

THE RICH POVERTY.

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NOTE.

'Rich Poverty' forms the last of the four treatises included in 'Light from Heaven' (4to, 1638). The title-page is given below.* For general title-page see Vol. IV. p. 490. G.

* THE
RICH POVERTY:
OR THE
POORE MANS
RICHES.

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Matth. 5. 3. *Blessed are the poore in spirit.*

James 2. 5. *Hath not God chosen the poore of this world, rich
in faith?*

L O N D O N,
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1638.

THE RICH POVERTY;

OR,

THE POOR MAN'S RICHES.

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.—ZEPH. III. 12.

BEFORE the captivity in Babylon, God sent prophets to his people, as Jeremiah; and among the rest Zephaniah likewise, who lived in the time of Josiah, to forewarn and forearm them against worse times. And as the contents of all other prophecies are for the most part these three, so of this: they are either such expressions and prophecies as set forth the sins of the people; or, secondly, the judgments of God; or, thirdly, comfort to the remnant, to God's people. So these be the parts of this prophecy: a laying open of the sins of the time, under so good a prince as Josiah was; and likewise the judgments of God denounced; and then in this third chapter especially, here is comfort set down for the good people that then lived. The comfort begins at the ninth verse.

This particular verse is a branch of the comfort, that however God dealt with the world, he would be sure to have a care of his own: 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' The whole Scripture is for consolation and comfort. When God 'pulls down,' it is that he may build up; when he purgeth, it is that he may cure and heal. He is 'the father of comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3. Whatsoever he doth, it is for comfort. Therefore he hath a special care in his prophets and ministers and ambassadors, that those that belong to him may be raised up with comfort, and not be over-much dejected and cast down. But to come to the words.

'I will also leave in the midst of thee,' &c.

In the words these three general heads:

First, God's dealings with his poor church when he comes to visit the world: 'I will leave in the midst of thee.'

Secondly, Their condition and disposition: they are 'an afflicted and poor people.'

Thirdly, Their practice and carriage towards God: 'They shall trust in the name of the Lord.'

From the first, God's dealing with his people in the worst times, we may observe, first, that

Obs. 1. There is a difference of the people, both in regard of providence in this world, and in regard of that love that tends to the world to come. For God hath a more special care, as we shall see afterwards, of some, than he hath of others ; and he loves some to eternal life, and not others : ' I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,' refusing others. God will leave some. He will purge away others ; as he saith in the verse before, ' I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride ; and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.' He will take away them, ' but I will leave in the midst of thee,' &c. There is a difference. All are not alike, as the proverb is, as white lines upon a white stone, that we cannot see a difference. It is not alike with all men, for we see a difference in this world ; but not much here, because God's government is veiled. It will appear at the last day ; and whatsoever appears at the last day, it had a ground before. There is a difference in regard of grace and inward qualification, and in regard of the care of God. Even as there is a difference in the creatures ; there be precious stones and common stones ; and in plants, there be fruitful trees and barren trees ; and as there is a difference likewise in the living creatures, so among men there is a difference.

The next thing is, that

Obs. 2. God will have some in the worst times. He will have some in all times, that are his, a remnant, as he saith here, ' The remnant of Israel shall do no iniquity ;' and as in the text, ' I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,' &c. God will have alway some that are his in the world.

Reason 1. For it is an article of our faith, ' We believe the holy catholic church.' There must not be an article of faith and no object to believe. If there be faith to believe a thing, there must be somewhat to be believed. If I believe that at all times there shall be an ' holy catholic church,' there must be such a church in the world, that is the object of my belief, or else there were no foundation for that article of faith. Therefore there must always be a church to the end of the world ; sometimes more, sometimes fewer, even as the discovery of Christ is. From whence comes the abundance of the Spirit ? The Spirit follows the manifestation of the knowledge of Christ, who is the head of the church. Then is the church most glorious, when the riches of Christ are more gloriously discovered. Those times wherein there is most discovery of Christ, and the mercy and love of God in him, there are more ' elect' of God in those times than in other. There will be alway a church in the world. That is the object of our belief. What is the meaning of it ? I believe that in all times to the end of the world there will be a company of people spread over the world, gathered out of the rest of mankind, whom Christ hath knit to himself by faith, and themselves together in a holy spirit of love, of which company I believe myself to be one ; therefore there must be such a company, or else there would be faith without an object of faith, which were a great absurdity in divinity and reason too.

Reason 2. Then again, The world should not stand, were it not for a company in the world that are his. For what are others ? A company of swearers and blasphemers, profane persons, belly-gods, ambitious bubbles, that care for nothing but the vanities of the world. What glory hath God by them ? What tribute do they give to God ? What credit to religion ? They are the shame of the times. They are such as pull God's vengeance

upon the times and places they live in. Such is the ill disposition and poisonous nature of men, if they have not the Spirit of God, that God would not endure the world to stand a moment, unless there were some to withhold his wrath, to be objects of his love, and to stay his hand; and when they are all gathered, there shall be an end of this wretched and sinful world. Some there must be while the world endures, and for their sakes God continues the world. Those that keep God's wrath from the world are those that are his; and till all those be gathered the world shall stand. There shall always be some.

Use 1. It is a point not altogether fruitless. It yields some comfort to know, that when we are taken hence, others shall stand up when we are gone. The church shall not die with us. Is not that a comfort, when a Christian yields his soul to God, to think: yet God will have a church and people, if not amongst us, yet in some other part of the world. He will have some that shall glorify him in this world, that shall adorn and beautify religion, and shall for ever be glorified with him in heaven, till he have made an end of these sinful days. It is some comfort, I say, that goodness shall live after us, that the gospel shall continue after us. There shall be a posterity to the end of the world, that shall stand for the truth and cause of God. The world was not, nor ever shall be so bad, but God hath had, and will have, a party in the world that shall stand for him, and he for them. Now the children of God, as they know God hath a purpose to glorify them world without end; so they have a desire that God may be glorified world without end; and from this desire comes joy, when they think that there will be a people on earth to glorify God still when they are taken hence: for it is a disposition wrought from God's peculiar love, to wish that God may ever have his praise here in the world, while it is a world, and for ever in the world to come. Therefore it is a comfort to them to think that God will always have a church.

But these are but a few, called by Isaiah a remnant: 'a remnant according to election,' as it is, Rom. xi. 5. A handful in comparison of the world, yet they are a world in respect of themselves; for they are a world taken out of the world. But compared with the rest of mankind, they are but as a 'few grapes after the vintage, as the gleanings after the harvest, one of a city, and two of a tribe,' Jer. iii. 14. The prophets, every one of them have special phrases to set out the fewness of those that God hath a special care of. He calls them in the next verse the 'remnant of Israel.' God will have some continually; but those are but a few that are his. His flock is but 'a little flock.'

It is a point not mainly aimed at here; but it is very useful.

*Use 2.** Is there but a few, but a remnant in all times? *Am I one of those?* What have I to evidence to me that I am of that little flock that is Christ's? What have I in me to evidence that God hath set his stamp upon me to be his? that I shall not go the broad way to destruction? This should force such *quæres* to our souls. When we hear of the few that shall be saved, we should make that use that Christ makes of that curious† question of the fewness of them that should be saved. 'Oh strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Luke xiii. 24. Stand not on many or few. Make this use of it. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Take up and practise the duties of religion, that are contrary to the corruption of nature, and contrary to the times. Avoid the sins and courses of the times, and then

* In margin here, 'To examine if we be of those few.'—G.

† That is, = 'vainly inquisitive.'—G.

we shall know and evidence to ourselves that we are of that few number. Somewhat must be done to shew that we are not of those that go the broad way. We hear that there are few that go the other way ; and indeed it will make a man look about him, the very consideration that there are but few that shall be saved.

Use 3. And it will make a man wondrous thankful. ‘ Who am I, and what is my father’s house ? ’ 2 Sam. vii. 18. What is there in me ? What could God see in me to single me out of the rest, out of a great number that go the broad way to destruction, to set his love upon me ? It will inflame the heart with thankfulness to God. It will not make a man proud to despise others. That is pharisaical. But it will inflame the heart to be thankful in a peculiar manner to God, and to single out God in a peculiar manner to be our God, as he hath singled us out to be his. For always he works somewhat in us, like to that he works for us. Those that God hath singled out to be his, he will give them grace to single out him again. God shall be my God, religion shall be my care, and that that God respects shall be that that I will respect. Since God so respects me, shall not I love and respect all that God respects ? And shall I not grieve when anything goes amiss with that that God hath a care of ? Certainly it will work this disposition, when we come to perceive, by grounded evidence, that we are of that few company, of that remnant here spoken of, that God will leave away to trust in his name.

Obs. In the next place, though they be few, yet *God hath a special care of them.* Why ? There is good reason ; for they are his in a peculiar manner. A governor of an house, he cares for all his cattle, but he cares for his children more. A man hath some care for all the lumber and trash in his house ; he sees them useful at some time or other, but he cares more for his jewels. If fire come, he will be sure to carry away his jewels, whatsoever become of the lumber. God’s children are his after a peculiar manner. Therefore he hath an answerable peculiar care of them in all times. And indeed when they are once his, as he makes them have a peculiar care of him, so he looks upon them as such as he hath wrought upon to be good, and to witness for him ; that have a care to stand for him and his honour, to own him and the cause of religion ; he will have a care of them. Not that they have this of themselves to win his love, but he works in them a care to witness for him ; he works in them a care to stand for him and his glory in all times ; and therefore he will be sure to stand for them in the worst times. He will not be beholding to any man. What we have, we have it from him ; and then he crowns his own graces after. He will have a special care of those that are his.

This might be instanced from the beginning of the world, from the infancy of the church to this present time. When he would consume the old world, Noah must come into the ark. And Lot must come forth of Sodom when it was to be destroyed ; the angel could do nothing else, Gen. xix. 22. So he had a care for Jeremiah and Baruk, he gave them their lives for a prey. He will have a care of his own in the worst times, for they are sealed ; he hath set his seal upon them. Those things that are sealed we have a special care of ; now in Rev. vii. 3, there are a number that are sealed, sealed inwardly by the Spirit of God, they are marked out for God ; they are a marked, sealed number, all those that God will have a special care of. As in Ezek. ix. 4, those that were marked in the forehead, they were looked unto and cared for before the destruction came. So in Mal. iii. 17, God had jewels that he saith he would gather. When

he brings a general destruction, he will be sure to gather his jewels; his first care is of them. 'A book of remembrance was written for them.' He hath a book of providence to write their names in. He hath their limbs, all the parts of them written; not a hair of them can miscarry: their tears, their steps, their days are numbered. 'My times are in thy hands,' saith David, Ps. xxxi. 15. All things are numbered exactly of those that belong to God. He hath a care of them and all theirs to a hair; as our Saviour Christ saith, they shall not lose so much as a hair of their heads. God hath an exact care of his remnant at all times.

Obj. But you will say, Sometimes it falls out otherwise.

Ans. Indeed, so it doth, for sometimes God's children are taken away in common judgments, perhaps for too much correspondency with the sins of the times; therefore they are wrapped in the destruction of the times. But yet there is a main difference between them. Jonathan and Saul died by the sword, both of them; Josiah and others died in the field. But there is a main difference. Jonathan was a good man; Saul, for aught the Scripture saith of him, we have no ground to judge charitably of him, but leave him to his judge. But sure it is in general, though the same things befall good and bad outwardly, yet there is a difference between Lazarus and Dives when they die. Dives goes to his place, and Lazarus to heaven. But for the most part this is true: in regard of the body of the church (though, some few members, God hath hidden ways to bring them to heaven and happiness; but for the body of his church and dear children), 'he will give them their lives for a prey,' Jer. xxi. 9. He will have a special care of them and be a sanctuary to them. Nay, so far he will do it, that the world shall know that he hath a special care of them in the world; as it is in the psalm, the heathen shall say, 'God hath done great things for them,' Ps. cxxvi. 2. Men that have no religion shall say, Certainly God doth great things for these men. Though he suffer them to be carried captive and to be in affliction, yet in that very affliction shall be the glory of the church, in that very bondage and abasement. Was the church ever more glorious than in Babylon, when Daniel was there, and the 'three young men' were put into the fire? The glory of the church oftentimes is in outward abasement. The world shall see that God hath a special care of them more than of others. God so magnifies himself, and is so marvellous to his church and children, to do good to them sometimes, to the envy of the enemies, and admiration of all the world that take notice of them, as at the return from the captivity; and the like shall be at the conversion of the Jews.

Use. The use of it may be, *to comfort us against evil times, against the time to come.* 'Let us cast our care upon God; he will care for us,' 1 Pet. v. 7. He will be with us and stand by us; he will never forsake us in the worst times. Nay, his fashion is to deal with his children as becometh his infinite wisdom, that they shall find most comfort and sweetest communion with him in the hardest times. Therefore let us fear nothing that shall befall us with slavish fear, let us fear nothing whatsoever in this world, as long as we are in covenant with God, come what will. It is a great honour to God to trust him with all for the time to come. Let us do our duty, and not be afraid of this or that, as long, I say, as we have God in covenant with us, who is all-sufficient. What should we be afraid of? 'Can a mother forget her child?' saith the prophet; 'If she should, yet will I not forget thee; thou art written on the palms of my hands,' Isa. xlix. 16. Those things that are in the palms of our hands we have ever

in our eye. God hath us in his eye. He sets his children before him alway. How can he forget them? How can Christ forget his church? He carries them in his breast, as the high priest had the names of the twelve tribes on his breast in twelve precious stones, when he went into the holy of holies. Christ carries our names in his heart; how can he forget us then? Let kingdoms dash one against another, and let the world tumble upon heaps; let there be what confusion of states there will, God certainly will have a care of his jewels. 'I will leave,' in spite of all the world, 'in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people,' &c.

Quest. You will say, When is this performed?

Ans. 'In that day,' saith he in the verse before my text. You must know it is the Scripture's fashion, when it saith, 'In that day,' to take it indefinitely, not to tie it to a certain day; though there is a certain day wherein there shall be an accomplishment of all prophecies and a performance of all promises, that is, at the last day. In the mean time, there is a gradual performance of promises, and the accomplishment of them is in several knots and points of time, so much as shall give content to God's children, yet always leading to a further and further performance. As, for example, God shewed mercy to these Israelites when they were in captivity. He brought them home again. They were a poor and afflicted people, and were much bettered by their abasement. There was a degree of performance then. And then there was a degree of performance in Christ's time, when he joined the Gentiles to them, and both made one church. There will be a more glorious performance at the conversion of the Jews, when God shall make his people 'trust in the name of the Lord,' and the Gentiles shall come in and join with them, and they with the Gentiles. But that which follows in the verse after, ver. 13, 'The remnant shall do none iniquity, nor speak lies; a deceitful tongue shall not be found in their mouth,' these things shall have their time, when the people shall be more thoroughly purged than ever they were; and certainly these glorious portions of Scripture cannot have performance but in such days as are to come. But the accomplishment of all shall be at the day of judgment. Indeed, in the mean time, as I say, there is a comfortable performance, leaving us in expectation of further and further still; because, while we live here, we are in a life of hope and expectation, and always we are under somewhat unperformed. So much for that.

I come now to the state and condition of these people:

'An afflicted and poor people.'

This is their state and condition, wherein is implied also their disposition. Their state is, they are 'an afflicted and poor people.' So it is answerable to the original, 'an afflicted and impoverished people,' a weakened people. However, God hath a special care of his church in this world. Yet it is with exception of some crosses and afflictions, 'You shall have an hundred-fold,' saith Christ, 'in this life;' but 'with tribulations and afflictions;' that must come in. But yet, notwithstanding, here is a blessing in this: for howsoever he leave them 'an afflicted and poor people,' yet he leaves them a people; and though they be a people afflicted and poor, yet they are a people that are rich in God. They shall 'trust in the name of the Lord;' of which I shall speak afterward. In that he calls them 'an afflicted and poor people,' hence we see, in the first place, that,

Doct. The state of God's church and children in this world, for the most part, is to be afflicted and poor in their outward condition.

I say, for the most part, we must not make it a general rule. It is a point rather to comfort us when it is so, than that it is always so with the church. For howsoever they are always in some respects afflicted, they have alway something to abase them; yet the times of the church are sometimes more glorious in the eyes of the world. They have the upper hand of the world sometimes. And sometimes again the children of God. they walk in the abundance of the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and increase and multiply, as it is in Acts ix. 31. When Saul was converted to be Paul, 'the church increased and grew, and went on in the fear of the Lord, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost.' There be good days and times for the church sometimes; but for the most part in this world, God's church and children are under some cloud. I will not enter into the common-place of it, but only touch it in a word or two.

Reason 1. God will have it so, *because it is fit the body should be conformable to the head.* You know our blessed Saviour, when he wrought our salvation, he wrought it in a state of abasement, and we 'in working out that salvation,' in going to that salvation that he hath wrought for us, we must go to it, for the most part, in a state of abasement in one kind or other; for we are chosen to be conformable to our head, and we are as well chosen to our portion in afflictions as to grace and glory. God hath set us apart to bear such a share and portion of troubles in this world, to suffer as well as to do. 'From my youth up,' saith the church, 'they have afflicted me; the ploughers have ploughed upon my back and make long furrows,' Ps. cxxix. 3; that is, from the infancy of the church, in all the growth of it, this hath been the state of the church, for the most part, to be afflicted and poor.

Reason 2. And indeed, if we look to ourselves, *by reason of the remainder of our corruptions*, it is needful it should be so. God in wisdom sees it fit it should be so, that we should be afflicted and poor, because he sees that we can hardly digest any flourishing condition in this world. It is as strong waters to a weak stomach. However strong waters intoxicate them not, to make them drunk, yet they weaken the brain. So, however a good condition in the world doth not altogether besot men, yet it weakens them without a great measure of faith, and makes them forget God, and the condition of worldly things, how empty and vain they are; and forget themselves and their own mortality; and forget others, what respect is due to them, as if the world were made only for them to toss and tumble in at their pleasure, to have all at their will, as if other men were scarce* men to them. You see when men are trusted with great matters, they deal with other men as if they were not men, as if all were made for their pleasure. This is the nature of man in great eminency. It sets up its own desire for a 'god,' as if all other were beasts, and base, and nothing. It is a pitiful thing to consider what our nature is in this kind. Nay, take the best. Hezekiah, in his prosperity, he would needs shew his treasures to the king of Babylon, a fair booty for him. You know what it cost him afterward. Naturally we are prone to outward carnal excellency, too, too much. God knows it well enough. David would be numbering the people, that he might be conceited what a goodly number he had to fight against his enemies. God punished him you see in that kind. He took away that people that he made his confidence. God deals thus with his children in this world, because he sees a disposition in them that cannot digest, and manage,

* That is, 'scarcely' not = rare.—G.

and overcome prosperity. They cannot command it as they should do, but are slaves to their own lusts, though they have a good measure of grace. We are prone to surfeit of the things of this life, and God is forced ; as it is in Ps. cxix. 75, ' of very faithfulness thou hast corrected me.' God, of very faithfulness, because he will be true to our souls and save them, he is forced to diet us and to keep us short of the things of this life ; to take away matter of pride and matter of conceitedness in carnal excellencies ; to make us know ourselves, and him, and the world, what it is ; the vanity of the world and worldly things. You see, then, God hath some cause to do it.

Use. And we may justify God when he any way abaseth us in this world. He knows what he hath to do with us : let us leave that to him, so he save our souls, and sanctify them, and delight in us to heaven and happiness. If his pleasure be to diet us in this world, in regard of riches and greatness, that he do not answer our desires, but keep us under hatches, let us leave it to his will. He knows what to do with us, as the physician knows better what concerns the sick than the sick doth. Therefore, let us take in good part the wise dispensation of God.

But why doth he join 'afflicted and poor' together ? Because poverty is affliction, and because affliction goes with poverty ? Poverty brings affliction. It brings abasement with it, and it is an affliction itself. For the poor man is trod on at all hands. Men go over the hedge where it is lowest. It is an affliction, and it goes with affliction. Therefore the apostle St Paul, Philip. iv. 12, he joins them together : ' I have learned to want and to be abased.' Why ? Because a man that is in want in the world is usually abased. Every man scorns him that is in want. They look haughty and high over a man that hath any use of them. So that affliction and poverty usually go together.

Those that God doth abase in this kind, let them consider that it is no otherwise with them than it hath been with God's people before. And let them labour for true riches : take advantage from their outward estate to be rich in a better way.

In the next place, we may observe hence, that

Doct. God sanctifies outward affliction and poverty, to help inward poverty of spirit.

Poverty in outward condition helps poverty in the inward disposition. In their state and condition is implied their disposition : poor for condition, and likewise in inward disposition, for that is implied here. The prophet doth not mean he will leave poor people that shall only be poor, for we see a world of poor and proud. A man, as he goes along in the streets, shall hear a company of poor that are the greatest rebels in the world against God ; that blaspheme and swear, that rail against magistrates and governors. They are the most unbroken people in the world, the poorest and beggarliest, the refuse of mankind. As they are in condition, so they are in disposition. The Scripture speaks here of God's poor, not of the devil's poor, such as are poor every way, outwardly and inwardly, and have their poverty as a just punishment of their wicked lives, and continue in that wicked life, having it not sanctified to them to make them desire better riches. Doth God esteem such poor ? No. But such poor and afflicted as, together with the meanness of their outward condition, have it sanctified to them ; so as they grow to be low and poor in their own esteem of themselves, they grow to inward poverty of spirit, and so to seek to God, to seek for better riches, ' to be rich in faith,' as the Scripture speaks, James ii. 5 ;

especially such, and only such, are here meant. So then, mark the point here, that

God sanctifies affliction and poverty for the inward good of the souls of his children.

Reason 1. This is the reason of it : outward poverty and affliction takes away the fuel that feeds pride, that is an opposite to spiritual poverty and humility, and sight of our wants. That which pride feeds upon, it is some outward thing, some outward excellency, that the flesh takes occasion by to swell, to over-ween itself, and to overlook all others. Now, when the fuel is taken away, the fire goes out. When the fodder and nourishment is taken away, those wanton steeds, you know, that grew fierce with pampering, they grow more tractable. So it is with the nature of man. Take away that that makes him fierce, and then, when his fierce and high conceits are taken away, he will be tame. Take away that that feeds his carnal disposition, and he grows tractable and gentle. Thus then, affliction and poverty, outward in our condition, it helps to inward poverty of spirit and disposition ; for it takes away that which inflames the fancy of a carnal man. A carnal man thinks himself as great and as good as he hath possessions of the things of this life ; and the devil enlargeth his conceit more upon the imagination, to think these things to be a great deal greater than they are. We come afterward, by experience, to see them nothing but vanity. But this is in man without grace : we are prone, as I said, to surfeit of them. They are too strong for us to digest and overcome ; and therefore God takes them away, that he may help the inward disposition of our souls.

Afflictions and poverty sanctified, they have a power to bring us to God, and to keep us in and to recover us when we are fallen. They bring us in, as we see in Manasseh and in the prodigal son. Affliction and poverty they brought him to know himself. They brought him home. He was not himself before. They brought him to inward poverty. When he could not be satisfied so much as with husks abroad, it was time for him to look home again. So when we are in the state of grace, it keeps and pales us in : 'God hedgeth us in with thorns,' Hosea ii. 6, that we may not run out. And then, if we fall, it recovers us, and fetcheth us in again, by embittering sinful courses to us. We see, then, affliction and poverty is sanctified to God's children, to work an inward sight of their spiritual wants.

Use 1. Take notice, hence, of the poison and sinfulness of our corrupt nature, that defiles itself in the blessings of God ; so that God cannot otherwise fit us for grace, but by stripping of us of those things that are good in themselves. This should abase us very much, considering that those things that should be rises to us, to raise us up to God, that should be glasses to see the love of God in, our nature useth them as clouds to keep God from us, and to fasten and fix upon the things themselves ; so that there is no other remedy, but God must strip us naked of them. This consideration should humble us.

Use 2. And let us make this use of it : let us know, when any abasement is sanctified to us, it comes from God's love. If we find any affliction make us inwardly more humble and tractable, and more pliable, certainly it comes from love, and is directed to our good ; and therefore it is in love, because it is directed to our good. For it is well taken away in earthly things, that is supplied in heavenly and spiritual. What if God takes away such outward honours, and respects, and riches, if God make it up in graces that

are eternal, that make us truly and inwardly good, which all the outward things in the world cannot do ! All the empires in the world cannot make a man an honest man. They may make him worse ; they may be snares to make him forget God and himself ; they may be a means of his damnation, without wondrous care. What if God take away a great deal of these things, and make them up in favours of a higher kind ! Therefore, if we find God sanctify any outward abasement for the inward good of our souls, let us bless him for it, and take it in good part as an evidence of his love ; for God thus deals with his children. He sanctifies their outward abasements for their inward good, to draw them nearer to himself.

Use 3. Therefore, those that are weak in their condition, for a man may be poor in regard of his condition, though not inwardly poor, those that are broken in their condition outwardly, they may know whether it be in love or no, *if they find this condition sanctified to a better disposition.* For as all things in general work to the best ‘to them that love God,’ Rom. viii. 28, so this is one : especial affliction and poverty work for good to them that love God. God sanctifies it to them for that end.

Therefore we should examine when we are under any cross, see how it works upon us, whether by it we are humbled or no, whether we join with God or no ; for those that belong to God have the grace of the Spirit to join with him in the work. When he afflicts them, they labour to afflict themselves ; when he goes to humble them outwardly, they humble themselves ; when he goes about to make them poor, to wean them from the love of the world, they wean themselves and join with God. As we see the physician by his art and skill, when he sees nature working away, then he will help nature till the cure be wrought ; so God gives his Spirit to those that are his, to work with him. When God goes about to take them down, they will take down themselves too, and so they grow inwardly better, together with their outward abasement.

Those therefore that ‘swell, and storm, and murmur, and rage, what do they get but more stripes ! They get not out of trouble by it, but if they belong to God, they get stripes upon stripes. What doth the horse get at last by shaking off his rider that is skilful ? More spurring and more strokes. So when men are under God’s hand, afflicted any way, and labour not to make a good use of it, but will pull the rod out of God’s hand and swell and pine, if they belong to God they get more stripes. Therefore let us kiss the rod, and the hand that holds it. God is about a good work, let him alone ; desire him rather to sanctify the visitation and abasement than remove it. A gracious heart desires rather the sanctification than the removal.

Use 3. Again, Hence we learn not to ‘*despise the brother of low degree,*’ James i. 9, nor we should ‘not have the faith of Christ in respect of persons,’ James ii. 9. We should not take scandal at the church, that it is usually in a mean condition in this world, for the church is alway rich in another kind of riches. The church is rich in reversion. It hath heaven and happiness, and the church is rich in bills and promises. The church is rich in an apparent pledge, that is worth all the world besides ; that is, Christ. ‘If he have given us his Son, will he not with him give us all things else ?’ Rom. viii. 32. The church is rich in this world indeed, ‘for all things are yours, and you are Christ’s,’ 1 Cor. iii. 23. Christ carries riches for the church, and dispenseth them to the church as occasion serves. Indeed, Christ’s riches are the church’s riches. The church cannot be poor if Christ be rich. It is only a medicinal poverty. It is God’s dispensation

to fit them for better riches. As a wise physician he purgeth a foul body, till he bring it almost to skin and bone ; but why ? That having made it poor, there may be a spring of better blood and spirits.

Let us take no offence therefore at God's dispensation, either towards others or ourselves, if we find him by his Holy Spirit sanctifying that outward condition to a holy inward bent and disposition of soul to God-ward. It is a happy affliction and poverty and abasement, whatsoever it be that draws us nearer to God, in whom we have more supply than we can want in the world. God never takes away anything from his children in this world, but he gives them more in better things. That is always his course. 'The poor receive the gospel,' Mat. xi. 5. The gospel is preached to them, and they receive it ; those that by their outward abasements are brought to a sight of their spiritual wants, and thereupon to hunger after Christ.

Again, In that this outward poverty helps to inward poverty of the soul, outward afflictions help the inward disposition ; hence we see likewise this truth that

Obs. Providence is serviceable to predestination and election.

God in election hath a purpose to call us out of the world, to save our souls. Providence, that is a general government of all things in the world. Election is in order to salvation ; he hath chosen us to a supernatural end, and fits us for it by calling and sanctification. Now how doth providence serve the decree of election ? Thus ; whom God purposeth to save, to bring to an end above nature, he directs providence, so that all things shall serve for that end ; therefore he encourageth them with outward things, or takes outward things from them in his providence, as may serve his purpose in election to save their souls. He hath a purpose to save them, therefore providence works all things for their good, Rom. viii. 28. All things, by the overruling providence of God, are serviceable to a higher degree of love that God bears to his children, to serve his purpose to bring them to heaven. Thereupon comes the dispensation of riches or poverty, honour or abasement. He takes liberty for outward things concerning this life, to give or take them as they may serve the spiritual and best good of his children.

Use. Therefore God's children, when they see God intends their good in taking away the things of this life, in letting them blood, as it were, for their health, *they should bless God as well for taking as for giving*, as Job did, Job i. 21. And there is as great mercy and love hid in taking away blessings as in conveying of them. 'I will leave an afflicted and poor people.' In the original it is poor and mild and gentle (*a*). Poverty of estate, and poverty of spirit, the disposition of soul, come almost in one word, and indeed in God's children they are joined together. For he sanctifies all dispensations and carriages of himself towards them. When God hath a purpose to save a man, everything shall help him homeward. And it is not a better outward argument to know a man's state in grace, than to see how the carriage of things serve God's purpose to do good to his soul, when we ourselves are bettered in our inward man by whatsoever befalls us. God complains of the Jews ; they were as 'reprobate silver,' Jer. vi. 30, because he had melted them, and they were never a whit the better ; they were like dross consumed in the melting. God's children are as gold refined. Those that find themselves refined and bettered, it is an evidence that they are God's ; because there is a providence serving their spiritual good, directing all things to that end.

But from their condition, we come to the disposition implied, inward and spiritual poverty.

1. Now this poverty is *not a mere want of grace*. To be poor in spirit is not to be poor of that spirit, or to be of a poor spirit. To be of a poor spirit is to have no goodness, no worth at all, but to be of a dejected, base mind. God's children are not so. There are none more courageous than they, when they are called to it. It is not this poverty of spirit to have no goodness at all. But to be 'poor in spirit,' is a state and disposition of soul, that hath some goodness, wherein they see a want of farther goodness. They have so much goodness and worth, as to see an unworthiness in themselves, and a greater worthiness out of themselves. They are sensible of their own want, and see they have no means of supply in themselves ; and they see an all-sufficiency out of themselves, in God, in Christ ; they see a necessity of dependence for supply out of themselves, in their whole condition till they come to heaven. In a word, this poverty is a sight of our own nothingness in ourselves, and besides that, our own inability, and a sight of sufficiency out of ourselves, and a desire of it ; and likewise a hope of supply from thence, which hope carries us to endeavour and to waiting till we have supply.

2. This will better appear, if we distinguish of this poverty in spirit by the two degrees of it. There is a poverty of spirit *before we are in the state of grace*, before we are in Christ ; and a poverty *after*.

The poverty before we are in the state of grace, is, when God by his Spirit, together with his word and work of correction, doth open the eyes of our souls to see what we are by nature, what we are in ourselves. It is a work of God's convincing Spirit, to give us a true view into our own condition, and with the sight to work a sense ; and from a sight and sense and thorough conviction, comes a wondrous abasement, and a desire to be otherwise than we are. There is some hope in spiritual poverty in God's children before their conversion, which stirs them up to look upon Christ, and to the mercy of God in Christ ; and this stirs them up to beg, and to use all means ; and at length God is gracious and answers all the desires of their souls. This is before they were in grace ; for before a Christian is a sound Christian, he must be driven out of himself. Naturally we are prone to cleave to something, either out of ourselves or in ourselves, and we must be fired out by a sight and sense of the misery we are in.

We see God hath taken this course alway in Scripture. This course he took with Adam. He cites him, arraigns him, condemns him. He lets him see what a miserable creature he was ; as no man on earth was ever so miserable, till he felt the sweetness of the promised seed. He that had been in so great happiness as he was, to have his conscience so galled as his was afterward, to feel such misery for the present as he did, he must needs be very miserable, as indeed he was the most miserable man that ever was since his time. It is the greatest unhappiness for a man to have been happy ; for his former happiness makes his present unhappiness more sensible.* When God had prepared him thoroughly, then he raised him up with the promised seed. God deals as he dealt with Elijah ; first, he casts him down with earthquakes and storms, and then he comes in a stiller voice. It is for that end that John Baptist comes before Christ, to level all, to cast down the 'mountains and fill up the valleys ;' Luke iii. 5, for all must be laid flat to Christ. We must lay ourselves at his feet, and be content to be disposed of by him, before we know what belongs to being in Christ. There must be poverty of spirit antecedent therefore. We see this lively set out in the prodigal son, that while he had anything in the world to content him, he never looks homeward ; but when he saw such an

* This idea is largely dwelt upon in Pascal's 'Thoughts.'—ED.

emptiness in all things he met with, that he could not be satisfied with husks, then he began to think of going home, and that there was some hope he had a father that would receive him. I will be short in this, because the other is mainly intended.

If we would know and discern by some evidences whether we have been poor in spirit, in this preparative poverty or no,

1. Let us consider *what we have judged of our condition by nature*; whether ever we have been convinced of the ill condition we are in; for if there be not conviction of sin, there will not be conviction of righteousness, as you have it, John xvi. 8. There are three works of the Spirit, 'to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' of spiritual government. The Spirit, before it convinceth us that we have the righteousness of Christ, and convinceth us of the necessity of government and holy life in Christ, which is called there judgment, he convinceth of sin, which is an antecedent work. Let us examine ourselves whether the Spirit have had such a work or no.

2. Where this conviction and poverty is, a man *sees an emptiness and vanity in all things in the world whatsoever, but in Christ*.

3. And *there is a desire of the grace and favour of God above all things*. Ask a poor man what he would have; he would have that that may supply his poverty and want. Ask a man that is spiritually poor before he be in Christ; what would you have? Oh, mercy and pardon. Offer him anything else in the world, it contents him not. But that will content him, the sense and persuasion of God's love and mercy in Christ Jesus.

4. Where this poverty of spirit is, there will be a wondrous earnestness after pardon and mercy, and after grace. To be in another condition a man will labour, even as for life. If you come to a poor man that labours for his living, and ask him, Why do you labour so? he will wonder at your idle question. I may starve else, he will say. A man that is spiritually poor, and sees what a state he is in, he labours in the use of means to have an inward sense of God's love, to find some beginnings of the new creature, to find a change, to be otherwise than he is; he sees he must perish else. There is a prizing and estimation in him of mercy and pardon above all things in the world, and a making after it.

5. It is alway joined likewise *with a wondrous abasing of himself*. He thinks himself not worth the ground he goes on, till God hath mercy on him in Jesus Christ. This is not so sensible in those that are brought up in the church, or that have religious thoughts put into them continually in both kinds; both concerning their own estate by nature, and withal concerning grace and mercy in Christ. Therefore grace is instilled into them by little and little, and the change is not so sensible. But where the conversion is anything sudden, from an ill course of life to a better, God works such a poverty of spirit before he bring a man to Christ. In Mat. v. 3, it is the beginning of all happiness, the blessedness that leads to the rest, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' And indeed, those that are poor in spirit are blessed, though they have not yet the sense of God's love so much as they desire; for this draws on all the rest, as I shall shew afterwards. To be poor in spirit therefore, is to see that we have no good in ourselves; that we are beggars and bankrupts, and have no means to pay or satisfy; and this stirs up desire and the use of means, and all the qualifications that follow there, 'hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mourning, and meekness.' For this will follow. A man that is poor in spirit, say what you will to him, he is so tractable and meek, let God do what he will with him so he give him grace; if he will cast him

down, so be it. 'What shall we do to be saved?' Acts xvi. 30, implying a pliability to take any course; he is willing to do or to suffer anything.

And indeed there must be such a poverty of spirit, before we can believe in Christ, whereby we may be convinced of our debts and of our inability to pay those debts, and our misery; that we are in danger to be cast into eternal bondage for them.

1. There must be this *before*; for else,

(1.) *We will never repair to Christ nor God's mercy in him.* 'The full stomach despiseth an honey comb,' Prov. xxvii. 7. We will not relish Christ, nor value him as we should.

(2.) Then again, without this, *we will not be thankful to God as we should be.* Who is thankful to God but he that sees before what need he stands in of mercy and of every drop of the blood of Christ?

(3.) And then *we will not be fruitful*; for who is so fruitful a Christian as he that is thankful? And this depends upon the other. A Christian that was never truly cast down and laid low by the spirit of bondage, he is a barren Christian. The other having tasted of the love of God in Christ, the very 'love of Christ constrains him,' 2 Cor. v. 14, and he studies to be 'abundant in the work of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58, as St Paul saith, and every way to 'shew forth the virtues of him that hath called him out of darkness into marvellous light,' 1 Peter ii. 9.

(4.) Again, this is the ground, when men are not sufficiently humbled before, *that they fall away dangerously.* It is the ground of apostasy, because they did not feel the smart of sin. He that hath smarted for his estate before, and knows what it is to be in such a condition, he will be loath ever to come into the prison again. Therefore the ground of careful walking is a sense of our unworthiness and misery. The more we are convinced of this, the more careful and watchful we will be, that we never come into that cursed condition again.

(5.) And indeed it is an error in the foundation which is not mended in the fabric, as we say, when there is an error in poverty of spirit at the first, when the work of humiliation is not kindly wrought; hence is the defect *in all the whole carriage of a Christian.* The foundation of God's building lies low; he digs deep. God lays his foundation oftentimes as low as hell itself in a manner; he brings his children to see that that he means they shall never feel, to see his wrath against sin, that so he may build upon this foundation. For Christianity it is an excellent frame; it is a frame for eternity, a building for ever. Therefore it must have a sure foundation, which must be laid in humiliation and poverty of spirit. An error in the first digestion is not amended in the second; if that be not good, the rest are naught. If there be not sound humiliation, nothing will be sound afterward. Therefore we should desire that God by his Spirit would help us more and more to know what we are in ourselves, that we may get to be what we are in Christ.

2. But there is a continual frame and disposition of soul, which is a poverty in spirit *that accompanies God's children all the days of their life* till they be in heaven, till they enjoy that riches that is laid up there for them; and that is especially here meant. And indeed it is an ingredient into all the passages of salvation.

(1.) *For in justification there must be a poverty of spirit,* to make us see that there is no righteousness in ourselves, or that can come from us, that is able to stand against the law and against the justice of God; all is defiled and spotted and unanswerable. And upon this poverty and apprehension

of what is defective in ourselves, comes an admiration of that righteousness of God in Christ—for it is of God's devising, and of God's approving, and of God's working, Christ being God and man—to force us every day to renew our right in the righteousness of Christ, and to be 'found in him.' There is such a poverty of spirit as to account all 'loss, and dross,' Phil. iii. 8, and nothing; to be willing to part with all to be found in Christ, 'not having our own righteousness, but that which is of God in Christ,' as Paul divinely speaks, ver. 9. So it is necessary in that main passage, of justification, to be 'poor in spirit;' that is, to see a defect in our own righteousness, to stand opposite to God's justice, who is 'a consuming fire.' It is requisite in regard of our daily living by faith in justification.

(2.) In the whole course of *sanctification* there must of necessity be poverty of spirit; that is, a sense that we have no sanctifying grace of ourselves, but we must fetch it from the fulness of Christ, whose fulness is for us: 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace,' John i. 16.

The ground of this is, that now in the covenant of grace all is of grace, both in justification and sanctification; all is of grace, nothing but grace. God hath set himself to get the glory of his free grace and mercy now in Jesus Christ. Therefore as our salvation is wrought out of us altogether by our surety, the 'second Adam,' Christ; so our righteousness is altogether out of ourselves, whereby we appear righteous before God. It is his, and given to us by marriage; being one with him, his righteousness is ours. And likewise in him we have the principle of all grace. He is the principle of our life, the root and foundation of spiritual life and sanctification: 'Without me you can do nothing,' John xv. 5. So that in Christ we have all that concerns our spiritual life in sanctification and justification, because it is a state of grace. Adam had it in himself. Though God at the first clothed him with his image, yet notwithstanding he had not such a necessity as we have to go to Christ for all; but now in the 'second Adam,' Christ, we must fetch grace for everything from him. Therefore there must be poverty in regard of our knowledge—we have no spiritual knowledge of ourselves—and poverty in regard of our affections. We have no joy, no peace, no comfort of ourselves, no delight in good things, nor no strength to them; we have all from Christ. 'By grace,' saith the apostle, 'I am what I am,' 1 Cor. xv. 10; as if grace had given him his being, his form, as we say. Indeed, so it doth; grace gives a Christian his form and being, his work and his working, for all working is from the inward being and form of things. By grace we are what we are in justification, and work what we work in sanctification. It is by what we have freely from Christ. Therefore in that respect there must be poverty of spirit.

Nay, I say more; in every action when we are in the state of grace, and have had the beginnings of the new creature in us, there needs poverty of spirit, in regard of our own inability to perform every action. For even as it is in our form—the life and soul, there is need of it in every moving and stirring—so there is a need of the spirit of grace, which is as the form and life and being of a Christian, to every holy action. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' saith the apostle, Acts xvii. 28. 'In him,' that is, in 'God reconciled to Christ,' we have not only our being, that is, our form, but in him we 'live and move' to every particular act. We are no wiser in particular things than God makes us on the sudden; the wisest man will be a fool if God leave him to his own wit. We are no stronger in every particular act that needs strength than God supplies us with spiri-

tual strength. We are no holier than God by his Spirit shines on us, and raises our souls in particular actions. So that it is not only necessary that we have grace at the first to make us Christians, but we must have a perpetual regiment* of the Spirit, from whence we must have an influence to every particular act. Though we have grace, yet we cannot bring forth that grace to act without new grace. Even as trees, though they be fitted to bear fruit, as the vine, &c., yet without the influence of the heavens they cannot put forth that fitness in fruits; so though we be fitted by the Spirit of God, yet we cannot put it forth to particular acts when occasion serves, without the influence of Heaven to promote and further that grace; and applying our spirits to every holy action by removing the impediments that would hinder it, adding new supply and strength to help grace. If the temptations be too strong, as sometimes they are, former grace will not serve, without a new supply of strength. As he that may carry a lesser burden cannot carry a greater without new strength, so in every temptation there is required more strength than the former; and in every new action there is required not only a continuance of grace, but a fresh supply of stronger grace.

And for want of this, the best of God's saints have fallen foully. Though they have had grace in them, yet, notwithstanding, the Spirit had left them to themselves in regard of new supply, because they have been conceited; they have not been poor enough in spirit. As Peter, he was conceited of his own strength: 'Though all men forsake thee, yet I will not,' Mat. xxvi. 33. This conceit moved God in mercy, as well as in justice, to leave him to himself, that by his fall he might learn to stand another time, and not trust his own strength. The best of us all, I say, when there is anything to be done, we had need of a fresh influence of grace, and a fresh light to shine upon us.

It should force perpetual poverty of spirit, to see the want that is in ourselves, and the supply that is out of ourselves, and to make use of that by going out of ourselves, and making towards him in whom is all our supply. In all our communion we have with God, which is the happiness of our estates, this frame and disposition of soul, to be poor in spirit, it is necessary in every act. Even in our very prayers for grace, we are so void of it, that we want ability to call for what we want. We must have that from the Spirit, not only grace, but that disposition of soul which carries us to God. A spirit fitting us to pray, that must be also given us; we know not what to call for. We of ourselves are so poor, that we not only want grace and ability to action, but we have not ability to ask; but God's Spirit must dictate our prayers, and give us motions, and make us sensible of our wants, and must enable our faith to cherish those graces, and make us go out of ourselves even in our very prayers. What a state is this, then! Had we not need to be 'poor in spirit' all our lifetime, that have not so much as ability to go out of ourselves for supply from another, but that must come from Christ too? As St Augustine, who was a great advancer of the grace of God, and an abaser of man; he had indeed St Paul's spirit, saith he, 'We should boast and glory of nothing, because nothing is ours' (b). We have need of this poverty of spirit in the whole tenure of our Christian life.

Again, in the actions of this life, how pitifully do we miscarry, because we think we have wit† and strength enough, and set upon things in our own wit and strength, we speed and have success answerable. Where the

* That is, 'government.'—G.

† That is, 'wisdom.'—G.

beginning is confidence, the end is shame, of any business even of this life. What is the reason that oftentimes the great and weighty business of this life have not answerable success? Many times it falls out so; as one said of general councils, they seldom were successful, because men came with confidence and wit for victory rather than truth.* Certainly there is less success in great matters, because men come with self-confidence. Therefore it is a good sign that God means to bless great businesses, when he puts it into the hearts of those that are agents in them to seek him in the affairs of this life. We must be poor in spirit to see that the carriage and success comes from him.

Well, so it is in suffering likewise. We cannot suffer the least cross of ourselves but with murmuring and repining, without strength from him. When Moses came to the 'waters of strife,' Moses' spirit was discovered. He could not endure the harshness and rebellion of the people, Num. xx. 13. A Christian comes sometimes to such opposition that his spirit is moved, and he discovers much corruption. It is so with the best men. Even Moses, a meek man, when he had such temptations and provocations, it moved him. We must labour to get a greater spirit than our own, to have the Spirit of God to work this spiritual poverty in us.

This poverty of spirit, as we call it, is *spirituale vacuum*, spiritual emptiness. You know in philosophy there is nothing empty in the world, but it is filled either with air or some kind of body, and to avoid the enemy of nature, emptiness, things will change their seat; heavy things will go upward, and things that are above will come below to avoid emptiness; that is contrary to nature, there being a fulness of things with one body or other. So, I say, spiritual poverty, it is an emptying of the soul, which of force alway bring better things in. Wheresoever this emptying of the soul is, this making of ourselves poor, it is upon good ground by this course. It is always such a *vacuum* and emptiness of one thing that brings in another better. The soul can never be altogether empty. When wind and vain stuff is out, then comes better things in, which St Paul calls 'the fulness of God.' He prays and wishes that they might 'be filled with the fulness of God,' Col. ii. 9. Then comes fulness of knowledge and understanding, and fulness of affection, and fulness of contentment, and complacency in the will; and all the soul hath an answerable fulness to the proportion of the emptying itself of itself.

In the next place, let us come to discover this disposition of poverty of spirit where it is, and then shew some helps to it.

1. First, To discover where this blessed frame of soul is. Surely those that are thus poor in spirit they are *full of prayer*. 'The poor man speaks supplications,' as the wise man saith, Prov. xviii. 23; that is his dialect. The poor man is much in prayer. He that is 'poor in spirit' is much in supplication; for prayers, they are the ambassadors of the poor soul to God to supply it with the riches of his grace. Therefore where there is no prayer there is no sense of poverty, but there is a Laodicean temper, as if they were rich enough. You have a company of men, they say they cannot pray privately, their spirits are barren. They intimate much pride of spirit, for if a man be sensible of his wants you need not supply him with words. If a poor tenant came to a landlord, and find he hath a hard bargain, let him alone for telling his tale; I warrant you he will lay open the state of his wife and children, and the ill year he hath had; he will be eloquent enough. Take any man that is sensible of his wants, and you

shall not need to dictate words to him. There is no man that hath a humble and broken heart, though he be never so illiterate, but he will have a large heart to God in this kind.

2. Again, there is a care *of using all means*. Where poverty is, there will be a making out of ourselves unto places where God bestows any riches. They that are poor, and have no victuals at home, they will go to market rather than they will starve ; and those that find in themselves want of grace and comfort, surely they will go out of themselves : they will go to God's market, they will attend upon the means. He that is like to be arrested for debt, and hath nothing at home, it is time for him to seek abroad for supply. So, when a man is poor spiritually, ready to be snared and catched in everything for want of spiritual grace, he will labour for strength in the use of all means. Therefore those that are of a Laodicean stamp, that think there is too much preaching, and too much hearing, and too much reading, and what need all this ado ? alas ! they were never humbled ; they were never sensible of their state by nature ; nor are not yet in the state of grace. For the soul of a true Christian is alway in the state of spiritual poverty, as that it relisheth spiritual means and is not fed with husks. A soul that is spiritually poor will discern in the use of means, this is flourishing ; this is for the ear ; this is conceits ; alas ! it comes for food for supply. A poor soul that finds the want of grace, and strength, and comfort, it judgeth of the means by what it finds. There will be a use of all means, and likewise some ability to taste where there is true poverty of spirit.

3. Again, Where this inward poverty of spirit is, it will make God's children *wondrous thankful, and thankful for a little grace*. A poor man that is sensible of his poverty will be more thankful for a penny, than another man for a pound that hath money of his own. A soul that sees the want of grace, and withal sees the excellency of grace, is thankful to God that he will work anything in such a poor defiled soul as he is ; that he will work any good motions, any good affections, any degree of faith, that he will give him any assurance of salvation. Oh he thinks what a good God is this ! He breaks out with the apostles, Peter and Paul, that had both been sinners themselves and found grace ; oh they were much in thankfulness ! ' Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c.* A thankful soul is a poor soul, and a poor soul is alway a thankful soul. He that is poor he knows he hath little and deserves little ; therefore knowing that he deserves nothing, he is thankful for and content with anything. A humble man is alway thankful, and that is the reason that God may have his glory from him. He is forced sometimes to humble and abase him. He should have no sacrifice from him else. A proud man, a conceited man, so doats upon his own worth ; he forgets the giver, he makes himself an idol to him. Therefore such, they are usurpers of what they have, they enter upon God's blessings, not considering from whom they have them, nor for what end they have them. They deny God his tribute of thankfulness because they are proud. But a man that is poor in spirit, he enters upon all by title of gift, and receives all from God in the form of a poor man. Therefore whatsoever he hath he returns thanks for it again. An unthankful soul, therefore, is a proud soul. A thankful soul is an humble abased soul alway ; and the more humble and empty the soul is, the more thankful it is for every degree of grace and comfort.

4. Again, A soul that is thus disposed, that is poor in spirit, it is willing

* Cf. Eph. i. 3, and 1 Peter i. 3.—G.

to resign itself to Christ's government, with self-denial of anything it is able to do of itself. It is ready to say, 'Lord, I have neither wit† of mine own to govern myself, nor any strength and ability of mine own; therefore I put myself upon thy government, I desire to follow thy light and to go on in thy strength.' There is alway a resignation to Christ's government, and that in fear and trembling; for whom we resign ourselves unto, surely we will have a care not to displease them. A dependent life is alway an awful life; for when a man hath resigned himself to the government of another, and knows he must depend upon him, he will have a care not to displease such an one; for he thinks, if I displease him he will withdraw his maintenance and countenance from me, and then what am I? So the soul that thinks it hath all from God, and from the Spirit of Christ, it resigns itself to the Spirit of Christ, and withal it is wondrous fearful not to grieve and displease the Spirit. For he thinks with himself, my life is but a dependent life, my graces are but dependent; let God but withdraw the beams of his Spirit and I sink; let him withdraw his comfort and his strength, what am I? Nothing but darkness, and deadness, and confusion. Those therefore that give not themselves up to Christ's government, but are governed by rules of policy, by the example of others, and have base dependence upon others, they know not what spiritual poverty is. They see there is a sufficiency in themselves to rule and govern themselves, as if Christ's wisdom were not sufficient. They are not so disposed as the apostle requires; they 'work not out their salvation with fear and trembling, because God gives the will and the deed,' Philip. ii. 12. The meaning is this, we should work out our salvation with a holy fear and trembling, a jealous fear, a son-like fear, lest we displease God. Why? 'He gives both the will and the deed,' Philip. ii. 13. He gives both the will to do good; and when he hath done that, he gives the ability of the deed itself. We cannot do anything, therefore we had need to walk in an awful condition, and not displease him in anything, lest he withdraw the assistance of his Spirit and leave us to ourselves; and then we shall fall, to his dishonour, to the discredit of religion, to the wasting of our own comfort, and the advantage of Satan. This is the temper of a man that is poor in spirit. He gives himself up to Christ's government, and depends upon it; and thereupon he is wondrous fearful to displease him in anything.

There are a company that know not what belong to this, that hope to be saved by Christ, and yet they will grieve the Spirit; they will venture into any place, upon any sight, into any company: but if ever they had been acquainted with the government of Christ's Spirit, they would know what it was to grieve the Spirit, and the Spirit would grieve them too. It is a sign they have not the Spirit of God, because he doth not check them when they have done. Therefore your adventurous careless persons, that are indifferent for all things, for all companies and places, that do not watch over themselves, and over their words and carriage, they have not this poverty of spirit. For then they would know what it were to displease God in anything, to walk and to speak loosely, because hereby they grieve the Spirit; and would presently find either want in grace or comfort. There is not one of many that are acquainted with the nature of the spiritual communion with God, and therefore they do not enjoy the happiness that those do, who are thus qualified, that are 'poor in spirit.'

5. Again, A man that is poor in spirit is *very tractable*, as it is in Isaiah: 'A child shall lead them.' 'The lamb and the lion shall feed together,'

* That is, 'wisdom.'—G.

† That is, 'a life full of awe.'—G.

&c., 'and a child shall lead them,' Isa. xi. 6; that is, such an one, you shall lead him with any counsel, let the person be never so mean; having smarted for his sins, and his own counsel and ways, 'a child shall lead him,' that is, any man shall lead and move him to that which is good, he stands not upon terms.

6. And alway he that is poor in spirit, he is no *upbraider of other men's wants*. He is more sensible of his own than that he sees in other men. He is not prone to upbraid and object against them their wants and conditions, he is so taken up with the sense of his own.

7. And lastly, He that is poor in spirit is *humbled in himself for spiritual wants*; not so much for outward things, but because he hath not a large heart to God, because he finds impatience, because he finds not that heavenly-mindedness and strength to go through the duties that God requires, that his flesh is so backward; these things abase him and bring him on his knees, and not so much outward things; and answerably he looks for spiritual supply. When a man is humble and poor in spirit he is not abased with any outward thing, that that he would have is mercy and grace. The apostle, when he would pray for all happiness to the churches, he prays for grace, mercy, and peace; for as they are more sensible of their spiritual wants, so they are carried in their desires after that that may give them satisfaction that way.

Use. Let us labour to bring our souls to this blessed temper, to be poor in spirit; the happy temper that our Saviour began his preaching withal. The first thing that he falls upon is, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. v. 3. But before I come to any directions for the getting this spiritual poverty, we must know and premise this caution, that we must not be so 'poor in spirit,' as to deny the work of grace in our hearts. It is one thing to be 'poor in spirit,' and to see our wants; and it is another thing to be unthankful and unkind; to deny the work of grace, and so to gratify Satan. We must not give false witness against ourselves, and so deny the work of God's Spirit in us. It is not poverty, but darkness of spirit. We are not acquainted with that grace that God hath enriched us with. Therefore where the soul is in a right temper, there is a double eye, one to see the defects and the stains of those graces we have; to see what we are wanting in of what we should be, and to see how our graces are stained, and that there is a mingling of our corruptions with them. The viewing with the one eye, that we have any grace, that should make us cheerful, and thankful, and comfortably go on, considering that there are some beginnings that God will perfect; for he never repents of his beginnings. And then a sight of the want, and of the stains of those graces that we mingle our corruptions with them; that works again this poverty of spirit to go on still out of ourselves, to desire grace, to purge and cleanse ourselves more and more. Therefore, I beseech you, let us remember that, that we do not unthankfully deny the work of grace, and think that to be poverty of spirit, as some do out of covetousness, because they have not that they would have, they think they have nothing at all; that is a spiritual covetousness. But let us be wise to discern what God hath wrought in our hearts, what he hath done for and in our souls. A holy man, you shall have him much in mourning and complaining, but it is of himself, not of God, as if God were wanting to him. You shall have a holy man in a perpetual kind of despair, but it is in himself; he hopes in God still. Remember this caution, that as we complain, so let us be sure it be of ourselves; alway justify God in his

mercy; and if we despair, let us despair of ourselves, that we can do nothing of ourselves. But be sure to maintain, all we can, the hope of God's rich mercy in Christ.

Now, having premised this caution, the way to come to spiritual poverty among many others is: first, to bring ourselves *into the presence of God*, to the presence of greater lights than our own. Men that think themselves somebody when they are alone; yet when they consider God sees them, whose eyes are a thousand times brighter than the sun, then they learn to abhor themselves in 'dust and ashes,' as we see Job did when God talked with him, when he saw God, Job xlii. 6; and Abraham when he talked with God, he accounts himself dust and ashes, Gen. xviii. 27. Let us bring ourselves into the presence of God; consider his holiness, his justice. And withal let us bring ourselves to greater lights than our own; that is, oft come into the company of those that have greater grace than ourselves. The stars give no light when the sun is up. The stars are somebody in the night, but they are nothing in the day. And those that are conceited of their own excellencies, when they come into the presence and company, and converse with those that are better than themselves, their spirits fall down, they are abased. It is a good course therefore not to love alway to be best in the company, as is some men's vanity, because they will be conceited of their own worth, but to present ourselves before God in his ordinances, and present ourselves in communion and fellowship with others that are greater and richer in grace than ourselves, and so we may see our own wants. This is one direction to get spiritual poverty.

2. Again, That we may come to be poor in spirit, let us consider what we are, *that we are creatures*. The term whence creation begins is just nothing. It is so in the creatures in the world. God made all of nothing, and is it not so in the new creature much more? Therefore if I will be anything in myself as of myself, surely I must look to no creature of God's making. For grace is God's creature. Therefore it must rise of nothing; there must be a sight of our own nothingness. Indeed a Christian in himself is nothing now in the state of grace. Whatsoever he is for grace or glory, it is out of himself. He hath nothing in himself as of himself; all that he hath he hath from Christ. He is poor in himself, but he hath riches enough in Christ, if he sees his own poverty. He is a sinner in himself, but he hath righteousness enough in Christ, if he sees his sins. Let us know that this is a qualification to interest us in the good that is in Christ. We renew our right in Christ no otherwise than we renew the sense of our own poverty and want. Would we see all in Christ, that we have riches, and wisdom, and happiness, and favour, and life, and all in him? With the same spiritual eye of the soul, let us see that we have nothing in ourselves; for I can no otherwise renew that right and interest I have in Christ, but by renewing this sight. We altogether shine in the beams of our husband. The consideration of this will be a means to work our care and endeavour towards it; that we are creatures, 'new creatures;' and therefore we must rise of nothing in ourselves, and we must be maintained and supported by the new Adam, 'the second Adam,' and have fresh grace from him continually. 'We move and live in him,' as I said before.

3. Again, That we may be poor in spirit, help ourselves *with presenting to ourselves abasing, emptying considerations*. What be they? Among the rest reflect our minds back to what we were before God shewed mercy upon

us ; how unprofitably we spent our days ; what a deal of good we left undone that we might have done. For the present, consider the imperfections that hang upon us, whereby we even defile the best performances that come from us. Let us have in the eye of our soul presented our special corruptions for the present. For the time to come let us present to our souls what will become of us ere long ; that for outward things, that nature is prone to be highly conceited of, they shall lie in the dust. These bodies of ours must lie low in the dust ; all other things must be taken from us, and we from them, we know not how soon. Let us oft think and consider of the vanity of all things, what will all things be ere long. They must all come to nothing. The fire will consume all that is glorious in the world. There will be no excellency but the excellency of Christ, and his church and children ; and think of the day of judgment. What will stand for current then ? Think of the time of our dissolution, how we shall appear before Christ ; what we have in us that will give us confidence at that day and time, to look upon him with comfort ; that those thoughts of the time to come, of death, and judgment, and eternity may not be frightful to us. The consideration of these things will make us to look about us, and make us indeed ‘ poor in spirit.’

Especially let us consider what our profession requires of us ; not by the law, let that go ; but what in the covenant of grace we should be, and are not, it will shame the best of us. Alas ! how much good might we have done that we have not ! How have we failed in bringing honour and credit to our profession ! How barren have we been in good works ! How unwatchful over our thoughts and speeches, whereby we have stained our religion and our consciences, and grieved the Spirit of God. Let us consider how short we are of that we might have been ; and this will bring inward shame and confusion of spirit, from whence this temper of poverty of spirit comes. Consider of these things, and enlarge them in your own meditations. There is not a more fruitful spending of our thoughts, next to the consideration of Christ, and the riches we have in him, than to consider what we are in ourselves ; that we may be in a perpetual disposition of soul, fit to receive the good that is to be had in Christ.

Two graces are the main graces that must go along with us all the days of our lives ; this grace to go out of ourselves ; and another grace to go to another that is better than ourselves, in whom lies our happiness. That we may go out of ourselves and the creature, and all that is in the creature, poverty of spirit is necessary, to see that there is not that in ourselves that will yield a foundation of comfort, and poverty of spirit sees that there is not that that we possess in the creature that will stand out. The creature, that is a particular good, for a particular case, to supply a particular want, and but for a time, it is fading and outward ; but the comfort we must have it must be spiritual and universal, to give contentment to the soul. The consideration of these things will force us to go out of ourselves ; this poverty of spirit, that we have not enough to make us happy. The heathen men, by the use of discretion and knowledge, had so much to see that there is nothing in the world to make man happy ; the negative part they knew well enough. But there must be another grace to carry us to a positive happiness where that lies, and that is the grace of trust that follows. ‘ I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,’ that shall be disposed and prepared by their outward poverty to inward spiritual poverty ; to go out of themselves to Christ, to trust in him.

‘And they shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

This is the carriage of these poor and afflicted people. ‘They shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

God hath no delight in afflicting his children; he joys and delights in the prosperity of his children. It is our sinful nature that forceth him to afflict us, that he may wean us from the world, because we are prone to surfeit upon things here below. All that God doth is that we may trust in him, which we would never do unless he did afflict us, and make us ‘poor in spirit;’ but when we are afflicted and poor in spirit, and have nothing at home, we will make out abroad, as people in necessity will do. Supply must be had, either at home or from without; and when the soul is beaten and driven out of itself, which requires much ado, then we are fit for this blessed act here spoken of, to ‘trust in the name of the Lord.’ And the one is an evidence of the other. How shall we know that we are sufficiently humbled and made poor in spirit? When we trust in the name of the Lord.

In the unfolding of these words, take these for grounds; which I will but name.

First, That naturally every man will have a trust, in himself, or out of himself.

Secondly, That God is the trust of the poor man; what he wants in himself he hath in God. God is the rock or the castle to which he retires. He hath supply in him.

The third is, that

Obs. God is trusted as he is known. They shall ‘trust in the name of the Lord.’ For God can be no otherwise trusted than he hath made his will known. It is presumptuous boldness to challenge anything of God that we have not a promise for; or to attribute that to him that he is not. God is therefore trusted as he hath made himself by some name known to us. He hath made himself known by his attributes, by his nature and essence, Jehovah; and by his word, and the promises in his word. For his word is one of the best and sweetest names whereby he hath made himself known. The name of God is glorious in all the world, in the creation; and every creature hath a tongue to shew forth the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God. But what is this to us, if we know not the will of God toward us? There is the name of God discovered; what he is in himself; something of his power and wisdom, &c. But what he is to us, gracious, and merciful, and sweet; that we must gather out of the discovery of his own breast. He must come out of that ‘light that none can attain unto,’ 1 Tim. vi. 16, and discover himself as he hath done in his word; and by this name of God, his word, we come to make use of his other names. The next thing I will speak of is the improvement of God when he is known, to trust in him, to pitch our trust and confidence upon him. ‘They shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

Obs. For there must be an application of the soul to God. We must lay our souls upon God. Though he be a rock, yet we must lay our souls upon him; and though he be a foundation, yet we must build upon him and his truth revealed. There is an adequate comfort in God and in the Scriptures, and superabundant too to all our necessities whatsoever. It transcends them all. There is more in the spring than we want ourselves. Yet notwithstanding there must be grace in the soul to repair to God. There must be an hand, an empty beggar’s hand, such as faith is, to reach that help that God yields. There must be a wing to fly to our tower. The wing of the

soul is this trust and faith ; and when these two meet, faith or trust, and God, what a sweet meeting is there ! For emptiness and fulness, poverty and riches, weakness and strength, to meet together, these will grasp sweetly ; for the excellency and all-sufficiency of the one, and the necessity of the other meeting together, breeds a sweet correspondency. We must ‘ trust,’ therefore, in the name of the Lord. That is the way to improve whatsoever is in God for our good.

Faith, the nature of it is, after it hath applied itself to the grounds of comfort, to draw virtue and strength from God. Of itself it is the most beggarly grace of all. Love is a rich grace, but yet notwithstanding in the covenant of grace, wherein grace and mercy must have the glory, God hath established such a grace to rule there as ascribes all out of itself, and is an empty grace of itself, to make use of the riches that is out of itself ; therefore God hath made choice of this trusting instead of all other graces, as indeed leading to all other graces whatsoever. God brings us home by a contrary way to that we fell from him. How did we fall from God at the first, that was our rock, our defence, and trust ? We fell from him by distrust, by having him in a jealousy, as if he aimed more at himself than at our goods. So the devil persuaded our first parents. The next way, therefore, to come back again to God, it must be to have a good conceit of God, not to have him in jealousy, but to be convinced in our souls that he loves us better than we can love ourselves, in spite of the devil and all his temptations. So to trust God is to rely upon him in life and death. Therefore God hath appointed this grace, as he saith here, ‘ They shall trust in the name of the Lord.’

Now, because we all pretend we trust in the name of the Lord, we will first examine our trust. Let us try our trust a little, that we may see whether it be true trust or no. And then upon that we will give some directions how to come to this blessed condition, to trust ‘ in the name of the Lord.’

For the first : I do not take trust here for the first faith, which is the grace of union to receive Christ ; but for the exercise of faith afterwards in a Christian’s life. So we speak of it as a fruit rather that comes from faith. And we may know our trust in the name of the Lord, being now conceived as a gracious Father in Christ, clothed with the relation of a father : for so we must trust him, not God absolutely, for there is no comfort in an absolute God, distinct from his relations ; but when we apprehend him in relation as a sweet Father in Christ, in that name, then the nature of God is lovely to us, between whom and us there was an infinite distance before. Now Christ being Immanuel, God with us, has brought God and us together in terms of league. Now our nature is lovely to God in Christ, because it is taken to the unity of his person ; and God’s nature is lovely to us, having made himself a Father in Christ his beloved Son. Therefore, when we speak of God, our thoughts must run upon God as thus conceived, as clothing himself with a sweet term of Father, our God in covenant, we must so apprehend him.

1. Now one evidence of this trust in this our God, is a care to please him in all things. When we depend upon any men, *we have a care to please them*. A tenant that fears to be thrust out, will strive to please his landlord. We that hold all upon this tenure, upon faith and trust in God, we should fear to displease him.

2. And there will be likewise *an use of all means to serve God’s providence and care of us*, if we trust in him ; or else it is a tempting and not a

trusting. There are no men more careful of the use of means than those that are surest of a good issue and conclusion ; for the one stirs up diligence in the other. Assurance of the end stirs up diligence in the means. For the soul of a believing Christian knows that God hath decreed both ; both fall under the same decree : when God purposed to do such a thing, he purposed to do it by such and such means. Trust, therefore, is with diligence in the use of all means that God hath ordained. He that trusts a physician's skill, will be very careful to observe what was prescribed, and will omit nothing. It is but presumption ; it is not trust where there is not a care in the use of means, as we see many pretend to trust in God and sever the means from the end ; they are regardless of the means of salvation.

3. Again, Those that trust in God, *they are quiet when they have used the means*. Faith hath a quieting power. It hath a power to still the soul and to take up the quarrels, and murmuring, and grudgings that are there, and to set the soul down quiet ; because it proposeth to the soul greater grounds of comfort, than the soul can see any cause of discomfort. The soul being reasonable, yields to the strength of the reason. Now, when faith propounds grand comforts against all discouragements whatsoever, that overcomes them, that is greater in the way of comfort than other things in the way of discouragement, the soul is quiet. It hopes comfort will be had. The soul is silent and at rest. We see in Ps. xlii. 11, when there was a mutiny in David's soul, by reason of the perplexed state he was in, he falls a-chiding downright with his soul, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul ! and why art thou troubled ?' v. 11. But how doth he take up the contention ? 'Trust in God, he is thy God.' So that wheresoever there is faith, there is a quiet soul first or last. There will be stirring at the first ; the waters of the soul will not be quiet presently. As in a pair of balances there will be a little stirring when the weight is put in till there will be poise ; so in the soul there will be some stirring and moving ; it comes not to a quiet consistence till there be some victory of faith with some conflict, till at length it rest and stay the soul. For this power faith has to quiet the soul, because it bottoms the soul so strongly. There is reason for it ; it sets the soul upon God, and upon his promises. 'Therefore he that trusts in God is as mount Sion,' Ps. cxxv. 1. You may stir him sometime and move him, but you cannot remove him. The soul is quiet, because it is pitched upon a quiet object.

Therefore, where there is cherishing of disturbance in the soul, and cherishing of doubts, there is no faith, or very little faith ; because it is the property of faith to silence the soul and to make quiet where it comes. This is one evidence and sign of true faith. And this is discerned especially in times of great trouble ; for then the soul of the righteous is not disquieted, as you have it in Ps. cxii. 7, 8, 'His heart is fixed, therefore he is not afraid of ill tidings.'

4. And therefore this evidence to the rest, that faith as it hath a quieting power, *so it hath a power to free the soul from all base fears, from the tyranny of base fear*. There will some fear arise. We carry flesh about us, and flesh will alway be full of objections and trouble our peace ; but, notwithstanding, it will free the soul—this trusting in God—from the tyranny and dominion of base fears. If any news or tidings be of any great hard matter, I beseech you, who hath his soul best composed at that time ? A sound Christian, that hath made his peace with God, that hath his trust in God, that knows what it is to make use of God, to repair to him. But for

another man, in the time of extremity and trouble, he runs hither and thither, he hath not a tower to go unto, he hath no place of refuge to repair to. Therefore he is worse than the poor silly creatures. There is not a creature but hath a retiring place. The poor conies have the rocks to go unto, and the birds have their nests, and every creature, when night or danger approacheth, they have their hiding places. Only a wicked, careless man that hath not acquainted himself with God, when troubles come, he hath no hiding, nor no abiding place, but lies open to the storm of God's displeasure. Therefore he is surprised with fears and cares, and pulled in pieces with distractions. He is as a meteor that hangs in the clouds ; he cannot tell which way to fall. But a Christian is not such a meteor, he falls square which way soever he falls, cast him which way you will. For his soul is fixed, he hath laid his soul upon his God. We see the difference in this between Saul and David. When David was in trouble, ' he trusted in the Lord his God,' when he was ready to be stoned. What doth Saul when he was in trouble ? He goes to the witch ; and from thence to the sword's point.*

5. Again, Where there is this excellent grace of trusting in God, and the soul is calmed by the Spirit of God, to rely upon God in covenant as a Father in Christ, *it will rely upon God without means and when all things seem contrary.* So the Spirit of God will difference a Christian from a natural man, that will go so far as his brain can reach. If he can see how things can be compassed, he will trust God, as if God had not a larger comprehension than he. Where he sees no way or means to contrive a deliverance, nor no means to satisfy his desire, there the soul of a natural man sinks and falls down : a politician will go as far as reason can carry him. But a Christian, when he sees no means, he knows God can make means. Now, when all things are opposite, if he hath a word of God, he will trust God, even against the present state and face of things, as Job saith, ' Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15. Therefore in the sense of sin, because there is a promise to sinners that, if they confess their sins, God will pardon them ; he will believe the forgiveness of sins, though he feel the guilt of sin. And in misery he will believe an evasion,† and escape, and that God will support him in it, because God hath so promised. And in ' darkness, when he sees no light,' as it is Isa. i. 10 ; in such a state ' he will trust in God.' As a child in the dark clasps about his father, so a child of God in darkness when he sees no light, he will clasp about his God, and break thorough the clouds that are between God and his soul ; as indeed faith hath a piercing eye. It pulls off the vizard of God's face. Though he seem angry, yet he will believe he is in covenant and he is a Father. Therefore though God shew himself in his dealing as offended, yet he argues God may be offended with me, but he cannot hate me ; there is hope. Faith, where it is in any strength, it will believe in contraries. In death, when a man is turned to rottenness and dust, faith apprehends life and resurrection, and glory to come. It will trust in God's means, or no means, if it hath a promise.

6. Again, He that trusts in God truly *will trust him for all things, and at all times.* For all things ; for faith never chooseth and singlet out its object, to believe this and not that, for all comes from the same God. Therefore he that trusts God for one thing, will trust him for all things. If I will trust a man for many pounds, surely I will trust him for a shilling.

* Cf. Ps. xiii. 15, xxvi. 1, with 1 Sam. xxviii. 9, *seq.*, and xxxi. 4.—G.

† That is, = ' a way out.' Cf. 1 Cor. x. 13.—G.

He that pretends he will trust God—God will save me, God is merciful—and yet notwithstanding will not trust him for common things, it is an abusive delusion and flattering of his own soul in vain. There is no such trust in him, because he that trusts God for the main will trust him for the less. Therefore true trust is for all things. He that trusts God for forgiveness of sins, which is the main, and hath wrestled with God for the forgiveness of sins, and found peace with God there, he will easily wrestle in other baser and less temptations. As God saith to Jacob, 'Thou art Israel, thou hast prevailed with God, and shalt prevail over men,' Gen. xxxii. 28, so a true Christian, that in the grand point of forgiveness of sins, when his conscience is surprised with the fear of God's wrath, hath gotten assurance of the pardon of his sins, when he is to set upon other lesser temptations, he overcomes them easily.

1. Therefore a Christian will trust God, as for forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, so *with his good name*. Oh, will some say, you will be reported of thus and thus. He cares not. He knows the cause is just. He will trust his good name with God, 'who will bring a man's righteousness forth clear as the noonday,' as David speaks, Ps. xxxvii. 6. He that will not trust God with his good name is of a base spirit, and fear of disgrace keeps many men from many just actions.

2. He that truly trusts God, will trust him *with the righting of his cause*. He will not pull God's office out of his hands. He will not revenge himself, but he will trust God. God certainly will right me first or last. He will only use the legal means, and that quietly. But a man that is not acquainted with the Spirit of God is presently moved with revenge,* and hath not learned to overcome himself in this conflict. A man hath gone indeed very far in religion, that can conquer himself in this conflict, that can trust his cause with God when he is wronged and overcome by might, &c. So our Saviour Christ committed his cause to him 'that was able to judge righteously,' 1 Peter ii. 23. Every true Christian hath the spirit of Christ. He, 'when he was reviled, retorted not again, but committed the cause to him that was able to judge righteously.' Shall I be able to commit my soul to God in the hour of death? and shall I not, in case of revenge, be able to commit my case to God, when I have done that that peaceably I may do? I may suspect that I am but yet an hypocrite; I have not true trust in God.

3. Again, He that hath learned truly to trust God for the grand main matters, he will trust him likewise *with his posterity, with his children, without using indirect means to make them rich*, as if they could not be blessed unless they have such a portion put into their hand when we die; as if God had not stock enough for them, 'for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. xxiv. 1. And he is the 'God of the faithful, and of their seed,' Gen. xvii. 19. Is he so? Then let us labour to leave our children in covenant, leave them in a gracious frame and state of soul, that they may be God's children; and then we leave them rich, for we leave them 'God all-sufficient' to be their portion. Therefore those that pretend, I do this but for my posterity and children, when they are unjust and unconscionable* in their getting, they make this defence for their unbelief. If they had true faith, as they trust God with their souls, as they pretend at least, so they would with their children and posterity.

4. Again, He that trusts God truly, will trust God *with his gifts, with the distribution of his alms, with parting with that he hath for the present*, when he sees it like seed cast upon the water. When seed is cast upon the

* That is, 'unconscientious.'—G.

water, we are likely never to see it again. Oh, but saith the wise man, 'cast thy bread upon the water, and thou shall see it after a certain time.' He that hath learned to trust God will believe this. Though he cast away his bounty, yet he hath cast it upon God and Christ, that will return it again ; he knows he doth but lend to the Lord. Therefore those that think their bounty and alms and good deeds to be lost, because they see not a present return, a present crop of that seed, they have not a spirit of trust in God ; for he that hath will endeavour to be 'rich in good works ;' nay, he will account it a special favour, a greater favour, to have a heart to do good, than to have means. A reprobate may have means, abundance to do good ; but only a child of God hath a heart to do good, and when he hath gotten a large and gracious heart to do good, it pleaseth him. Then he sees he hath an evidence that he is the child of God. He knows he shall not lose a cup of cold water, not the least thing that he doth in the name of Christ. The apprehension of this should make us more fruitful, and 'abound in the work of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is for want of trust and faith that we are so barren as we are in good works.

5. Again, He that will trust God with the greatest matters, will trust God *with his ways for direction*. He will not trust his own wit and wisdom, but God. God shall be wise for him. He will follow God's directions, and whatsoever is contrary to God's direction he will not do. He will acknowledge God in all his ways. Prov. iii. 5, 'Acknowledge God in all thy ways,' acknowledge him to be thy guide, thy defender, thy light, to direct thee ; acknowledge him to be able and willing to give thee success ; acknowledge God in all thy ways and consultations ; and when we have especially any great matters in hand, oh, I beseech you, let us learn to acknowledge God. What is it to acknowledge him ? To go to him for direction and protection in doing our duty, that we seek to him for strength and for success ; this is to acknowledge God in our ways. What makes men so unfortunate and successless in their consultations ? Because they are so faithless ; they do not acknowledge God in their ways, but trust too much to seeming things and appearance of things ; they are carried too much with that. Though things seem to go never so well, yet let nothing make us give over to acknowledge God ; nay, when things are never so ill, let us acknowledge God, for God can set all straight and at rights again. Alas ! what a small matter is it for him that rules heaven and earth, and turns this great wheel of all things, to turn the lesser wheels to order lesser businesses, and bring them to a happy issue and conclusion ! It is but a little matter with his command, seeing he rules all things. It is but trusting in him and praying to him, and then using the means with dependence upon him. Let us therefore acknowledge God this way, by committing our ways and affairs to him. We need knowledge and strength, and a comfortable issue for all that is necessary in our affairs ; let us acknowledge God, and fetch all these from him.

6. Well, the last thing that we have any use of trusting God withal is, *when we are dying, to trust our souls, to commit them to God, and yield them up to him*, our *depositum*, to lay it with him. He that hath inured himself to trust God all his life, and to live by faith, he will be able at length with some comfort to die by faith. He that hath trusted God all his life with all things that God hath trusted him, he can easily trust God with his soul ; and he that hath not inured himself to trust God in this life, undoubtedly he will never trust God with his soul when he dies. It is but a forced trust.

Thus you see in all the passages of our lives we must learn to trust God,

and to make use of God, for God is so abundant that he is never drawn dry. He joys when he is made use of. It is an honour to him. Let us try ourselves by that I have said, whether we truly trust God or no. Let us not deceive our own souls, but labour to trust God for all things. Let it be our daily practice in the use of means. Look to the course that he prescribes us, and then look up to him for strength and blessing and success. This ought to be the life of a Christian, *Oculus ad cælum*, as they say of the governor of a ship. He hath his hand to the stern, and his eye to the pole-star, to be directed by that. So the life of a Christian. He must have his hand to the stern, he must be doing that that God prescribes him, and he must have his eye to the star, to be guided in his course by God's direction. He that hath not this knows not what it is to trust in God.

How shall we bring our souls to this so necessary a duty? Indeed, it is a very hard matter. We know what it is to live by our wits, by our wealth, by our lands; but what it is to live by faith in depending upon God, few souls are acquainted with that.

Therefore, in the first place, *learn to know God*. You see here, we must trust in his name. We know men by their names. God and his name are all one. His name is himself, and himself is his name. Therefore, let us learn to know God as he hath discovered himself: know him in his works, but especially *in his word*; know him by that work, as he hath discovered himself in his word. Let us know his promises, and have them in store for all assays* whatsoever; promises for grace and for direction in this world. God will not 'fail us, nor forsake us,' John xiv. 18. He will be in all extremities with us, 'in the fire and in the water,' Isa. xliii. 2; and the promises of issue, 'All things shall work for good to them that love God,' Rom. viii. 28; and the promise of his Spirit, 'He will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke xi. 13. Besides particular promises, a world of them in Scripture, let us know God in these promises; they are our inheritance, our portion. And if we should go to God, and not be acquainted with these, he will ask us upon what ground? How shall we be able to go to God? But when we have his promise, we may say boldly with the psalmist, 'Lord, remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust.' We may put God in remembrance: not that he forgets, but he will have us mindful of what he promiseth, and put him in mind. And it is an evidence to our souls that he will grant any thing, when we have faith to put him in mind of his promise: 'Lord, remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused thy servant to trust.' Lord, thou canst not deny thy word, and thy truth, and thyself, and thy promise, and thy name by which thou hast made thyself known. Thus we should know God in his word; as it is Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will trust in thee, O Lord.' We never trust a man till we know him; and those that are not good, we say they are better known than trusted; but the more we know God, the more we shall trust him.

And know him *in his special attributes that the word sets him out in*, besides the promises, that we may know that he is able to make good all these promises; and then we shall trust him. What are those attributes? He hath made himself known to be all-sufficient. What a world of comfort is in that. He saith to Abraham, 'I am God all-sufficient: walk before me, and be perfect,' Gen. xvii. 1. Take thou no thought for any other thing: 'I am God all-sufficient.' There is in him whatsoever may be for an object of trust. He is all-sufficient. He hath power. 'Our trust is in the name

* That is, 'essays,' endeavours, = undertakings.—G.

of the Lord, that made heaven and earth,' Ps. cxv. 15. There is a consideration to strengthen faith : there is power enough. We believe in a God that made heaven and earth ; and there is will to help us, he is our God ; and there is skill to help us : as St Peter saith, ' He knows how to deliver,' 2 Pet. ii. 9. It is his practice. He hath used it from the beginning of the church, and will to the end. He knows how to deliver them, to protect and stand by them ; he hath power, and will, and skill to do it. And then again, he is everywhere. He is such a castle, and tower, and defence. We have him near us in all times : he is ' a present help in trouble,' as it is Ps. xli. 1. What an object of trust is here, if we had but faith to make use of it. Let us therefore know God in his word, in his attributes, and this will be a means to strengthen trust ; as it is Ps. xxxvi. 7, ' How sweet is thy goodness ; therefore shall the sons of men trust under the shadow of thy wings.' Why come we under the shadow of God's wing ? Because his goodness is sweet : he is a fit object for trust. The things of this world, the more we know them, the less we trust them, for they are but vain. But there is such infiniteness in God, that the more we know him, the more we shall trust him. Therefore, let us grow in the knowledge of God's word and truth.

And add *experimental knowledge*. It helps trust marvellously : the experience of others, and our own experience. When we see God hath helped his church in all times, especially when they have sought him by fasting and prayer : ' Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded,' Ps. xxii. 4, 5. Therefore, if we trust in thee, we shall not be confounded. So for our own experience : ' Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb ; I have depended upon thee from my mother's breast : forsake me not in mine old years, in my grey hairs, when my strength faileth me,' Ps. lxxi. 18. Thus we may gather upon God from former experience, that God will not now forsake us, because we have had experience of his kindness in former times. He hath been my God from my childhood ; therefore he will be now. This is a good argument, because God is as he was ; he is the same, he is never drawn dry : ' Where he loves, he loves to the end,' John xiii. 1. Where he begins, he will end. Therefore, this should strengthen our faith, to gather experience from former things. Thus David allegeth the lion and the bear ; and so St Paul, ' He hath delivered me, therefore he will deliver me,' 2 Tim. iii. 11. It is ordinary with the saints of God.

Again, If we would trust in God, labour every day to be acquainted with God in *daily prayer, in hearing, and reading, and meditation*. We trust friends with whom we are much acquainted ; and those that are not acquainted with God, in that communion which belongs to Christians, that do not often talk with God by prayer and meditation, when they go to God in extremity, what will God say to them ? Upon what acquaintance ? You are strangers to me, and I will be a stranger to you ; and ' Wisdom itself will laugh at their destruction,' Prov. i. 26, when they will force acquaintance upon God when they have use of him, and never care for him in the time of peace. Therefore, if we would trust God, and go to God boldly, as who is there here now that will not have need of him ? We have need of him continually, but sometimes more than others. Therefore, I say, let us be acquainted with him, that we may after trust him. Those that have not the care to be acquainted with God, either they have not the heart to go to God, or if they have, they have but a cold answer. But indeed, for the most part, they have no heart to go to God, for their hearts misgive them,

and tell them they have been careless of God, they have neglected God. Therefore, God will not regard them: 'Go to the gods ye have trusted,' as it is Judges x. 14. Answerable to our care, beloved, in the time of peace, will our comfort be when we are in trouble. Therefore I beseech you, let us remember this, as one means to strengthen our trust, our daily acquaintance with God; and acquaint ourselves so with him, as to keep him our friend, not to offend him, for if we offend him, we shall not trust him. A galled conscience is afraid of God, as a sore eye is of light. A comfortable conscience* is from a conscience to please God. 'This is our boldness and confidence,' saith Paul, that we have laboured to 'keep a good conscience,' that we may have him our friend, 2 Cor. i. 15, Heb. xiii. 18.

Again, Let us labour to *exercise our trust upon all occasions*; for things that are exercised are the brighter and the stronger. Let us inure ourselves to trust in God for all things, and to trust him with all things; with our bodies, with our souls, with our estates, with our children, with our ways, with our good name, with our credit and reputation, with all; as I said before in the signs of trust. Faith it grows in the exercise, as we see Ps. lxii., a psalm expressing David's trust in God, and the conflict with his soul in trusting. He begins, 'Yet my soul waits upon the Lord,' &c.; and in verse 2d, 'I shall not be greatly moved,' saith he; but when he had gone on, and exercised his faith still, then he saith in verse 6th, 'He is my rock, and my Saviour, and defence; I shall not be moved.' He that at the beginning saith, 'I shall not greatly be moved,' afterward, working upon his heart and soul, and exercising his faith, saith, 'I shall not be moved; he is my rock, my Saviour and defence.' Faith it is the engine by which we do all, by which we prevail with God and overcome the world, and all the snares on the right hand and on the left; it is that whereby we do all. Therefore we had need to keep it in exercise, and inure it, that we may have it to manage and use upon all occasions. It is not enough to have faith in us, but we must live by it. It must not only live in us, but we must live by it. This is another way to strengthen this faith, and assurance, and trusting in God.

The next is to practise that I spake of in the forenoon, to grow 'poor in spirit,' 'for they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' Let us labour more and more to see our own wants. A Christian should have a double eye: one to look to himself and to his own wants, to be abased; another eye to God's promise, to God's nature, to trust in God; and thus we should pass our days. The more we can empty ourselves, the more we shall be filled with God. We see here in the text the way to trust in God, to be 'poor in spirit.' The reason is in nature. Whosoever is not poor in himself, and sees a necessity, he will never go out of himself, for he hath some other supply. Therefore, if we would learn to trust in God, we must learn to empty ourselves of all self-confidence, by observing our weakness and wants; by taking notice, not so much of our graces, as of our wants. When Moses came from the mount, his face shone; he knew not of it. All the world about him knew it besides himself, but he observed it not, saith the Scripture, Exod. xxxiv. 29. So when a Christian considers not, especially in temptations to pride, what he hath, but what he wants—how little good he hath done, how many evil thoughts and actions have passed from him, how short he is in fruitfulness and thankfulness to God—this is the way to trust in God, for then we will keep close to God when we do see our own weakness.

* Qu. 'confidence'?—Ed.

And let us labour to *have a spirit of sanctification*, to have our souls more and more renewed to trust in God, or else all other courses are nothing ; for when it comes to particulars, if the soul be not sanctified there is no correspondency and harmony between it and God. How can an unsanctified soul close with a holy God ? Therefore we must labour to be good and to do good ; as the apostle Peter saith, ‘to commit our souls to God in doing good,’ 1 Pet. iv. 19. Let us labour to be good, to get grace, and then there will be a harmony, a connaturalness between a holy God and a holy soul ; and then we shall trust and rely upon him easily. Where there is not grace in the heart subduing corruptions, when it comes to particulars, whether to trust in God or man, then the soul will rebel, and scorn as it were trusting in God. It will go to wits, to friends, to favours, and other helps.

Let a man be never such a scholar, of never so great parts, when he comes to any shift, if he have not grace in him, he will disdain out of pride of spirit, as every man naturally is deeply proud, to rely upon conscience, and upon the truth and promises of the word, and upon such terms. These be weak things. No ; he will stir hell rather, and earth, and all means. He accounts it greatness that he can do so. It is only the holy man that will cleave fast to God, and to his truth and word, for he relisheth it. The Spirit that penned the Scriptures and the promises, it rules in his heart, and therefore he relisheth them. Oh these promises are sweet ! And as he can trust the promises, so he can trust God ; because, as I said before, he is acquainted with them. Where there is not a gracious heart, there will never be a believing, trusting heart.

There is in God infiniteness of ways of supply, let us labour therefore *for a prudent heart*, to learn the skill of fetching out of God for all necessities. As our want is, so let us fetch supply from some attribute of God, and some promise answerable. This is the wisdom of the saints of God. Are we in extremity ? Then with Jehoshaphat say, ‘We know not, Lord, what to do : but our eyes are toward thee,’ 2 Chron. xx. 12. Are we perplexed that we want wisdom ? Then go to God, who is infinitely wise. Consider him so, for he is fit for the soul ; nay, he exceeds all the maladies and wants of the soul. There is not only abundance in God, but redundancy and overflowing abundance. Therefore there wants but skill to make use of what is in him for our turn. Are we wronged ? Go to God, that ‘judgeth righteously,’ Jer. xi. 20 ; consider him in that relation, as a God ‘to whom vengeance belongeth,’ Ps. xciv. 1. Are we overpowered ? Go to God, ‘that made heaven and earth,’ to the Almighty God, Ps. cxv. 15. Are we troubled with the sense of sin ? Go to God, that is ‘the Father of all mercy, and God of all comfort,’ Rom. xv. 5. Are we cast down, and no man regards us ? Go to God, that styles himself ‘the comforter of the abject,’ 2 Cor. vii. 6. This is the skill that faith learns, not only in gross to think of God, but to think of God answerable to all occasions ; as indeed there is somewhat in God to satisfy the soul in all extremities whatsoever. I beseech you, let us learn to do this. What a happy condition is he in that hath learned to inure his soul to trust in God for the removal of all ill, and for the obtaining of all good ! He is sure of all. ‘For God is a sun and a shield ;’ a sun for all that is good, and a shield to defend us from all ill. He is so to all that trust in him. He is a ‘buckler, and an exceeding great reward,’ Ps. xviii. 30. He is a buckler to award* and shield ill from us, and an exceeding great reward for all

* That is, = ‘ward off.’—G.

that is good. Therefore in how happy a condition is the soul that is acquainted with this blessed exercise of trusting and believing in God! It is a state wherein we shall be kept from all ill—I mean from the ill of ills: not from the ill of sense, but from the ill of ills, and from the poison of all ill. Whatsoever ill we endure, there shall be comfort mixed with it; and it is better to have it than the comfort. What a comfort is this! ‘They that trust in the Lord shall want nothing that is good. He that trusts in the Lord is as a tree planted by the river side,’ Jer. xvii. 7, 8. He shall always have his leaf flourishing and bear fruit, because he is at the well-head. He that hath the spring can never want water, and he that is in the sun can never want light. He that is at the great feast can never want provision. He that hath learned to trust in God, and can improve what is in him, what can he want? Oh it is the scarceness of our faith that we want comfort! As our faith is, so is our comfort; and if we could bring a thousand times larger faith to grasp the promises, we should carry away larger comfort and strength.

NOTES.

(a) P. 241.—‘In the original it is poor, and mild, and gentle.’ Cf. Dr Henderson *in loc.*

(b) P. 246.—‘As St Augustine . . . saith, “We should boast and glory of nothing, because nothing is ours.”’ A frequent acknowledgment in the ‘Confessions,’ with varying phraseology. G.