are laid upon them from an angry God, and are forerunners of his eternal wrath, which shall seize upon their souls in hell, where the more they are tormented the more they shall blaspheme, and the more they shall blaspheme the more they shall be tormented without cessation.

*Causes.* The cause of all this evil upon the wicked is, *first, God's infinite justice*, which will not be unsatisfied; *secondly, their own vile hearts*, which, like a sick man having an ill stomach, digests nothing, but turns all to poison. Therefore saith the apostle, 'To the unclean all things are unclean,' Titus i. 15. As poisonous plants put into a fertile place do envenom the ground whereinto they are removed; so the same crosses that turn unto a good man's welfare prove a bad man's ruin, by reason of the corruption within him. *Another cause is, the devil's malicious working by it.* He makes wicked men abuse all their parts, both inward and outward, to God's dishonour and their own confusion, endeavouring to conform them to himself. None hath greater knowledge and understanding in the word of God than the devil. Yet he turns all his knowledge unto the sin against the Holy Ghost. But yet the devil cannot force men to wickedness. It is their own sinful hearts which betray them into his hands.

*Use 1.* Whence we learn that *all wicked men, in the midst of their happiness, are most unhappy*, because they turn the sweetest blessings into bitter poison; for all the gifts of God, without his special gift of using them well, are turned into a curse; as Balaam had good parts, but they not being sanctified proved his bane.

*Use 2.* We see further, that *outward prosperity is no mark of the true church*. Abundance of temporal blessings is no sign that we are in God's favour; neither are learning and knowledge evidences of spiritual grace. For the devil hath greater understanding and parts than any man. Howbeit, sight of sin preserves us from falling into it; and such as shut their eyes against the light, plunge themselves into the deeper misery.

*Obs. 1.* Now to proceed to further instructions. Do all things work together for the best to God's servants? Then hence we may learn *the certainty of the salvation of God's elect*. I take my reason from the text itself after this manner. That which nothing can hinder, that is certain; but the salvation of God's children cannot be hindered; therefore the salvation of God's children is most certain. If anything do or can hinder the saints' recovery or perseverance, it is sin; but to such as are united unto Christ by faith, sin is so far from hindering their happiness, that by God's overruling providence it turns to their best good.

*Obs. 2.* The second thing which we may ground here for the information of our judgment is this: *That as we know the providence of God is the cause*

*why all things work together for the best to his children, so we should eye this very particular providence in all that we enjoy, turning the same to our good.* There is a working hand of God in everything towards us, as we may see in the examples of Job, Joseph, and David, with other of his servants, whose present sorrow and humiliation was but a means of their future glory and exaltation. There is nothing so bad, but he can draw good out of it when any evil is intended. God either puts bars and lets\* to the execution of it against us; or else limiteth and boundeth the same, both in regard of time and measure. The God of spirits hath an influence into the spirits of all men, and knows how to take them off from doing us harm. All the strength of the creature rests in the great Creator of all things, who if he denies concurrence,† the arm of their power soon withereth. It cannot but bring strong consolation to the soul, to know that in all variety of changes, and intercourse of good and bad things, our loving God hath a disposing hand. So as all blessings and crosses, all ordinances and graces, nay, our very falls, yea, Satan himself, with all his instruments, being over-mastered and ruled by God, have this injunction upon them, to further God's good intentment to us, and in no wise hurt us, which should move us to see his disposing hand in all that befalls us. We owe God this respect, to observe his providence in the particular passages of our lives; considering he is our Sovereign, and his will is the rule, and we are to be accountable to him as our Judge. We should question our hearts for questioning his care in the least kind. So long as God sits at the stern and rules all, we may be sure no evil shall befall us that he can hinder (*id*).

*Obs. 3. Thirdly, Hence we may learn, that there is not two, but one sovereign Head over the whole world,* which is plainly proved by this text of Scripture. For '*all things work together for the best to them that love God:*' and things which in themselves are contraries agree together to procure their good. Therefore all things whatsoever are overruled by the sole power of the Almighty. The devil himself, although he be called 'the god of this world,' yet he is at Christ's beck, and could not enter into a few swine without leave first obtained. He raiseth up hideous storms and tempests against the saints, but perisheth himself in the waves at last. Persecutions and perils may follow us, but they are all limited in the doing of hurt, which plainly demonstrates that there is but one main worker and wise disposer of all things.

*Obs. 4. Further, Hence observe, that there is nothing in the world that to God's servants is absolutely evil; because nothing is so ill but some good may be raised out of it; not as it is an evil, but as it is governed and mastered by a supreme cause.* Sin is of all evils the greatest; and yet sinful actions may produce gracious effects, through God's ordering and guiding the same.

*Obs. 5. Again observe, that a child of God is truly happy in the midst of all misery.* To prove this, I reason thus. In what estate soever the child of God is, it shall turn to his good; therefore no affliction can make him truly miserable. The proof of this the apostle sets down in his own example: 'He was poor, yet made many rich; he sorrowed, yet always rejoiced; he had nothing, yet possessed all things; he was chastened, and yet not killed,' 2 Cor. vi. 10. God's children, although to the world they may seem to be miserable, yet having communion and fellowship with him, they are always happy. The very worst day of God's child is better than the very best day of the wicked. The worst day of St Paul was better to him than the best day of Nero was to him; for the wicked, in the midst of

\* That is, 'hindrances.'—G.

† That is, 'concurrence.'—G.

their happiness, are accursed; whereas the godly, in the midst of their miseries, are blessed.

This doctrine is a ground of understanding divers other places of Scripture, as Ps. xci. 3, the Lord promiseth that he will 'deliver his from the snare of the hunter, and from the noisome pestilence;' and yet oftentimes his dear servants are in the hands of the wicked, and taken away by the stroke of his judgments, this truth nevertheless remaining firm, that 'all worketh together for their best.' So God teacheth us in his word that he doth make a league between his servants and the creatures. But all such expressions of his love we must bring to this text, and then they are true, else they may seem to be false. 'The plague shall not come near thy dwelling-place,' Ps. xci. 10, but only so far forth as it is for thy benefit. The good prophet was torn in pieces by a lion, 1 Kings xiii. 24; and sundry holy men have received hurt by wild beasts, whose eternal welfare were furthered thereby. Therefore this phrase of Scripture, that 'the creatures are in league,' is to be understood, not that they have put off their hostile nature, but that they have the same issue as those that are at peace with us.

Here likewise is a direction for us *how to pray for earthly blessings*, and the removal of temporal judgments. Oftentimes worldly honours and riches are snares unto God's children, and temporal chastisements, which we so earnestly pray against, work much good unto us. And therefore it falleth out that when we pray against temporal calamities, we pray against our own good.

Being therefore afflicted, we should desire not absolutely that God would remove our troubles, but that he would work his own good pleasure upon us thereby. Our prayers for temporal blessings and removal of temporal crosses must always be conditional; for what good will it be for us to come out of the fire worse than we were when we went into it? If, therefore, God in his wisdom see it good for us to have affliction, we should not desire him absolutely to remove the same till it have done us good. And then, 'Lord, deal with us as seems best in thine own eyes.'

As for such as affect\* neither God nor goodness, let them know that if all things work for the best to the saints, then they may forbear their successless endeavours which they daily enterprise against them. In going about to hurt the godly they do them most good, for God will benefit them by their malice. Their wicked practices shall not only be made frustrate, but dangerous to themselves. After the chastisement of his servants for their good, God will cast the rod into the fire. Men may know whether they are 'vessels of mercy' or no by the use they are put to. The basest of people are fit enough to be executioners. It is a miserable wisdom when men are wise to work their own ruin. Do not many spin a fine thread and weave a fair web, when by their turnings and devices they turn themselves into hell? Whatever we get by sin for the present, it will one day prove the heaviest business that ever we undertook.

God is the only monarch of the world, and makes all things and persons whatsoever serviceable to his own end and his church's good. He is higher than the highest. Satan with all his instruments are but slaves to the Almighty, executioners of his will. Can we think that God's children, who are so near and dear to him, shall always be trampled upon by the powers of darkness. No, certainly. He is interested† in all their quarrels, and takes their injuries as done to himself. When we can be more subtle than the devil, or more strong than God, we may think to thrive against them. He

\* That is, 'choose,' 'love.'—G.

† That is, 'interested.'—G.

is a 'wall of fire' round about his church, not only to defend and preserve it, but to consume all the adversaries thereof. God doth great matters for his servants; he rebukes kings and princes, and ruins empires for their sakes. For the bringing home back again of the Jews, he translated the Babylonish empire to the Persians; and therefore the wicked must take heed of attempting anything against God's church: because the harm thereof will redound upon their own heads. God delights to take the oppressed party's\* part, and serves himself of all his enemies for his people's good. They practise against the righteous, and he 'laughs them to scorn.' Wicked men cannot do God's children a greater pleasure than to oppose them; for by this means they help exceedingly to advance them.

Satan and all his instruments, what get they by their cruelty to the saints? They do but increase their own torment, and do them the more good. But this is both against their knowledge and wills. Therefore if they be loath to do them any good, let them take heed how they attempt any evil against them.

*Use 1.* And here let all such be admonished *how they provoke God's children to cry in their prayers against them.* For it is better for the wicked that they had all the creatures in heaven and earth against them than the poor saints; for a few of these will more prejudice them than all the world besides.

Come we now to the grounds of practice hence to be observed.

*Use 2.* Again, Doth God order all 'for the best' to them that love him?

Let us not then *except against any evil that shall befall us*; for this our present cross shall turn to our future comfort. It is the saints' happiness, that their best is in working still, till they be complete in heaven. But the wicked and men of the world, their worst is always in contriving. Their life is bad, their death is worse; and after death it is worst of all with them. God himself, and all under him, work continually for the good of his children. Their best is last. Their light groweth on clearer and clearer 'as the light, until the noonday,' Prov. iv. 18. But the worldly grow worse and worse every moment. To them that fear God, sin and sorrow, their very worst, is by God's mercies best for them; whereas all the best of the wicked by abuse turns to their worst.

*Use 3.* Observe here the excellency of the saints' comfort, above all other comforts whatsoever. The nature of it is this: it must be stronger than the grievance of which it is a cordial. And the reason of spiritual comfort must be more forcible than any carnal reason can be to undermine it. Now what stronger consolation can a man have than to be assured that all things, without exception, shall work together for his good? But this is not all. What a sweet refreshment is it when the soul can say, God will either stop me from falling into sin, outwardly by afflictions; or else subdue my corruptions inwardly by his Spirit, that I shall not be overthrown by them. He will never suffer me to rot in my sins, but when I do fall, will raise me up again. It bears up a Christian's heart, that rather than we shall continue in an evil way, God will send some Nathan or other to rouse us out of our security.

Therefore to all thy comforts add this, that God will not only save thee at last, but turn all things to the best whilst thou art here. This is the highest strain of consolation. It is far stronger to refresh and quicken us than any grievance can be to afflict us. It maketh evil things, in comparison, to seem good; as, 'Moses counted the rebukes of Christ greater

\* Cf. Note, Vol. III. page 9.—G.

riches than the treasures of Egypt,' Heb. ix. 26. He made more choice of 'affliction' than he did of the world's glory. If God be with us, who can be against us. If he be our shepherd, we are sure to lack nothing. There is such a force of comfort in salvation, that we will rather choose outward evils than to enjoy outward good things. Moses, by faith, seeing that outward affliction and shame were knit to salvation, chose these, and refused dignity and ease.

How ought this to stay the soul under all its heavy pressures! Why should not I be patient in sickness, in poverty, in disgraces; or why should I despair at the hour of death? Am I not under the hand of my God, working my good out of every evil? It is the subtilty of our arch-enemy to drive us to a stand, that we may doubt of our conditions, and say with Gideon, 'If the Lord be with me, and that I am his child, why is it thus with me?' Judges vi. 13. How is it that all this sorrow and misery hath befallen me, and lieth so heavy upon my soul? But our comfort here is, that God who turneth all things to our best is stronger than Satan.

Use 4. Again, *Considering all things conduce unto our goods, though in appearance never so opposite*, this comfort ariseth, that if God do so work this or that, then I must believe against belief; I must stand firm against contraries, my faith must answer his manner of working, and believe that God can bring me to honour by shame, and to heaven by hell-gates. For if it be his course of dealing, first to cast down and then to lift up, by disgrace to bring his servants to glory, then in all my extremities I must rest upon God, who is never nearer unto his, to succour them, than when he seems to be furthest off. When he means to give victory he suffers us to be foiled first, and when he intends to justify a poor sinner he will condemn him first. Let us therefore hope against hope, and desire God in our distresses to open our eyes that we may see our consolations.

Hagar had a well by her when she was ready to perish for thirst, and yet she saw it not; and Elisha's man had angels to defend him when the Aramites\* compassed him about, but perceived not the same. So 'the angel of the Lord continually pitcheth his tent about the godly,' though they are not aware of it; yea, God is then nearest to us when we are in most straits. Cordials are kept for faintings. When Christ went to cast the devil out of a child, he then most raged and tare him. So likewise Satan and wicked men most rage when they are nearest to their end and destruction. In thy greatest danger, never rest on thy friends, but on the Lord, who never standeth nearer and firmer to us than when we are most perplexed and know not what to do. A distressed soul seeth oft no comfort in outward things, and therefore retireth unto God, in whom it finds whatsoever may make it happy. 'Our strength may fail, and our heart may fail,' Ps. xxiv., but God is our portion for ever. When we are weak, then we are strong; and when we are most cast down in ourselves, we are nearest to God's helping hand. This carriage of the Almighty ought to establish our faith.

In all cases of extremity we should have a double eye: one to look upon our grievances and troubles, and another to look upon the issue and event of them. Why do men in time of dangerous sickness take bitter physick, which is almost death unto them? Why do they then undergo such things as they loathe at other times? Is it not because they rest upon the skill of the physician? And shall we then in our distresses distrust God for our souls, when we will trust a weak and mortal man with our

\* That is, the Syrians. Cf. 2 Kings vi. 17.—G.

bodies? If conceit be so strong in earthly things, as indeed it is, then faith is much stronger, when it grounds itself upon the truth of the word. When God exercises us with poverty or other afflictions, this should teach us submission to his providence in any condition, saying, Lord, do with me what thou wilt, only let this poor soul be precious in thine eyes! Thou hast promised that howsoever these afflictions lie heavy upon me, yet in the end, all shall turn out to my good; therefore dispose of thy servant at thine own pleasure; I resign all to thee!

Here is the rejoicing of a Christian, which makes him cheerfully pass through any affliction; he knows that good is intended in all that befalls him. With what alacrity did Joseph say unto his brethren, 'Ye sold me hither, but God hath turned it to the best, that I should preserve and nourish you all, and save much people alive, who otherwise were like to have perished with famine,' Gen. xlv. 5. This made Job so patiently to say, 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh; blessed be the name of the Lord,' Job i. 21.

This is the ground of all true contentation.\* I have learned, saith St Paul, 'in all estates to be content: to be rich and to be poor, to abound and to be in want,' Philip. iv. 11; and why so? Whatsoever his estate and condition was, God turned it to the best. Shall any man dare to mislike of God's allowance? Doth not he know better what is good for us than we can possibly imagine what is good for ourselves?

This likewise should teach us not to take offence at the reproach and disgrace which is cast upon God's children; for 'mark the righteous,' saith David, 'and behold the upright: the end of that man is peace,' Ps. xxxvii. 37. The issue of their trouble is ever quietness. Take not one piece of a Christian man's life by itself, but take it altogether, and then thou shalt see the truth of this doctrine. To see Joseph in the dungeon and in his irons, we haply may be offended, and call God's providence in question; but beholding him in his honour and advancement, we cannot but conclude him a happy man. So if we look on Job sitting with sores on the dunghill, there is matter of offence; but to see him restored again, and blessed with a greater estate than he had before, this is matter of praising God. If we consider of Christ abased, and hanging upon a cross, so there will be scandal; † but look on him exalted to glory, far above all dignities and powers, and then the scandal is soon taken away. Let us therefore lay one thing to another when we eye God's people, and we shall see a blessing under their greatest curse. Those things which are contrived by man's wit‡ may argue great folly if one part be not annexed to the other. Therefore look to the whole work towards his servants, and then thou shalt never be offended at their condition.

Use 5. This also is a ground of *Christian boldness in holy courses*, when a man is fully resolved, that come what will come, God will turn all to his good. It encourages him cheerfully to go through any difficulty. What is the reason of the fearfulness and dastardness of most men, but only this, that if we do this or that duty, or abstain not from this or that good action, then this cross and this displeasure by such and such a person will be brought upon me. The wise man saith, that 'the fear of man bringeth a snare, but he that trusteth in the Lord shall be exalted,' Prov. xxix. 25. Let us not, regarding the fear of man, neglect our duty to God, for he can turn the hearts of the kings on the earth to seek the welfare of his poorest creature,

\* That is, 'contentment.'—G.

† That is, 'wisdom.'—G.

‡ That is 'offence.'—G.

and make thy very enemies to be thy friends. He that for sinister ends will offend his Maker, may well be excluded to the 'gods whom they have served,' Judges x. 14. Go to the great men, whose persons you have obeyed for advantage, to your riches, to your pleasures, which you have loved more than God or goodness : you would not lose a base custom, a superfluity for me ; therefore I will not own you now. Such men are more impudent than the devil himself, that will claim acquaintance with God at last, when they have carried themselves as his enemies all their days. God wants not means to maintain his, without being beholden to the devil. He hath all help hid in himself, and will then shew it when it shall make most for his own glory. He deserves not to live under the protection of a king, that will displease him for fear of a subject. The three children in Daniel said, 'Know, O king, that our God can deliver us out of thy hands ; but if he will not, yet, nevertheless, we will not fall down and worship thine image,' Dan. iii. 5, *seq.* 'The righteous are bold as a lion,' saith the wise man, Prov. xxviii. 1 ; 'the Lord is his strong tower,' Ps. lxi. 3. What need we fear any creature, when we have him on our side who hath both men and devils at his back ?\*

*Use 6.* And if God turn all things whatsoever to our good, *should not we through the whole carriage of our lives chiefly aim at his honour?* God writes our names in his book, he numbers our hairs, and bottles up our tears.† He hath a special care of us. Every good deed we do he writeth down to eternity ; yea, if we give but 'a cup of cold water in his name,' Mat. x. 42, he taketh notice of it ; and shall not we then take special occasion to magnify him in all things ? We pray daily, 'Hallowed be thy name,' therefore ought accordingly to observe God's dealing with us. How is it possible that we should give him the glory of his mercies, if we never observe them ?

A wicked man considers, This makes for my advantage and this for my profit, this tends to my ease and wealth, &c. ; studying how to make friends, and please persons in place above him, not respecting God's honour and glory in the least kind ; whereas the sincere Christian looks on all things as they tend to his best happiness, and therefore forecast thus, If I do this or that good, then I shall grow in grace and wisdom and knowledge ; but if I neglect it, and be careless of well doing, I shall hurt and wound my soul, and break the peace of my conscience. By this company and good acquaintance I shall be furthered in holiness, become wiser and better in heavenly understanding ; if I fall, they may raise me up, and help maintain a gracious frame within me. Where true holiness is, the soul is sensible of all advantages and disadvantages of good. An indifference for any company or employment shews a dead heart.

This is a main difference to distinguish a child of God from a profane wretch that only lives to himself. His heart is taken up wholly with the world and matters below, whereas the godly are all for thriving in grace and increase of godliness. The wicked man considers of things as they serve to satisfy his lust ; and if we have better thoughts at any time, it is but for a start. But a godly man's aims are always holy, and the strength of his soul is put forth that way. He values himself as he stands in relation to God and a better life ; and esteems all other things more or less as they further or hinder his spiritual growth, and bring peace and † sorrow at the last unto him.

2. But I hasten to the second part of the text, *the persons to whom this*

\* Qu. 'beck' ?—ED.

† Cf. Ps. lvi. 8.—G.

‡ Qu. 'or' ?—ED.

*privilege belongs*; that is, 'to them that love God.' And why to them that love God? Because the apostle speaketh of afflictions; and we know that the grace which is most conversant in the saints' sufferings is patience, which floweth from love.

Also, for that of all other graces is the first and sweetest. It is the first; for whom we love we are sorry to offend; and hate whatsoever is contrary to that we affect.\* We rejoice in that we love, and grieve in the absence thereof.

It is the commanding affection of all others, and setteth the whole man sweetly a-work to attain its desire. Love makes us forward and zealous Christians. All the inward worship of God is in the affections; as, Thou shalt rejoice in no God but me, and fear no God but me. All the commandments of God are brought by Christ to this duty.

Again, Love hath a special part in this privilege of bringing all things to work for our good. For when we love God, we will make the best use of everything which we suffer or do, if we love God and eye his glory therein. Love makes any burden easy. It makes us studious of pleasing the party loved; as we say in the proverb, 'Love me, and do with me what you will.' Love is full of inventions. It studies complacency, and sets the soul a-work to honour God in all things.

In that the apostle saith, 'to them that love God,' and not to the children or servants of God, we may observe, *that Christianity is not a bare title, but it requireth some qualification.* Therefore the Scriptures, when they describe a saint on earth, do not usually say, 'the child of God,' but they set him forth by some holy affections or actions wrought in him; as such as love God, or fear God, and 'walk in his ways;' hereby shewing that religion is not a matter of compliment, but a real and holy endeavour to please the Lord; and although the Scriptures do name but some one particular affection, yet it is all one as if they had named all; for where one is in truth, there all follows.

Again, In that the apostle here ascribes privileges to those only that are thus qualified, we must take heed in applying the promises of God and these sweet consolations, that we be such persons to whom of right they do belong; 'for all things work for the best,' not to every one, but to such as 'love God.' We must not therefore preach comfort to all, but must first labour to make men capable of it. To this end,

1. First, We will shew the nature of this love.
2. Secondly, The exercises of it, and directions unto it.
3. Thirdly, Some incitements to this holy affection.

1. The ground of love is a considering of God as *our own God* in the covenant of grace, and an acknowledging of ourselves to be his peculiar children in Christ Jesus; when we can say as the spouse in the Canticles, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' ii. 16. This is a loving of God, not as the God of nature only, but as ours peculiar by grace. This union of love, which knits us to Christ, implieth another union by faith first, which is a cleaving to God as *my* God, and to Christ as *my* Christ; whence issues a second conjunction or cleaving to him in love, as my Saviour, my husband, and my head.

To come to the nature of this grace, and then to the working of it. The nature of love is seen in four things:

1. In admiring of some secret good in the thing beloved, which stirs up the soul to make out for it.

\* That is, 'love,' 'choose.'—G.

2. In a studiousness of the contentation\* of the person beloved.
3. In a desire of union and fellowship with the person we affect.†
4. In a resting and solacing of ourselves in the thing we love.

By these let us examine ourselves whether we have the true love of God or no. For it concerns us much to have this grace. It will distinguish us from all others, who fear him not.

1. First, Our love to Christ cometh

(1.) *From the high esteem of the good things we see in him.* But how shall we know whether that we have this admiring of the good things we see in God and in his word and children? We shall know it by our choice; and our choice follows our judgment. Would we know whether our judgment be good? See what do we choose, especially when things of the world and God come together. And here we want not examples to guide us. The question was, Whether that Moses should still choose to live in Pharaoh's court and be accounted his son-in-law, or else depart and suffer adversity with God's children. Now Moses, by sound judgment, had an high esteem of the excellency and privileges of the saints; and therefore chose rather to endure afflictions 'than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,' Heb. xi. 25. Let us then see whether we can be contented to part with our preferment or pleasure for God or no. And whether we do esteem the rebukes of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world: whether we can lay down our lives and liberties at Christ's feet, and gladly want all, so we may enjoy him. If it be so with us, our estate is good.

(2.) Again, Let us see whether *We have a right prizing of the good things in God.* Do we delight to speak much and often of Christ and the benefits we receive by him? How was St Paul's heart enlarged, and his tongue full of heavenly eloquence, in setting forth the 'unspeakable mercies of God,' which we have by Christ Jesus our Lord. If 'God be on our side, who can be against us?' saith he; 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ;' 'shall tribulation, shall anguish and affliction? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor any other thing can do it,' Rom. viii. 38.

(3.) Another sign to know whether we have a secret admiration of the good things we see in God is this, *if we do undervalue all things else for Christ.* Worldly men are ever admiring of the things below, accounting such men happy and blessed that abound most therein. Therefore there is nothing that doth more truly try a man than this. The soul that sees a vanity in the things beneath, and can rejoice in God only as his true riches, is in a good condition. Where there is a true judgment of God and religion, the soul of that man will never stoop to the creature; the soul so rejoiceth in God, as that it will not yield itself to any other. Adam and Eve, in their innocency, were both naked and were not ashamed. One reason might be, because their thoughts were taken up with higher matters. In heaven we shall not be ashamed of things we now are ashamed of. A Christian soul is so ravished with the enjoying of God, that it mindeth almost nothing but him.

2. The second branch in love is a desire to do all things, (1.) *to the content of the party<sup>s</sup> beloved.* Our love to God will frame us to the obedience of his will. Obedience is the proof of love: 'If ye love me,' saith Christ, 'keep my commandments,' John xv. 10. If we love God, we will pray for the enlarging of his kingdom. Where love is kindled in any heart, there

\* That is, 'contentment.'—G.

† Cf. foot note in Vol. III. page 2.—G.

† That is, 'love.'—G.

is a care to be approved of him whom we so love. This makes our obedience general to all God's commandments, in all places and all things whatsoever. It makes us give our inwards to God, serving him with the soul and spirit.

Those therefore that nourish unclean hearts within them, and think it enough to abstain from the outward act of evil, love not the Lord sincerely. The devil himself will do outward things as readily as you; he will confess Christ to be the Son of God, and say, 'Why art thou come to torment me before my time?' Matt. viii. 29. So that if thou dost outwardly only confess God, what dost thou more than the devil? In outward duties, without sincerity, there is no love. You will pray; the devil will do as much. The devil hath a bad end in good actions. So there are many that come to church, and make show of religion, to cloak their evil courses. But such poor wretches, however they are pleased with shadows, are little better than Satan himself.

(2.) Again, If we be desirous to content him whom we love, *then will we suffer anything for his sake.* Therefore the apostles went away 'rejoicing, and accounted it their glory that they were esteemed worthy to suffer hardship for Christ,' Acts v. 41. And David, for 'dancing before the ark,' being by Michal mocked, saith, 'I will yet be more vile for my God,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. He cared not for any reproach that could happen to him in a good way. Yea, this will make us 'zealous in his truth.' He that hath no zeal hath no love. If our hearts rise not when God is dishonoured, what love have we to him? Is God's glory and the church's welfare dear to us? It is a sign we love him. But can we see those things go backward and have no zeal, nor be anything affected therewith, surely then we have no love.

3. Again, if we have a true love to God, then

(1.) *Have we a desire of union and communion with him.* We will be much in meditating of him, in speaking to him and conferring with him. Those therefore that go on from day to day, without private speeches with God, or solacing of their souls in him, what affection have they to him? Love is communicative; and what desire of communion can that soul have that lives a stranger to his Maker? Can we say we love one with whom we never confer or speak to any purpose?

(2.) Again, If we love a man, *we will advise with him, especially in matters of moment.* So if we love God we will take counsel of him in his word, for the guidance of our lives and stablishing our consciences. If we advise not with God, it is a sign that we either think he doth not regard us, or else that we count him not worthy to be counselled by.

(3.) Another sign is, to examine what *desire we have to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.* Do we love his appearing to judgment? and are we now fit for his coming? Surely then it is a plain sign that our love is fixed and set upon him; so much as we do fail of this desire, so much we fail in love to Christ. What was the reason that the people under the law were so much afraid at the appearing of an angel unto them? Was it not this, that they were not fitted and prepared for God? A man may be a good Christian, and yet not at all times willing to die; for as eyes that are sore cannot always endure the light, so a soul galled with sin desires not to hear of the day of judgment: yet ought we to thirst after it.

(4.) Another sign of this grace is *our eager and hungry desire after God,* when with David we can say, 'O God, my heart panteth after thee, as the hart panteth after the brooks of waters,' Ps. xlii. 1, when a soul is never

at rest till he enjoys his Maker, but cries out still, 'O when shall I appear in his presence!' it is a good sign, ver. 2.

4. The last branch or property is, *resting and quieting ourselves in the love of God above all things whatsoever*, saying with David, 'Whom have I in heaven or in earth besides thee? or what do I esteem in comparison of thee?' Ps. lxxiii. 25; let me enjoy but 'the light of thy countenance, and it suffices me,' Ps. iv. 6. Demand therefore of thine own heart, what the things are that trouble thee most? and what is the cause of thy sorrow and disquietments? whether it be for losses or crosses outwardly, or for want of God's love and the sense and feeling of his favour inwardly? They which grieve chiefly for outward evils are most carried in their affections that ways; but if in the confluence of all worldly blessings, we can grieve for our spiritual wants, it is a comfortable evidence. When a man reckons not his happiness to stand in the possession of the creature, but in the fruition of the Creator, and desires his favour above anything, it is a gracious sign.

David had an abundance, yea, he had a kingdom, yet nothing would satisfy him but the mercies of God. And when he was in want, what course did he take, but 'still comforted himself in the Lord his God,' Ps. li. 1, *seq.* That which a man sorroweth most for when he wanteth it, that he rejoiceth most in when he hath it. Can we in our crosses rejoice that God is ours? This is an excellent sign, and plainly discovers, that we place our contentation\* more in him than in anything else. Can we delight more in the solace of his favour than in outward prosperity? It is a heavenly testimony of a renewed condition. When David was in his greatest distresses, what desires had he then most in him? Why, he longed after the house of God. When the people were ready to stone him, wherein did he trust, but in 'the Lord his strong tower'? Ps. lxi. 3.

In the last place, Would we know whether we can rest in God or no? Let us

(1.) *Examine ourselves then what endeavours we make every day to cleanse our souls from sin*, that so God may take pleasure in us, and we again may delight in him.

(2.) *Let us see how we restrain our affections from running riot after the world and sinful pleasures.* And

(3.) *How we set our joy upon God, and frame ourselves to do his will.* I beseech you, let us deal faithfully with our own souls in this particular. And if we find

(4.) That our hearts tell us, as Peter's told him, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' John xvi. 30; I desire, O Lord, to please thee above all things; I have set mine heart upon thee, and I joy in thee and in thy love more than in all things else in the world; if thus, I say, we can in the integrity of our spirits appeal to God, who only knows and searches our ways, and say, 'Truly, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' it is a certain and infallible sign unto us that we are his, and all things shall work for the best unto us.

But take we heed how we deceive ourselves in these things. By love we are Christians; therefore labour for sincerity of affection. A reprobate or a castaway may go far in these four signs of love. He may admire and wonder at the good things of God; but he doth it not from anything within him, but from the outward beholding of them. He can admire and talk of them, but yet such men are without any relish or sweet taste of the thing they speak of. So likewise an hypocrite may desire to please God

\* That is, 'contentment.'—G.

in many things, but not in all things ; as we see in Herod, he heard John Baptist willingly, and obeyed in some things, but not in all. He could not be crossed in his beloved sin which abode in him ; that must not be touched. Then farewell God, and farewell Christ and all.

So a castaway may desire to be in heaven, as being a place good for him ; and he may have some little ‘ taste of those joys above,’ as is mentioned in the Hebrews, vi. 4, 5 ; but he hath no relish of them from the love of God, but only from the love of himself. And his desire is not such as will draw him on to the use of means for spiritual growth and progress thereunto, as we see in Balaam ; he had a desire ‘ to die the death of the righteous,’ Num. xxiii. 10, but this could not make him leave his covetous disposition, and find a contentment in God alone.

A reprobate may be content with religion and with God’s ways, so long as peace doth accompany the same (as now in this our country, Christ cometh amongst us with plenty and prosperity, therefore Christ is a good Christ), but if the gospel and religion should be professed with persecution and danger and disgrace, it would soon appear where men’s contentments were. There is a resting not in the truth, because it is truth, but in regard of the good things which follow it. If we desire to approve ourselves to God, let us examine ourselves about this affection, and every branch of it. The deceit is both common and deadly ; and the profession of religion in many Christians is not for religion itself, but for by-ends and sinister respects. To which end consider further these particulars.

Where there is true love, *there will be a desire of union to the beloved object* ; so where the love of God is, there will be a desire of the accomplishment of the marriage between God and the soul. ‘ He that loves a harlot,’ saith the wise man, ‘ is one with her,’ 1 Cor. vi. 16. So he that affects\* the Lord, desires to be one with him ; therefore men have their names from what they love. If they love the world, they are called ‘ worldlings ;’ if they love Christ, they are called Christians. How canst thou say that thou lovest the Lord, and dost not desire his presence in his ordinances ? Can we say we love such a man, when we care not for his company ? God observes not so much what we do, as from what affection our duties proceed.

Again, If we love, *there will be a desire to give content to the party beloved.* This appears even in carnal self-love ; for take a man that loves himself, he makes himself his utmost aim and end in all his actions. But when once God hath plucked this fleshly love out of our souls, then our affections will be carried to Christ only. This made the prophet David say, ‘ I love the Lord dearly,’ Ps. xviii. 1. ‘ He is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer,’ Ps. lxi. 3. A Christian hath his contentment in God alone ; he finds an all-sufficiency in the Almighty, and therefore makes him his resting-place. In all his troubles he will make God his deliverer, and find more true comfort in him than in all the things of the world besides. Therefore, if God should take all other things from us, yet if he leave us himself, a Christian is well contented, because he knows his best being is in God.

*Quest.* But how shall I know whether I do esteem rightly of God or no ?

*Ans.* If we highly esteem any thing, whether it be of this or a better life, we will be often speaking of them. It is a sign men undervalue heavenly truths when they discourse little about them. They much set light by God that have him not in all their thoughts.

Again, What we esteem of, *we will choose above other things.* It appears

\* That is, ‘ loves.’—G.

we have a precious esteem of God when we choose him, and him alone, for our portion; as David, when he said, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in his courts for ever,' Ps. xxvii. 4. Where God is truly loved, there will be a fall of all earthly things in that man's estimation. So he may gain Christ, he counts all else but dross and dung.

Lastly, If thou lovest God, *thou wilt be afraid to offend him, and careful to please him in all things.* God delights not in a proud and haughty spirit, but in an humble and meek soul. These then should be thy delight. God is wonderful well pleased with faith; for it is that which binds him to perform his promise; therefore seek it earnestly. Whatsoever God approves, a Christian should take pleasure in. Every grace is an ornament to a Christian; and God delights to see his own graces in us. Isaac, before he took Rebekah to wife, sent her jewels to adorn her; so Christ sends rich jewels to his children, even the graces of his Holy Spirit, to make us love him, and fit us the more for him. Those that live in sins against conscience, think we that these love God? No, certainly. If they did, they would love that which he loves, and hate that which he hates. What a pitiful thing is it to see men glorying in that which is their shame; in swearing and profaneness, and yet for all this say they love God! Is it possible that the love of God and the love of sin should ever stand together?

Proceed we now to some reasons and directions for the attaining of this grace.

1. And first, *Let us not rest in an inferior degree of this affection, but rise up therein, and labour that it may have full assent.* There are degrees of assent, as when we love God because we love ourselves. A natural man may do so, but this is not enough; for if we love God for ourselves, we make ourselves our god. Where the heart is truly set upon God, it delights in him only for himself, and takes comfort in no condition further than he sees God in it. He never affected Christ in truth that is more taken with the benefits and privileges that come by him than with the excellency of his person. What friend will be content that a man should only love him because he doth him good? We must love ourselves and all other things in and for God. Moses and Paul rejoiced to honour the Lord, though themselves were accursed and deprived of happiness; and if we could so love Christ as not to desire heaven itself if Christ were not there, this were truly to affect\* him; for indeed if Christ were not there, heaven should not be heaven unto us. We must love our happiness no further than we can have with it God's leave and liking.

2. Again, We shall know our love to God, whether it be sincere or no, *by our abstaining from sin.* If we avoid evil for fear of punishment or hope of reward only, our love is unsound; but when we so love God that we will not do anything contrary to his Spirit, it is a special sign. Such a man, if there were no hell to punish him, nor place of bliss to receive him, yet would not break with God upon any terms.

For the means to attain this love, we must, in the first place, *labour for an humble and empty soul.* 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' saith Christ, for such only apprehend their misery without Christ and their need of him, which occasions an holy rejoicing in the Lord, and unfeigned love to him. What is the reason that some are so ravished with the favours of the Almighty? Is it not for that they were so formerly stung with the sight and feeling of their sins? The more loving Christian ever the more humble

\* That is, 'choose,' 'love.'—G.

Christian. Mark it when you will, and you shall find this disposition manifest in every true convert. They are daily humbling themselves for the least offence.

A second direction is, to *taste of the love of God in Christ*. When the beams of his favour once shine into our hearts, we cannot but reflect upon him again. 'We love him,' saith the apostle, 'because he loved us first,' 1 John iv. 10. Mary therefore 'loved much,' because she had the experience of God's love 'in forgiving her many sins,' Luke vii. 47. When a broken humble soul truly savoureth the goodness of the Lord, it cannot but be inflamed with desire after him. A Christian, after he hath had a taste of the love of God, hath another manner of judgment of justification than before. 'Taste and see,' saith David, 'how good and gracious the Lord is,' Ps. xxxiv. 8. A man that relishes the sweetness of a thing can better judge of it than he which never tasted it.

A third direction is, to *see what motives and reasons we have from the love of God in Christ to exercise our understandings this way*. We know heat cometh from light, and there is a sympathy between the brain and the heart. The brain must make a report to the heart before that can be inflamed with affection; therefore seriously search into the grounds of thy affection.

(1.) The first ground is, *goodness in God*. God is goodness itself, in whom all goodness is involved. If, therefore, we love other things for the goodness which we see in them, why do we not love God, in whom is all goodness? All other things are but sparks of that fire, and drops of that sea. Seest thou any good in the creature; remember there is much more in the Creator. Leave, therefore, the streams, and go to the well-head of comfort.

(2) Another reason of love is *our affinity with God our Father and friend*, who is unto us in all degrees of nearness, both our head and our husband. Were not the Son ours, what fellowship could we have with the Father? Having such a Mediator with God, that is 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' why should we fear to go unto him? He hath taken upon him these comfortable relations of shepherd and brother, to possess us of his acquaintance with our infirmities and readiness to relieve us. For shall others by his grace fulfil what he calls them unto, and not he that out of his love, hath taken upon him these relations, so thoroughly founded upon his Father's assignment and his own voluntary undertaking? How doth the tender mother sympathise in the anguish of her child, notwithstanding all its froward averseness? And shall we think there is more bowels in ourselves than in God? Can there be more sweetness in the stream than in the spring? If the well of consolation be always open, and the fountain of living water be never shut up, let us teach our hearts to suck and draw comfort from these rivers of refreshing. What a shame is it that men should hunger at such a feast!

Consider, likewise, the benefits which we have bestowed upon us, and the end why God vouchsafes us so much favour.

Benefits win love even from brute creatures. Therefore we are worse than beasts, if we love not God for his benefits. 'The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib,' Isa. i. 3. What are we indeed but an heap of God's benefits? All our faculties of soul and body are the blessings of God. Whatsoever we have or hope to have is from him. Our breath, life, and being subsists in God, who hath promised that 'heaven and earth, men and devils, crosses and blessings, sin and death,' all shall be turned by his over-ruling power to our good.

(3) Consider *what now we are, and what a happy condition God hath made us capable of hereafter*. Is it a small matter that we should be regarded above the angels that fell? and that he who knew no sin should be made sin for us, nay, become a curse to free us from the curse? It was strange that the 'three children,' being cast into the hot fiery furnace, should not burn. So likewise it is a wonder that Christians, being in the midst of the flame of God's love, should be so cold and dead-hearted. It is not only the guilt of sin that we are freed from, but the unsupportable vengeance of the Almighty due for the same. And is this a small matter?

(4.) If we regard *the manner of bestowing his benefits*, it will much advance God's goodness towards us, and raise up our spirits to love him again. Doth not he love us first of all, and prevent\* us with his favours? Is not his love full and overflowing, so as he never leaves us until he make an end? Where he freeth a man from danger, he settleth him in a good estate, never ceasing till he possess him of glory; as it is 2 Tim. iv. 17, 'The Lord hath freed me out of the mouth of the lion, and he will preserve me to his everlasting kingdom.' He delivers us from spiritual evil, and gives us spiritual good. The meditation of these things will warm our hearts.

(5.) The next means is, to *join fear with our love to God*. Whom we love thoroughly, we will do nothing that shall displease. The fear of God, whom we love, will cause us to make conscience of the least sin against him; for there is no sin, be it never so little, but it will weaken our affection to goodness. When we venture upon anything against conscience, is there not a decay of our love to God and of our sense of his favour towards us? Surely sin is the only make-bait in our souls, and weakener of all our comforts. Those, therefore, are the lovingest souls towards God that are most conscientious in their ways. Careless Christians have not that feeling of God's love which humble fruitful Christians have, neither do they live or die with that comfort as these do.

We are the spouse of Christ, and he is jealous of our love. Our betrothed husband cannot abide that we should set our affections upon strangers. Take heed, therefore, of adulterous and false affections. The more we love earthly things, the less we shall esteem of heavenly; and as our affection towards the creature increaseth, so our heat towards Christ abateth.

(6.) The next direction to stir up our love to God is, *to exercise the same daily*. For true love is not an abstractive† affection, but an affection in practice; and we know everything doth increase by exercise. Exercise it, therefore, in fighting against the love of the world and all self-love; for as there are contrary commands, so there are contrary desires in a Christian. As there is the old man and the new man, the flesh and the spirit, so there are contrary affections, one setting itself against another in him.

When we see a poor Christian, the love of God will say unto us, Now shew thy love unto Christ in succouring one of his members. No, saith flesh and blood, charity begins at home; thou mayest want, thyself, another day.

In doing good likewise we should say, Here is now an occasion offered me of honouring God, and I will embrace it. Oh but, saith self-love, there is time enough hereafter; hereby you may run into poverty and disgrace; be not too forward. Therefore there must be a perpetual denial of ourselves against our whole thwart‡ nature. Those that are Christians know experimentally what belongs to these things. But take a carnal man or woman, and they are led altogether by their sensual lusts as brute beasts. What-

\* That is, 'anticipate.'—G.

† That is, 'abstract' = theoretic?—G.

‡ That is, 'thwarted' or 'twisted' = evil.—G.

soever ease and self-love wills, that sways their hearts any ways. And indeed the most sincere Christian hath the motions of these carnal and wordly respects; but his love unto God constrains him to deny all, and listen to what Christ whispereth in his heart.

Consider we a little what may stir us up to exercise ourselves herein. Love, it is the light of our life; love we must, something; and he lives not that loves not. Seeing then we cannot but love, and that the misplacing of our affection is the cause of all sin and misery, what can we do better than attend to directions how to love as we should?

To come therefore to the four things before mentioned, being the branches of love. First, *We must admire God above all things.* And can we admire anything with wisdom but God alone? It is commonly said that we cannot be wise and love together, for that this affection is blind, except it be in God. Again, Is there anything more comfortable than that we give content to God? Is any service comparable to the service of a prince? We must serve the Lord only, and others in and for him, or else all we do is naught. All other services are bondage; this a perfect freedom. Again, Is there anything more worthy our souls than to be united to God? Can we have a greater happiness than to be made one with Christ? By loving a thing we come to be like to it. Is there anything that may or ought to challenge our love but Christ? Is it not a base thing to unite our souls, which are the best things under heaven, to earthly contentments, than which we shall one day find nothing to be worse? The love of God planted in our hearts maketh Christ and us one. As a pearl in a ring makes the ring more precious and valuable, so the soul united unto Christ cometh to be more gracious and heavenly. The more excellent the soul is, the more loving it will be to God. The holiest saints have ever burned with most affection to Christ, as Moses and Paul. Can anything satisfy us more than God? Know we not that all things here shall perish? Therefore when we place our love and joy in the world, do we not lose them too? We shall leave behind us the things of this life; our sins only we carry away, which cleave fast unto us and stain our consciences world without end. What might more content us than the love of God, which will endure for ever and accompany us to heaven, when all other loves perish?

Consider that every thing thou dost without love is dead and empty. Love is the life of all actions; as we say of a gift, the love of the giver is better than the gift itself; not only our performance is nothing without love, but we ourselves are nothing without it. Every acceptable service we do must proceed from this heavenly flame: 'Though we speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, we are like to a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal,' 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Have we not much to do and suffer in this life? And what is it that makes us constant in duty, and carries us through so many oppositions as we meet withal—is it not love? Doth not love sweeten our hearts, and take away every difficulty in our way to heaven? Whilst we live here, we must of necessity suffer ill things and go on in well-doing; neither of which can be performed without love. This rules our whole lives. Beg therefore of God to quicken thee in all cheerful and willing obedience: pray that the Sun of righteousness would enlighten thy heart. We cannot serve God without God, nor have any holy affection, except by his Spirit he work the same in us.

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## NOTES.

(a) P. 256.—‘Luther . . . wished all men after him to read his writings warily.’ One of many of the great Reformer’s modest self-estimates, found in his Table-Talk. Cf. note *uu*, Vol. III. page 533.

(b) P. 256.—‘As the apostle St Jude saith, “with both hands the word.”’ The verb is *ἐπαγινώσκειν*, upon which Bengel says, ‘*Officium duplex pugnare strenue pro fide, contra hostes; et adificare se ipsum in fide*,’ ver. 20. Curiously enough he gives as a reference, Neh. iv. 17 (by a misprint handed down through all the editions of the *Gnomon* ver. 16), which embodies Sibbes’s thought, though it is difficult to see where he finds it in the word.

(c) P. 260.—‘The very heathen could say, that we are then best in soul when we are weakest in body, for then we are most in heavenly resolutions and seeking after God.’ Is this another form of the apophthegm, ‘Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity’?

(d) P. 270.—‘So long as God sits at the stern and rules all, we may be sure no evil shall betide us that he can hinder.’ Cf. John Newton’s beautiful letter to Mr Bean. Having been himself formerly a ‘seaman,’ he often employs nautical phraseology with great effect.

G.