

THE WORKS

OF

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THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING, LATTER PORTION OF PART II.,

AND A PORTION OF PART III.

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THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART II.—(*continued.*)

THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART II.

CHAPTER VI.

How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness, in the relation of masters, with a good wish about the duty of a master.

THE third and last relation in a family, is that of master and servants; the other two relations had a being in man's estate of innocency, this was brought in by man's apostasy.¹ Civil subjection to man came in by our sinful defection from God. We lost our liberty by casting off God's service.² The word servant is thought to be a derived *à servando*, because those who were taken in battle, and might have been slain, were saved, 2 Kings v. 2. As servitude came in with a curse, (the first time the word servant sounded in the world, was when Noah cursed his son Ham, Gen. ix. 25,) so sovereignty is promised as a blessing, Gen. xxvii. 29, and xxv. 23.

There are usually reckoned three causes, or rather occasions, of service.³

1. Victory; when men are conquered in war: the victor often spared their lives, but took away their liberty.

2. Necessity; when men are sold for debt. It was usual for the debtor to become servant to the creditor amongst the Romans,⁴ by the law of the twelve tables. The French were wont also to sell themselves to noblemen for debt.⁵ And the Jews were not ignorant of this practice, Lev. xxv. 39; Exod. xxi. 7; 2 Kings iv. 1, though

¹ Chrysost., Hom. 29 in Gen.

² *Servum hominem homini aut iniquitas aut adversitas erit.*—*Aug. Quest. Sup. Gen.*, lib. i. 15.

³ Basil. De Spirit., cap. 20.

⁴ Gel., lib. xx. cap. 1.

⁵ Caesar, vi. De Bell. Gal.

their usage by their brethren was much differing from the usage of strangers.

3. Utility ; when one committeth himself, or is committed to the government of another for his education.

Among the Jews there were two sorts of servants. Some that were of other nations ; their servitude was perpetual and hereditary, both of themselves and their children.

Others that were of their own nation, which were to serve but six years, and in the seventh to go out free, Exod. xxi. 2. Some reckon among them four sorts of servants.

First, The highest in that degree, as Abraham's steward ; such were said to stand before their masters, 1 Kings x. 8.

Secondly, Such as waited on their master's person immediately ; these are said to pour out water upon their master's hands, 2 Kings iii. 11.

Thirdly, Such as were employed in inferior offices, as in dressing of meat, or reaping harvest, 1 Sam. viii. 13. These were called labourers.

Fourthly, Such as did their lowest and basest work ; and these were said to sit behind the mill, because they thrust the mill before them as they wrought, and this was one of the basest works about which such were occupied, Exod. xi. 2 ; Isa. xlvii. 2.

Amongst the Romans there were two sorts of servants.

1. Such as were taken in war ; over these the master had an absolute power to dispose of them as he pleased, these were slaves for life ; all they got was their masters' ; they might sell them, or kill them, and were never questioned for it.¹ Titus Sempronius would sell his aged and weak servants as cattle, and so Cato Pollio commanded one of his servants to be thrown into his fish-ponds for breaking a glass, which he valued highly, though he had store of them ; which in humanity, when Augustus Cæsar understood, he entered the place where the glasses were, and broke them all, to prevent the like cruelty for the future.

2. Such as were servants by compact ; over these the master had only a conditional power. He had right, not to the persons, but only to the actions of these, to their work.

Reader, if God hath called thee to the relation of a master, remember that thou art his servant, and carry thyself accordingly ; give to thy servant that which is τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα, just and equal, Col. iv. 1. Do not use him as a slave, but as thy fellow-servant of the same Lord. God teacheth us, both by his pattern

¹ Macroh., lib. i. cap. 6.

and precept, to mix our authority with clemency, for he hates tyranny. Though he hath sovereign, and illimited, and absolute dominion over all the world, and might pluck up and pull down, slay and destroy without pity, and none could say to him, what doest thou? yet his mercy is over all his works, judgment is his strange work, Isa. xxviii. 21. And as he hath committed to some persons dominion over others, so hath he commanded them to exercise it with moderation. A king is his deputy on earth; but if a prince would fix upon a sure foundation, he tells him his laws must not be written, as Draco's were, in blood: 'Mercy and truth preserve the king; his throne is established by mercy,' Prov. xx. 28. A father hath authority over his child, but mark what a caution God gives him not to abuse it: 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.' The husband is the head of the wife, but observe what care he takes lest any should be so unnatural and cruel to their own bodies: 'Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.' So also, because the master hath much power over his servant, God limits his commission, and appoints that it be tempered with mercy: 'Masters, do the same things to your servants, and forbear threatening.' Still God manifesteth this to be his pleasure, that the sword of power be furbished with the oil of pity; yet herein there must be care that a master's carriage do not expose him to contempt from his servants. As masters must not be fierce, so neither familiar with their servants. Cato was in both the extremes; one while he would eat and drink, and work naked with them, and when he had worn them out with work, sell them like horses in a market.¹ So the Romans in general, at their feast called Saturnalia, did wait on their servants; the servants sat at the table, and the masters served them; yet possibly, before the year was expired, would kill them as dogs.²

But servants are most apt to be slighted; it is too usual an expression, by way of reproach, He is but a servant, or, She is but a waiting-maid. (It is free grace that thou art not a servant. I pray thee, who made thee to differ?) The Son of God himself, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was of no reputation; he was despised and rejected of men, Phil. ii. 7; Isa. liii. 3.

I shall lay down two or three motives to quicken thee to thy duty in this relation, and then shew thee wherein it consisteth.

First, Consider they are made of the same earth with thee; when thy proud heart esteems them vile and base, think with thyself that they have the same pedigree and parentage with thyself. 'The poor

¹ Plut. in Vit

² Athen., lib. xiv. cap. 17.

and the rich meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them both,' Prov. xxii. 2. There is no such vast difference betwixt thyself and thy servant, as thy haughty spirit would suggest.¹ Thou and he meet together in the same common mother, the earth, and in the same common Father, in heaven. Master and servant are made of the same mould, and have the same maker. Nay, a poor servant is so little thy inferior, that he is called thy own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7. Though there be a civil difference, there is no natural difference, for he is the same flesh, thy own flesh.

Therefore it is said, 'He that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his maker,' Prov. xvii. 5. He despiseth the maker of his person, and the maker of his portion. He reproacheth God for his work of creation, for making such a man or such a maid; and he reproacheth God for his work of providence, for making such a one poor, and such a one a servant and an inferior.² For our civil conditions, as much as our natural constitutions, are from God. As he maketh cedars and shrubs, mountains and valleys, so also masters and servants, bond and free. This argument kept Job within the bounds of his duty; he durst not, though a master, nay, though a magistrate, (and so in no fear of punishment from man,) abuse his servant upon this account: 'Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?' Job xxxi. 14, 15—*i.e.*, Should I in passion flee in his face, or through pride trample him under my feet, who is a child of the same father with myself?

Secondly, Consider, as they are made of the same earth, so they are heirs of the same heaven with thee. If there be a civil distinction, yet there is no spiritual distinction. In Christ there is neither bond nor free, Col. iii. 11; he paid the same price, and bought the same purchase for both. We read under the law that all the Israelites, both poor and rich, gave the same ransom for their souls, Exod. xiii. 15; signifying that the same precious blood of the Son of God was to be shed for the redemption of all sorts of persons. And it is recorded in the Gospel, that 'God hath chosen the poor of the world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,' James ii. 5. I may say the same of masters and servants, as the apostle speaks of Jews and Gentiles, 'God hath given them (servants) the Holy Ghost as well as us, (masters;) and hath put no difference betwixt us and them, purifying their hearts by faith,' Acts xv. 8, 9. Thy servant,

¹ Fortuna distinxit dominos a servis, natura utrisque communis et eadem.—*Philo. De Spec. Leg.*

² Vis tu cogitare istum quem servum tuum vocas, ex iisdem seminibus ortum, eodem frui celo, æque spirare, æque vivere, æque mori.—*Senec., Epist. 47.*

if born again, is God's son; and if a son, then an heir, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. Take heed therefore that thou dost not abuse God's child; great heirs are tenderly used. It called for great lamentation, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, Lam. iv. 2. And will it not be sad for thee to trample one of God's jewels as dirt under thy feet? Oh, how wilt thou be ashamed of it at the last day!

At present thy servants may be before thee in grace; how clearly doth thy experience teach thee that the poor receive, when the rich reject, the gospel, Mat. xi. 5, &c. The Lamb is offered in sacrifice, and acceptable to God, when the lion as an unclean creature is cast by. How many a master, like Potiphar, is an enemy, a foe, when the servant, like Joseph, is a great friend and favourite in the heavenly court!¹ God's church are called the congregation of his poor, Ps. lxxiv. 19; and to despise the poor is counted by God, and called a despising the church, 1 Cor. xi. 20. Thy servant may be poor in spirit, when thou art poor in spirituals. He may be rich in grace, in good works, which is infinitely the better, when thou art possibly only rich in gold and outward goods. Thou esteemest him at a poor rate, and not worth a penny; but be it known to thee, O man! that he is, if holy, worth thousands, and millions. Thy servant, like Levi, though he hath no part in the earthly Canaan, may have the boundless God for his portion. What wise man would esteem a horse by the gaudiness of its trappings and furniture, or a knife by its gilt haft. So truly no wise man will esteem another by his fine clothes, or great estate, or any outward ornaments, but by his spiritual endowments.

Hereafter thy servants may be above thee in glory. It is taken notice of, that a contemptible grasshopper, the silliest almost of all creatures, is advanced into the chief city of England, (London,) and a principal part of that city, the Royal Exchange, when far more noble creatures are less regarded. He that took upon him the form of a servant, and was vilified and scorned as a worm on earth, is certainly the highest in heaven. A poor servant, like Lazarus, may be comforted and highly exalted, when a rich master, as Dives, may be disgraced and tormented. He that hath not a foot of land, may have a title to the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thy servant may be the Lord's freeman, 1 Cor. vii. 22, and therefore must not be used as a slave. Though he be of low degree, yet he is a brother, and must accordingly be treated, James i. 9;

¹ Dominus fidelem habens servum, diligat ut filium, vel ut fratrem, propter fidei societatem.—*Clemens Constit. Apost.*, lib. iv. cap. 12.

Lev. xxv. 39. Though his spiritual relation do not privilege him from dutifulness and subjection to thee, yet it should prevent thy oppression of him. Do not dare to put those vessels to sordid sinful uses, which are now vessels of honour, and must shortly, according to the martyr's phrase, be scour'd bright, and set on the high shelf of heaven.

Thirdly, Consider that thou hast a master in heaven. As servants are, if gracious, God's sons, and thereby may be comforted, so masters are God's servants, and thereby may be cautioned. Is thine eye upon thy servants, to see whether they do their duties faithfully? I must tell thee, God's eye watcheth thee much more, to observe whether thou carriest thyself in thy relation conscientiously. Thy servants may cheat thee, and thou never the wiser; but thou canst not cozen God, for all things are naked and open in his sight. The awe of this master kept holy Job from abusing his power to the prejudice of his servants. 'If I despised the cause of my man-servant or maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' The fear of God, not any human affection, made him faithful to the meanest in his family. Fellow-servants will not abuse and smite one another whilst their master is in presence.¹ 'What then shall I do when God riseth up?' Oppressing and unjust masters will fall, when God riseth to judge servants' causes, and to revenge their quarrels. 'Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but fear thy God,' Lev. xxv. 43.

God delights to appear in the behalf of the afflicted poor, and such as have none to take their part. How severely hath he punished many masters for their want of pity to their servants. When the Jews were false and unfaithful to their servants, he turned their own liberty into bondage and slavery, and made them experience by the cruelty of the Chaldeans what it was to be served as slaves. When the hard yoke was upon their own necks, to the grating and goring their flesh, then they felt their servants' misery, Jer. xxxiv. 8-21. As divine, so human writ confirmeth this. The Chians, a people of Grecia, who were infamous for their inhumanity in this particular, being conquered by Mithridates, were made by him slaves to their own servants.² The Lacedæmonians also were cruel to their servants, the Tenarenses, but their city on a sudden was so shaken, that all those houses wherein their cruelty had been exercised, except four, were destroyed.³ God makes such men

¹ Posse et non velle nocere argumentum est hominis deum timentis.—*Athen.*

² *Athen.*, lib. vi. cap. 6.

³ *Ælian.*, vi. 76.

know many times here that wherein they deal passionately and proudly he is above them, but always hereafter ; ' they shall have judgment without mercy that shew no mercy.'

Reader, think often in all thy dealings with thy servant, that thou hast a master in heaven, who may suddenly, but will shortly, reckon with thee ; and if thou now afflictest him, when God visiteth, what wilt thou answer him ? As he will not favour thy servant barely for being an inferior, so he will not fear thee in the least for being a superior. ' Forbear threatening, and do to thy servant that which is just and equal, knowing that thy master also is in heaven ; and with him there is no respect of persons,' Eph. vi. 9 ; Col. iv. 1. Oh do but consider ! Thy master in heaven is omniscient, and knoweth all thy unjust dealings with thy servant. He is holy, and hates all thy oppression ; nay, he is omnipotent, and his hand will reach thee, and punish thee for it.

Fourthly, Consider he is God's servant. God hath the original, illimited right to thy servants ; thou hast only a derivative, bounded power over them. God commands the Israelites to treat their servants mildly upon this motive, ' For they are my servants,' Lev. xxv. 42. Hence some tell us that the Jews, in the infancy of their commonwealth, were very meek and moderate towards their servants. They did not put them to do either any vile office or any hard work ; they allowed them the same meat, drink, and lodging with themselves, say the Rabbins ; and thence arose that proverb, He that buyeth a Hebrew servant buyeth himself a master. Therefore several of them loved their service so well, that they would rather have their ears bored through, and continue in that condition, than enjoy their freedom. Sure I am, God's servants must not be used as Satan's slaves. If men should not have hard, uncharitable thoughts of others, because they are another's servants, much less may they be uncharitable and cruel in their actions towards such. ' Who art thou,' saith the apostle, ' that judgest another man's servant ?' Rom. xiv. 4. So may I speak to thee, reader, if an unjust master, who art thou ? and what art thou that abusest and oppressest another's servants ? Do what thou wilt with thy own servants, if ever thou canst get an absolute dominion over any, but darest thou to wrong another's servants, and the Lord's servants too ?

If a friend should, when he is necessitated to go abroad, commit his servant to thee for some time, wouldst thou not use him kindly and courteously for thy friend's sake ? And when thy God hath committed his servants to thy care and keeping for some time, to

be instructed in his word, and acquainted with his worship, wilt thou abuse his servants as dogs, and bring them up as brutes? To be the servant of God was a title that the greatest masters in Israel gloried in, and well they might. Now, wilt thou abuse and abase those whom God himself doth thus honour? The heathen moralist, to dissuade a master from cruelty and rigour, can tell him that though they are servants yet they are men, and fellow-servants with us of the same supreme deity.¹

One thing, reader, I would in a word warn thee of, before I speak to thy duty in this relation, that thou consider whom thou takest into thy service. It is dangerous to admit diseased persons into thy house: let none wait on thee who will not worship God. It was said of Hannibal's army, that it consisted *ex colluvie omnium gentium*, of the scum of all nations; but let it not be said so of thy family. He that knowingly harbours a traitor is himself a rebel. Some servants will hinder thee from discharging thy trust in reference to their souls; but having spoke formerly to the well-choosing,² I shall speak now to the well-using of servants.

Thy duty in relation to thy servant will be discovered in these particulars.

Thy duty is to endeavour the welfare of thy servants' souls. Turks mind nothing about their slaves but that they do their own work; but Christians must mind that their servants do God's work also. Some read that Gen. xiv. 14, 'And Abraham armed his catechised servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen.' It is clear that he commanded his household, the greatest part of which were servants, to keep the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19. Joshua was for his whole house to serve God, Joshua xxiv. 15. And the fourth commandment is full for it: 'Thou, thy son, thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant,' Exod. xx. 10.

He is esteemed a cruel master that will not allow his servant bodily food; but God counts him infinitely more savage who gives not his servant spiritual food. Shimei looked so much after his servants that he lost his life by it; but many masters look so little after their servants that it will cost them their souls for it.

Instruct thy servants in the word and worship of God. I told thee before, they are God's servants; and wilt thou not take care that they serve him? Holy Esther would not only fast and pray herself, but 'I and my maidens will fast also.' It was happy for those servants that they had such a mistress; it is likely their ser-

¹ Senec. de Clem.

² Vide the First Part, cap. ult.

vice, which was corporal, was instrumental to their spiritual liberty, Esther iv. 16.

Take time in the evenings, and on the Lord's-days, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God. Be often speaking to them of the threefold state of man, and the three offices of Christ; with gentleness and mildness draw them towards God. Do thou frequently in their hearing commend the sweetness of God's love in Christ to sinners, the richness of that inheritance which he hath laid up for his servants, and the monstrous unthankfulness of men in rejecting that love and neglecting this life. Give others cause, that frequent thy family, to speak to thee, as the queen of Sheba to Solomon, 'Happy are thy men; happy are those thy servants, which stand continually before thee,' 1 Kings x. 8. As he is the best servant that looks most to the main of his master's estate, that, though he forget some smaller matters, will be sure to remember the principal; so he is the best master that looks most to the main, the precious soul, and eternal salvation of his servant.

Pray with and for thy servants. Possibly they have good natures, but no grace. They mind thy work carefully, but neglect God's worship carelessly; and canst thou think, without bowels and pity, of their eternal perdition? When Elisha's servant was sore distressed by reason of the Syrians, Elisha prayed for him: 'Lord, open, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw,' 2 Kings vi. 17. Reader, are none of thy servants blind, not knowing, in a saving degree, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Canst thou let them alone in this condition, and not cry to God to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light? Oh pray hard; thou knowest not but God may hear and cause them to see in their day the things of their peace.

When the body of the good centurion's servant was sick, his master went to the Lord Jesus for his cure, saying, 'Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.' So go thou to Christ: Lord, my man-servant, my maid-servant is sick; full of spiritual diseases, sick of the stone in the heart, of the tympany of pride, of the fever of lust, of the dropsy of drunkenness, of the consumption of atheism; Lord, help him, help her; for he, for she is grievously tormented. For thy comfort, consider what answer Christ gave the centurion, 'I will come and heal him.' Jesus Christ, upon thy fervent prayer, may send thee in such an answer as may rejoice thy soul, and the heart of thy poor servant for ever.

Be careful that thy servants frequent the public ordinances of

God. Elkanah would go up to offer sacrifice with his whole house, 1 Sam. i. 21. When thou appearest before God, let not thy servant be left behind. It is not so safe to go alone as with company. Do not, as the Egyptian masters did, when thy God calleth thy servant to sacrifice, tell him he is idle, and wanteth more work. When they have attended on the word, examine them what they remember. Scholars never learn their lessons well when they beforehand know they shall not be questioned about them. If thou sendest thy servant on an errand about thy temporal estate, thou wilt call him to an account how well he hath done it. Let thy conscience be judge whether thou hast not much more cause, when he is sent about his own eternal estate, to question him how he hath performed it.

Thy benefit doth not a little depend upon thy servant's piety, which may encourage thee to promote it to the utmost of thy power. The more thy servant is conscientious to please God, the more careful he will be to please thee. A wicked servant will make nothing of blemishing thy name and impoverishing thy estate; as Gehazi, he will make thee a cloak for his own covetousness; as the unjust steward, he will lessen thy stock to enlarge his own; when a godly servant, as Joseph and Jacob, will rather wrong himself than rob thee. It is observable of Onesimus, that though, before his conversion, he was as a rotten post in his master's house, threatening to pull it down, yet afterwards, as a sound pillar, he assisted to bear it up. 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; who was in time past to thee unprofitable, but now is profitable to thee and me,' Philem. 10, 11. When once he became a new creature, instead of robbing and running away, he would enrich his master. There are no such faithful servants to men, as those that are faithful subjects to God. Grace will turn him who is a moth to waste, into a merchant to increase their outward stock; when a graceless servant, like Ziba to Mephibosheth, will make no bones of deluding the magistrate, so he may defraud his master.

Famous is that story of Pyrrhias,¹ a merchant of Ithaca, who seeing an aged man captive in a pirate ship, had compassion on him, and bought him and all his commodities, which were certain barrels of pitch. The old man considering that merely out of charity, and not out of covetousness, Pyrrhias had done this, presently discovered to him a considerable treasure hid in the bottom of the barrels, whereby he became exceeding rich.

¹ Willet, Hexapla in Lev.

Reader, if the redemption of one out of bondage to man through the divine providence had so large a recompense, surely thy work of redeeming thy poor servant out of slavery and bondage to sin and Satan shall receive a far greater reward. Besides thy temporal, thou mayest expect to reap an eternal reward. The redemption of a soul, as it is far more precious, so it is infinitely more profitable, James v. 20; Dan. xii. 3.

2. Provide what is just and convenient for thy servants' bodies. Prefer their souls, but provide for their bodies. 'Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal,' Col. iv. 1. Some covetous wretches will overwork their servants, but underkeep them, either of which is unjust. That dealing is just towards a servant which a master from his heart would desire might be used towards himself, if he were in the condition of a servant.

Convenient food must be allowed thy servants. Thou canst not rationally expect that they should be diligent about their work, if thou deniest them convenient diet.¹ Thou knowest thy horse must have his provender, or he cannot well perform his journey. 'The hired servants in my father's house have bread enough,' Luke xv. 17. They have not what is toothsome, but sufficient of what is wholesome; bread enough; nature, not lust, must be nourished. God commandeth thee to satisfy their hunger, but not to pamper their carnal appetites. 'He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at last,' Prov. xxix. 21. He that affordeth his servant raiment too costly, or nourishment too dainty, or carrieth himself towards him too familiarly, will find him at last a young master in his house, so malapert as to equalise himself with the children, and to tyrannise over his fellow-servants. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, did, by sad experience, find the truth of this. The wise man himself saw it in Jeroboam, whom for his parts, not for his piety, he had received into his service, and preferred before worthier persons, till at last he took state upon him, and did not only endeavour to be as his son, but even aspire to be his sovereign.

But though servants' sloth and sin may not, yet their bodies must be cherished. He cheats himself who will not allow his servants, nay, and cattle too, sufficient food. The good housewife alloweth meat, as well as appointeth work to her maidens: 'She riseth

¹ 'Domini, quod justum est, servis exhibete,' Col. iv. 1. In opere servis injungendo justitiam colit, qui nec premit laboribus immodicis, nec sinit otio et desidia torpescere. Sic in cibo præbendo, qui nec detrahit illis victum necessarium ac convenientem, neque patitur illos gulæ et ebrietati indulgere.—*Dave., in loc.*

whilst it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a task to her maidens,' Prov. xxxi. 15. Work without meat would quickly famish the natural body; meat without work would feed the body of sin; therefore she mindeth both. The labourer is as worthy of his meat as his lord of his work.

The Hebrew Rabbis tell us that the first wise men among them gave their servants and beasts meat before they did eat themselves. Masters must also allow physic to their diseased servants. He was an Amalekite, an enemy to God, that left his servant, when sick, to the wide world: 'And my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick,' 1 Sam. xxx. 13, which act of cruelty God punished severely. He took care, by his providence, that the poor servant should be recovered, and the oppressing master destroyed. The good Samaritan will bind up the wounds of a distressed stranger, much more of a servant. Xenocrates, though a heathen, was pitiful to a poor sparrow, that, being pursued by a hawk, fled to him for succour. He sheltered her while the enemy was fled, and afterwards letting her go, said, *Se supplicem non prodidisse*, That he had not betrayed his poor suppliant.¹ A Christian should have more pity for a distressed Christian than a heathen hath for a bird. A master should be a physician to his servants; as careful to preserve their healths and prevent their death, as to provide them work. Ischomachus told his wife that it was part of her office, and the most grateful part of it, in case a servant fall sick, to take care of his recovery.² The centurion, though a soldier, (and their hearts usually are more obdurate and less compassionate than others,) was earnest and diligent for the help of his sick servant, Mat. viii.

Clothes or wages must also be afforded servants. Apprentices have raiment from their masters, others have money to find themselves; now in both, or either of these, thy duty is to be faithful. The good housewife minds raiment for them to whom it is due, and that neither too neat nor nasty, but such as is suitable to the season, Prov. xxxi. 21.

Be careful to pay them their wages. It is high injustice to detain their dues. God will pay those masters who will not pay their servants. He hath wrath for them who have no wages for others. Such covetousness brings a dreadful curse: 'Woe be to him that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work,' Jer. xxii. 13. The mean and low servant hath the great and high God for his avenger. His eyes see such cruelty, and his ears hear the poor servant's cry. This is one of those cry-

¹ Elian. Var. Hist., lib. xiii.

² Xenophon.

ing sins which will give God no rest till he revenge it. Murder or blood hath a loud voice ; it crieth, Gen. iv. 10. As the blood of the Mediator cried for pardon, so the blood of men, unjustly shed, crieth for punishment. The souls of the good, and the blood of the bad, if their bodies be murdered, will cry for vengeance. God hath washed his hands in their blood (and thereby kept his honour unstained) who have stained their hands in the blood of others. Sodomy is another crying sin ; man with man, doing that which is unseemly. Human bestiality calleth for divine severity, Gen. xviii. 22. Hell shall be rained out of heaven, but that such an unnatural sin shall be revenged. This hellish fire in men shall be punished with fire from God. Oppression is a third crying sin, Exod. iii. 7, and xxii. 23. To keep back the servant's wages is to dare the master in heaven to a duel, James v. 4. Though the poor servant be silent, yet the sin itself hath a large throat, and will cry aloud. It is cursed covetousness not to be charitable ; but it is inhuman cruelty to suck out poor men's sweat and spirits, and to deny them what is their due for its reparation. This sin hath a louder voice than the sinner. The very land will cry and the furrows complain when the poor man, armed with patience, doth not, or, awed with power, dareth not, Job xxxi. 39.

This scarlet crying sin is of a double dye. When masters pay servants less than their work, or late for their work, they are in some measure guilty of it. There ought to be a proportion between the work and the wages. Laban, by his shuffling and cutting with Jacob, was met with himself at last. It is unworthy and wicked for any master to work upon the necessities and wants of others. We have a saying, There is nothing cheap but poor men's labour. But I am confident, how cheap soever their work is here, many a griping master will find it dear enough in the other world. To delay the payment of servants is also sinful. To defer, by the law of man, is all one as to deny. When they slip the time appointed, the bond is forfeited. God would not permit the Jews to sleep with such money in their purses. 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land : at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it ; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it : lest he cry against thee,' Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

3. Command thy servant nothing but what is fit and lawful. Two things I include under this head : that thou shouldst enjoin thy servant nothing but,

1. What is agreeable to God's law ; that his soul be not injured.
2. What is suitable to his natural strength ; that his body be not prejudiced.

First, Nothing but what is agreeable to God's word. Thou art but a steward, and therefore to appoint those that are thy inferiors that only which thy lord directeth. They and thou also are God's servants, wherefore his pleasure must always be preferred.¹ The Holy Ghost in thy description giveth thee a good caution. He calleth thee a master *κατὰ σάρκα*, according to the flesh, or a bodily master, Eph. vi. 5 ; Col. iii. 22. Thou hast power to give laws to his body, but no power at all to make laws for his soul. His flesh may be at thy beck, but his spirit must only be at God's bidding. If in any command thou transgressest God's laws, thou exceedest thy limits. And I must tell thee that thy servant is not bound to obey thee, nay, he is expressly forbidden it. I shall by and by charge him in God's name not to do it, and be it at his own peril if he dare. Some masters indeed, as Absalom, enjoin their servants what God forbids, to steal, or cozen in their callings, to lie, or bear false witness, when it is for their profit and credit, and to profane the Lord's-day by working ; and think, as that proud prince, that their word must be an unquestionable and sufficient warrant, ' Fear not, have not I commanded you ? ' But such men must know that they themselves are guilty of high treason, by commanding others to become traitors. Oh be not thou called master in this sense, for one is thy master, even Christ ! Mat. xxiii. 9. It was the saying of Anastasius the emperor, that he would venture upon no design, though never so gallant and glorious, that might cost a drop of the blood of his subjects.² And wilt thou venture upon those commands which may cost the soul-blood both of thyself and servant ? Abraham was careful not to trouble his steward's conscience, Gen. xxix. 8.

Secondly, Nothing is to be enjoined thy servant but what is suitable to his strength. Neither his inward man must be wronged by sinful, nor his outward man by cruel commands. Thou mayest use him, but thou mayest not abuse him. It is one thing to work, and another thing to rack and wear out a servant. It is thy duty to keep him from sloth, but thy sin to suck out his spirits. A tyrant and a master differ specifically ;³ ' Ye shall not rule over one another

¹ Omnis autoritas et superioritas, a Deo derivatur, et ideo debet divinæ auctoritati subordinari. Præceptum ergo inferioris potestatis non obligat ad obedientiam quando contrariatur præcepto superioris.—*Durandus*, lib. ii. ist. 39, qu. 5.

² Evagrii, lib. iii.

³ Masters must consider, Et quid ferre valent humeri, et quid ferre recusant.—*Hor. in Art. Poet.*

with rigour,' Lev. xxv. 46. It is for wicked Egyptians to command bricks and deny straw, to make their servants' lives bitter, and their service an iron furnace; yet I fear that some families in England may be called, as Egypt, a house of bondage, wherein governors, according to the prophet's phrases, 'eat the flesh, and flay the skin, and break the bones of poor servants,' Micah iii. 3.

The master should be, as the servant of Naaman called him, a father to his servants; esteem his servant, according to Seneca's appellation, as a lower or lesser friend.¹ Satyrus in Athenæus was called *Εὐδοῦλος καὶ Εὐοικος*, because he was kind to his servants. If a merciful man be merciful to his beasts, much more to his servant. God contemneth the service of those masters, when they worship him, who are cruel to their servants, Isa. lviii. 5, 6. He that overstraineth his horse at work wrongs his own purse; but he that overworketh his servant wrongs his conscience.² Oh, it is a barbarous act for any man to command what may likely hazard his servant's life! He that takes such earnings drinketh his servant's blood, which holy David would not do, 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. And some think it troubled his conscience that he had by a wish, though he never gave any word of command, occasioned the dangers of his three worthies' lives. It was said of the Massilians, it is better to be their sheep than children. It may be said of some masters, it is better to be their swine than servants, they are so unmerciful to them.

4. Masters must be faithful in teaching their servants that trade and calling to which they are bound. As the servant is bound to be faithful to his master in obeying his lawful commands, so the master is bound to be faithful to his servant in instructing him in his calling. It is a gross and grievous fault in many masters, in taking their servants' work, and their parents' wealth, and concealing from them the mystery of their trade. This is robbery and unrighteousness. Their covetousness will persuade them to teach inferiors so much as will make them profitable servants, but their envy and avarice together hinder them from teaching them so much as may make them honourable masters. Hence it comes to pass that apprentices, when their time is expired, are still in bondage; for being ignorant how to buy and sell, or in some essential particular of their trades, they dare not take a shop, lest, through their unskilfulness, occasioned by their masters' unfaithfulness, it should

¹ *Humilis amicus.*—*Senec.*, Epist. 97.

² *Μετρία μὲν ἡ θεῶ δουλεία, ἀμετρος δὲ ἡ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.* Moderata servitus est quæ Deo placet, immoderata quæ ad humanam libidinem exigitur.—*Plat.*, Epist. 9.

in a few months fall on their heads. Ainsworth tells us that God would not have servants sent away empty, lest they should be necessitated to return to service, from which second servitude he would free his people.¹ But these masters purposely (I mean many of them) keep close their art and mystery to continue their servants to them in a little nobler slavery, that, when their indentures are ended, their apprentice may step into a journeyman, which is but bondage in a second edition, and somewhat a fairer print. Others fear, if their servants should be made skilful in their calling, they would some way or other get away their custom; and therefore conceal their trade, hereby turning a possibility of their future suffering into a certainty of present sinning, just like one that, because it is possible somebody hereafter may give him a cup of wormwood, is resolved to prevent it by taking a present cup of poison. But whatsoever be the root, the reason of it, sure I am the fruit is bitter and distasteful to God, and all sober men. A common robber on the road is not in so deep a degree guilty of theft as an unfaithful master. This man robs the father of his money now, and the comfort he might expect from his son hereafter; he robs the servant of his present labour and his future livelihood; he robs his country of that service which the apprentice might have done it if the master had been conscientious in teaching him his calling; and he robbeth God and his own soul most in wronging all these, and in being so false and unfaithful to his covenants, which, under his own hand and seal, will be brought out against him at the day of Christ.

I know some servants are dull and backward, and cannot easily learn; and others are untoward, and will not be easily taught; but let masters do their endeavour and discharge their duties, and then the sin will not another day lie at their doors.

But, reader, I would be rightly understood; I do not intend by teaching thy servant the mystery of his art and trade, thy instructing thy servant in the mystery of iniquity, those sly, subtle tricks which some masters have (by false weights, or rotten wares handsomely glazed or glossed, or any other sinful way) to cozen their customers. No. If thou art skilled in this hellish black art, keep it to thyself and the devil, whence it came, but let not thy servant be abused by doing thy work so many years, and then turned off like thy horse, after such hard labour, without any reward.

By that small acquaintance I have in the city, I find the urging this duty exceeding necessary, many masters being faulty herein, to the great prejudice and wrong of their apprentices; and I do some-

¹ Ainsworth in Deut. xv. 14.

what marvel that those who write of relation duties, do generally omit it—not one that I ever read of so much as mentioning it.

5. Masters ought to exercise discipline towards their servants. Reproof is due to a servant sinning, as much as his diet; nay, a servant that will not be corrected with words, must with blows, Prov. xxix. 19. The philosopher tells us, a servant may challenge three things, *ἐργον, τροφήν, καὶ κόλασιν*, work, meat, and correction; and it is clear, as the case may be in the last, that the master in giving them all, doth no more than what is just and equal. Some servants, like the Phrygians, will do nothing any longer than they are beaten to it. But that servant who knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke xii. 47. The Scythians, when their servants, upon their long absence in Asia, had married their wives, and at their return withstood them, conquered their servants with whips, though they could not conquer them with swords.¹

The master ought to be wise, especially in this part of his duty. Correction is like physic, not to be given without good advice and caution; if it be too frequent, it works no more than our meat with us; some faults that are lesser, may be pardoned without danger, Eccles. vii. 21, 22.

Every house must not be turned into a house of correction. The servants' disposition must be observed. We use a difference when we go about to hew a rugged piece of timber, and to smooth a little stick, which you can bend as you please.

A fit season must be observed. Cut your trees at some time of the year, and you kill them; prune them at other times, and they thrive much the better.

The fault must be plain. Arraignment and conviction in all our courts precede judgment and execution. Some masters in their heat and haste fly on their servants upon a supposition which is false; like those who hang men for a fact, and then examine whether they are guilty or no, and if they be found innocent, take their bodies down from the gibbet, and allow them a burial. No man was to be beaten among the Jews, say their writers,² but by witnesses and evidence, and they were to examine the witnesses by inquiry and diligent search, even as they did in judgments of life and death. Joseph's master sinned in putting him into prison upon his wife's bare assertion, Gen. xxxix. 20.

The correction must be moderate. Servants must not be wrought

¹ Pez. Mel. Hist.

² Ainsworth in Deut. xxv. Ex Maimon. in Sanhedrin., chap. xvi. sec. 4.

like horses, nor beaten like dogs. When Hagar fled from the too hard dealing of her mistress, and groaned to God, he heard her cry. Dent. xxiii. 15, he cannot endure that our brother or sister should be vile in our eyes. Adrianus the emperor banished one Umbra, a matron, for five years, for handling her maids cruelly, Dent. xxv. 3, 4. Whosoever did beat his servant amongst the Hebrews immoderately, was to be beaten himself, unless there were a fine by their judicial laws, as in some cases, imposed on him.¹ It is evident, that if the master had wronged his servant, though but in a tooth, he was to make him satisfaction, Exod. xxi. 26, 27. The Romans punished their faulty servants, by forcing them to carry a piece of wood called *furca*, in way of disgrace, up and down among all their neighbours, and the offender was called *furcifer*.²

6. Masters ought to encourage good servants. Sometimes by seasons for lawful recreations. The naturalist, who speaketh much that servants should not want work, saith also that they must have rest and recreation, ἀργίαν, as well as ἐργον, refreshment as employment. Their hard meat will go down the better with a little sauce.

Horses too strait reined in, are apt to rise up with their forefeet; when they are allowed convenient liberty with their heads they go the better.

Sometimes by preferring him, if it be in thy power: 'A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren,' Prov. xvii. 2. God would have those that are low and lowly exalted to higher places. Potiphar, though he had no fear of God, yet having found Joseph faithful, he preferred him, a poor slave, to be over all his house. The centurion's honest servant was dear to him, ἐντίμος, of great price; a good servant is a jewel of great price, and therefore he should not always be put to mean, servile use. It is pity a gracious person should ever, much less always, stand in a low place. Oh, suffer not live coals to go out for want of blowing; let thy words and thy works shew that grace in a mean man is glorious.

Paul writes to Philemon on the behalf of his godly servant, 'Receive him not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?' Philem. 16. It is sordid in many masters that dismiss their servants, when they have dwelt with them many years, and served them faithfully, rather as prisoners out of a jail,

¹ Ainsworth in Dent. xxv. Ex Maimon. in Sanhedrin., chap. xvi. sec. 4.

² Plutarch.

ragged and tattered, than as brethren out of a Christian society. God commandeth the Jews, when their servant's apprenticeship was out, 'In the seventh year thou shalt let him go free. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: but shalt liberally furnish him out of thy flock, and out of thy floor: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give him,' Deut. xv. 13, 14. Heb., In furnishing thou shalt furnish him, that is, certainly do it. Some read it, Adorn him as with a chain, release him with honour, and not turn him out as a vagabond. For the quantity, the law appointeth not how much the master should give his servant.

The Hebrews gather out of Exod. xxi. 32, that he might not give less than thirty shekels, whether it were of one kind (of the things forementioned) or of many.¹ Now these judicial laws, as to their equity, are still in force. But how far from conformity to the equity of this precept are those crabbed, covetous persons, who instead of good works deny their honest servant a good word at parting; nay, and when they are gone, and set up for themselves, envy them their custom, and do their utmost to hinder them in their callings; such masters degenerate into savage beasts, scrambling to have all themselves, and fighting, at least in thoughts and words, that no others may share with them.

7. Masters should set a good pattern before their servants. Masters are the looking-glass by which servants usually dress themselves. If they be false glasses, their servants will be attired but in ill-favoured fashions. Servants are as members, masters as the head; now the members accompany the head, whether through a dirty ditch, or through a cleanly path—whether to a tavern or to the temple. It is the unhappy privilege of a master to have, like Korah, a company following him in his wicked courses and worst practices. 'The eyes of a servant are to the hands of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hands of her mistress,' Ps. cxxiii. 2. Reader, observe it, to the hand of master and mistress; the hand is the organ of action, the instrument of working, servants' eyes are as much, often more, to their masters' and mistresses' works, as their ears to their words. Their voice to their superiors is like that of Tiberius to Justinus, If you please I agree, if you refuse I deny also; or as the king of Judah to the king of Israel, I am as thou art; or as that scribe to Christ, 'Master, I will follow thee wherever thou goest,' Mat. viii. 19; what care therefore should masters take that their race be by rule, lest poor servants should wait on, and follow

¹ Maimon. Treat. of Servants, chap. iii. sec. 14.

after them to hell ! If a governor be bad, all his servants are wicked, Prov. xxix. 12. Pharaoh's servants took after their master, and so did Saul's. Servants are as sunflowers, they follow the motion of (the sun) their masters, whether to good or evil. If the high priests, and the heads of the Jews, prove corrupt, they shall not want company in their evil courses, though it be to buffet and persecute, and deride the Lord Jesus Christ. Inferiors are like a flock of cranes, which way their superior, the foremost, flieth, all the rest follow. The servants of Absalom will join with him in his sin, sooner than the servant of Elisha will join with him in his sanctity. If the first sheet in the press, upon its last review, go off ill, full of errors, the whole fifteen hundred, or two thousand that come after, have all the same faults ; but if that go off well, the rest will resemble it ; truly what the first sheet is to them that remain, that is a master to his men-servants, and a mistress to her maidens. If the master make conscience of his words, of his deeds, if he be serious in, and diligent at, holy duties, servants, at least in pretence, will imitate him ; but if he be a curser, a cheater, a liar, a Sabbath-breaker, how ordinary is it for servants to take after him ! The works of commanders and masters, are usually the commanders and masters of servants' works. Consider therefore, reader, how thou carriest thyself, lest those that thank thee in this world for thy pains and faithfulness in teaching them their trades, curse thee in the other world for leading them by thy wicked pattern to the place of torments.

A good wish about the master's duties, wherein the former heads are epitomised.

The sovereign Lord of the whole world, who hath manifested his manifold wisdom in appointing such a subordination amongst his several creatures, as might be most conducive to the ends of their creation, and his boundless goodness in bestowing dominion on some for the welfare and happiness, not for the injury and hurt, of others, that the poor and weaker, as they yield subjection to, might receive protection and provision from, the rich and stronger, having out of his mere mercy, not for any merit, called me to be a master, I wish that I may never behave myself in this relation as a slave to Satan, or a servant of unrighteousness, by making my house to my servants, as Egypt to Israel, an iron furnace and a house of bondage,

either to their souls or bodies ; that I may not abuse my power to the prejudice of the poorest, but that I may give unto all my servants that which is just and equal, knowing that I myself have a Master in heaven.

I wish that, whenever my heart is ready to insult over them, or my hand ready to fall heavy upon them, I may consider that though there be some difference betwixt us in regard of civil condition, yet there is none in regard of natural constitution. Did not he that made me in the womb make them ? and did not he form us all in the womb ? Should the children of the same father with me be used like beasts by me ? Our births, our beings, our lives and deaths, are the same ; I am made of the same essential parts, live by the same providence, breathe in the same common air, and must shortly be buried in the same earth with them ; and is here any ground for arrogancy in me, or cruelty towards them ? When they are my fellow-travellers, that came out of the same inn of the womb, are willing to wait upon me as I journey, and walk with me to the same grave, shall I rob or wrong them by the way ? Lord, since nature made no difference betwixt me and the meanest servant in the world, but whatsoever difference there is comes from thy free grace, enable me to carry myself towards them righteously and mercifully, as towards my fellow-creatures, those that are of the same make and mould with myself, lest by despising the poor I reproach both their and my maker.

I wish that I may behave myself towards my servants as towards those that are God's sons. As they differ not from me in natural principles, so neither do they differ in spiritual privileges ; they have right to the same God, to the same gospel, to the same Saviour, and to the same salvation. Though they are poor, yet they have an equal title here to the exceeding rich and precious promises, and hereafter to the purchased possession. What though they want those external fading accomplishments of birth, breeding, honour, estate, which others boast of, when they may have the real internal endowments of the love of God, and the blood of Christ, and the embroidery of the Spirit, which are the only things of worth and price ! Good kings will not suffer their subjects to be wronged, much less their children. He that toucheth God's chosen, toucheth the apple of his eye. How sure am I to suffer, if I offend one of Christ's little ones. Oh let me never, according to the world's judgment, esteem persons by their outward ornaments ; but as David shewed kindness to lame Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, so let me shew kindness to low servants for Jesus' sake. Lord,

since thou makest not the least difference betwixt me and them in spirituals, let me make the less difference in civils; let me never be so foolish, and so much my own foe, as to oppress and abuse thy favourites, but let me use them in all respects as those that are or may be thy heirs, and partakers with me of the same holiness, and the same heaven.

I wish that the fear of my Master above may make me faithful to my servants here below. His eyes behold all my ways, his heart doth perfectly hate all my wickedness, and his hand can punish me when he pleaseth; he will not spare me for my place, nor fear me for my power; with him there is no respect of persons. Shall not his dread fall upon me, and his terror make me afraid? If the presence and awe of a king make a judge righteous to his subjects, shall not the omnipresence and dread of a God make me just to my servants? Oh that I might never be so far possessed with unbelief as to think my Lord delayeth his coming, and thence to take liberty to beat the men-servants and maidens, (to neglect their souls, to wrong their bodies, by oppressing them with work, or not paying them their wages,) and to eat, and drink, and to be drunken, lest my Lord come in a day when I look not for him, and in an hour when I am not aware, and cut me asunder, and give me my portion with unbelievers, Luke xii. 45, 46. Ah, should I be a hard master to them, how heavy would the hand of my God be on me! If an oppressed Israelite groan by reason of his bondage, God will hear his cry, and maintain his cause; and what plagues will then fall down on such Egyptian masters! Lord, though I could abuse my servant without any fear of men, let me not dare to rule with rigour, out of the fear of thee. For if I despise the cause of my man-servant, or my maid-servant, when they plead with me, what then shall I do when thou risest up? and when thou visitest, what shall I answer thee? Job xxi. 14, 15.

I wish that I could consider that I am but a deputy-master, that God only hath an absolute dominion, and therefore my servants must be always used answerable to their relation to him. Who am I, that I should offer to abuse the servants of another man? And do I dare to abuse the servants of the great God? If it were ground enough for Pharaoh, a heathen, to let Israel enjoy their liberty because they were God's people,—‘Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness,’—surely it should be reason enough with me, a Christian, to rule over my servants with meekness and mildness, because they are God's servants; reason and civility would forbid me to oppress the servants of a stranger,

and shall not religion and sanctity withhold me from abusing the servants of my Father and Saviour? Lord, my flesh is apt to suggest that I am a sovereign, and therefore may deal with them according to my passion; but thy word hath told me that I am but thy substitute; oh, let me therefore govern them according to thy precepts!

I wish that, because they are God's servants, I may be the more careful to teach them his statutes, and the more conscientious to acquaint them with his word, and command them his worship; I hinder God of his honour, and them also, to my power, of heaven, if I mind nothing about them, but my own work. Would I be willing that poor servants should, out of my house, stumble into hell? Their souls are as precious as of the greatest earthly princes. My God in the making of them took as great pains; my Saviour in the purchasing them laid down the same price; the Holy Spirit will dwell in them, if they be pure, sooner than in the soul of the highest ungodly potentate; and shall I trample those jewels, which my God esteems at so dear a rate, as dung and dirt under my feet? Oh that I might not, as covetous wretches, ever increase my temporal goods, by being cruel to my servants' souls, and neglecting their eternal good. Within a few days they shall enter into their unchangeable estates: heaven or hell must hold their precious souls for ever; and shall I be no more mindful of my man or my maid than I am of my beasts, that when they die have a period both of their pain and pleasure? Lord, I beg it of thy sacred Majesty, that my servants may, through me, as an instrument, receive from thee saving mercy. Oh that my faithfulness might be so real, and thy favour so effectual, that none might go out of my family into the unquenchable fire.

Dearest Redeemer, who wast pleased to take upon thee, for our sakes, the form of a servant, and didst not disdain in the days of thy flesh, here on earth, to give a visit to a poor sick servant, let it please thee to visit my sick men, my sick maids, with thy gracious and powerful presence; shew thyself a charitable, skilful, and compassionate physician in healing such poor, dangerous patients, for God's sake. They are not able to requite thee, but thou lovest freely; oh heal their backslidings, and receive them graciously, and they will render thee (what they are able) the calves of their lips, the thanks of their hearts, and the praise of their lives to all eternity.

I wish that I may be true to their bodies, though I be most tender of their souls; I ought to prefer the inward, but yet to pro-

vide for their outward man. Why should I be so unrighteous as to withhold their due, whilst I accept their duty? and so unreasonable as to expect their labour, and yet to grudge them that which maintaineth their lives? I would neither pine nor pamper them, but feed them with food convenient and sufficient. Charity bindeth me to feed and clothe others in necessity, according to my estate and ability; but justice requireth me to requite these. They earn their bread in the sweat of their brows, and should they be turned off with a knock and a bit? The ox must not be muzzled that treadeth out the corn; and is not the Christian labourer worthy of his hire? If my serviceable beast were ill, I would willingly be at the cost of his cure; and doth not my Christian servant, when sick, deserve much more care? What though he should, when recovered, prove ungrateful, or die, and thereby be disenabled to acknowledge my kindness; yet my God, who is a sure and liberal paymaster, would not fail largely to recompense my labour of love. Lord, let me never be of the number of those gallants who through their pride bring up their servants (pampering them in wantonness and wickedness) to bring down their families; nor of those muckworms who, out of penuriousness, deny them their due; but let me regard them as thy servants, both in health and sickness, and afford them, with respect to my wealth and their wants, as those that are or may be thy adopted sons.

I wish that I may never abuse my power to the wrong of my Saviour or servant, by commanding anything which my God forbiddeth. My authority is derivative from him, and therefore must be exercised in obedience to him. It is his free grace that I am a master, not a servant, and shall I not improve his favour to his glory? How unworthy should I be if, like Jchu, I fight against my Master with his own soldiers, and use the power which he hath given me to dethrone and dishonour him? I am greatly ungrateful if I do not acknowledge his kindness by improving it to his credit; but what a monster of ingratitude am I, if I abuse the gracious commission of my king, to the robbing him of his crown! Lord, preserve me from following Sennacherib's heathenish and hellish pattern, who commanded and sent his servants to revile and reproach the living God; but let all the work I shall ever appoint them, be agreeable to thy word. Since my person is by millions of engagements bound to subjection, and my dominion is received wholly from thee, let my person and power ever be improved in subordination to thee.

. I wish that I may never wrong their bodies by immoderate work,

as well as not injure their souls by anything that is wicked. They are come to be my servants, not to be my slaves. I am called to be their master, not to be their tyrant. Oh, let me never be so barbarous, as, by working them like beasts, to drink their blood ! If a merciful man be merciful to his beasts, what a man of blood is he that is cruel to Christians ! Lord, keep me from imitating those pharisees, who bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, on the shoulders of inferiors, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

I wish that I may be faithful in teaching them fully that trade to which they are bound. How cursedly do I cozen both parents and children if I deal deceitfully with them in my calling ! With what conscience can I use them as servants, whilst I resolve they shall never be masters ? And doth it not pity me to see how hard they work, and what pains they take to buy their future beggary ? Do I deal with others as I would be dealt with myself ? Can I imagine that such covetousness, or whatsoever be the cause of this injustice, shall escape a curse ? I hinder, by my unrighteousness, their temporal weal, but I further my own eternal woe. Lord, suffer me not to raise myself by robbery, nor, as many rich persons, to build my house upon others' ruin ; but let justice in all my actions run down like water, and righteousness in this relation like a mighty stream.

I wish that my servants' souls may be always dearer to me than their sins ; I mean, that I may never allow them in anything that is unlawful. The human nature will help me to discourage them in that which may poison their bodies, and shall not the divine nature hinder me from encouraging them in that which will pollute their immortal souls ? My frowns, through God's blessing, may famish, but my favour will too probably fatten, their body of sin. Will sin deal so tenderly with their souls if they go to the place of torment, that I should be so meek and so mild in reproving it ? How perfectly doth my God hate sin, when he inflicteth such dreadful judgments on sinners for sin's sake ! What ignominy and agony, what sorrows and torture, did my Saviour undergo to make satisfaction for sin ! What pains doth the Spirit take to cast sin down, even when he doth not cast it out, in any soul ! and shall I allow any in sin ?

Besides, I am guilty of that profaneness which I may, and do not, prevent. Their debts, contracted through my connivance, will be laid to my charge at the dreadful day of Christ. And are my own sins so light a load that I must cry for others' burdens, and,

as a man pressing to death, call for more weight? Oh that I might never wink at either wife's, or children's, or servants' wickedness; but though I love their persons, may yet loathe their vices, and so reprove them, as one that would not have his poor house removed, when they leave this world, into hell. Lord, did I never feel sin, and that I am still apt to have such favourable thoughts of it, both in myself and others. Hath not the law's curse, because of it, gone over my soul, and thy wrath pressed me very sore? and shall no learning teach me? Oh, whatsoever affliction it be thy pleasure to chastise me with, preserve me from thy curse, the permission of sin in my own or any others' soul.

I wish that I may be fit to reprove others, by living without rebuke, and being irreprovable myself. Eyes filled with dust cannot see spots in others' faces. Hands that are filthy are not fit to wash out the defilement of the other members. Besides, if I commit, and am guilty of that swearing or drunkenness, or any sin which I condemn in others, I do but, like David in condemning them, pass a sentence of eternal death upon my own soul. I wish, therefore, for my own sake, and the sake of my followers, that I may be a follower of Christ, and walk in all things as I have him for an example. How soon will my servants tread in my steps, whether right or wrong! As the body in a beast, so do servants in a house, follow the head, the master. And am I willing to make them wicked with me, and to be for ever woeful with them? Will not hell-fire be the hotter for so much fuel? Oh that, since servants are the soft wax, and my life is the seal, I might live so righteously, soberly, and godlily, as to be a pattern of piety, and a credit to the gospel, and instrumental to stamp God's image on their souls. Lord, the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to direct his own steps. I beseech thee, therefore, to lead me in thy truth, and so to order all my steps by thy word, that the iniquity of my heels—I mean of them that follow me at the heels—may never compass me about.

I wish that I may not only be a terror to evil-doers, but also an encouragement to those servants that do well; that I may, as a wise gardener, be as diligent to cherish the good plants, as to pluck up the evil weeds. It is infinite pity that virtue should famish for want of favour, that grace should languish for lack of countenance. Oh, how carefully doth my God encourage piety in never so mean a person! He looks on their enemies as his enemies. It were better that a millstone were hung about the neck of the greatest emperor, and he thrown into the sea, than that he should offend

one of these little ones. They are holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of his increase ; all that devour them shall offend, evil shall befall them. He makes it the character of a true Christian to honour them, poor or rich, bond or free, that fear the Lord. They are precious in his sight, and honourable, though the world judge them base and contemptible ; though he be the high and lofty One, yet he humbleth himself to make these poor in spirit the habitation where his holiness dwelleth. Lord, help me, who profess myself to be thy son, to resemble thee in my carriage towards my servants, that wheresoever I behold any sproutings of grace, or buddings of godliness, I may afford those tender buds such warm beams as may cause them, through thy blessing, to ripen into fruits of holiness, and to end at last in everlasting life.

Finally, I wish that I may, in every particular of this relation of a master, carry myself as a faithful servant to Christ. Lord, if I expect such reverence, obedience, and diligence from my servants, because I give them, through thy bounty to me, a little food and wages, what reverence, obedience, and diligence mayest thou expect from me, when I owe my life and all my comforts to thy free grace, and am bound by millions of engagements to thy blessed Majesty ! Oh that as mountains overflowing with water do thereby help to fatten the valleys, my heart might be so filled with living water, that I may be instrumental to make my servants and inferiors fruitful in godliness ! Blessed God, remit all my miscarriages in this relation, and be pleased so to renew my soul after the image of thy dear Son, that I may carry myself towards my servant as a vessel of honour, fitted and prepared for my master's use ; and when the day of my death shall come, that servants shall be free from their subjection to me, I may be free both from sin and suffering, under which I am now sold, and enter into my master's joy. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the relation of servants.

The lowest relation in a family is this of servants, in which, as well as in the rest, religion must be minded. Therefore the Spirit of God giveth directions in his word how these should carry them-

selves; and the minister, as he is a steward, is bound to give the meanest in his master's family their portion.

Some servants in the days of the apostles thought that their spiritual freedom by Christ had exempted them from bodily and civil subjection to men. The first author of this opinion is thought to be Judas of Galilee, mentioned by Gamaliel, Acts v. 37, and he is there said to have stood up in the days of the taxing. Eusebius ascribeth this heresy to the Essenes. And Josephus¹ saith that after them rose up the Galileans, who taught that none was to be called Dominus, lord or master, but God only; and they would suffer the most exquisite torments rather than give this title to any man. In succeeding ages rose up the Manichees,² A.D. 273, who denied all civil authority, whether public or private. After these followed, A.D. 1296, the Pseudo-apostoli, whose ringleader was Gerardus Sagarellus de Parma, whose doctrine was *neminem subjici nisi soli Christo*, that none should be subject to any save to Christ alone. Of latter times some licentious Anabaptists did drink in the same poisonous liquor.

But the doctrine of the gospel doth not free men from their service, but fasten them to it.³ It freeth servants from sinful subjection to their masters, I mean in anything which God forbiddeth, but not from civil subjection in those things which are lawful. Religion doth not consume but confirm the master's authority. Hence the gospel layeth down such precepts for the carriage and usage of servants. If all service to men had been sinful, the Holy Ghost would not have laid down rules, both for servants' duties to, and dues from, their masters. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, neither is the liberty which he purchaseth for his people of this world. All are one in Christ in regard of internal and eternal salvation, not in regard of external condition. For they remain after conversion, master and servant, high and low still. Surely Paul, after Onesimus was born again, would never have turned him to his master if service had been unlawful.

Reader, if thou art called to be the servant of man, carry thyself therein as the servant of God. It is thy privilege that in thy low place thou mayest honour the blessed and glorious potentate. As 'in every nation,' so in every calling and condition, 'he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him,' Acts x. 35. Thy subjection to thy master on earth should be performed so

¹ Joseph. Antiq., lib. xviii. cap. 2.

² Prateol. Har., lib. xi. cap. 6.

³ Servi cum crediderint, plus dominis carnalibus servire debent.—*Cypri. Testim.*, lib. ii. cap. 72.

religiously that it may be service to thy Master in heaven. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, not with eye-service, but with the service of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

I shall first lay down some motives, and then speak to the servant's duty.

First, Consider, godliness will much sweeten your present subjection and servile condition. Possibly thy life is full of black lines, thy yoke is very hard, by reason of a hard master. Now, how wilt thou make it easy but by godliness? Thy corporal servitude should make thee the more desirous of spiritual liberty. Thy present disgrace should whet thy endeavours after the eternal weight of glory. Will it not be sad for thee to be slighted and despised of men for thy mean condition, because thou art a servant, and to be hated and plagued of God for thy reigning corruptions, because thou art a servant of sin? Doth not thy heart ache to think of two hells—a hell on earth, and a hell in hell? Believe it, without godliness thy present slavery is but a pledge of thy future misery. Now, it may be thy master is a Nabal, such a man of Belial that thou canst not speak to him; his looks are ever lowering, his lips are always railing at thee, and his hand is often heavy on thee. Ay, but thou wilt find Satan an infinitely more cruel tyrant. This severity is but a shadow of thy sufferings hereafter. Now thou workest hard all day, wearying out thy spirits and wasting thy strength, and art turned off with a bit and a knock, and possibly at night thy master thinks thy pains are never great enough, and thy reward is never little enough; but these things are but the beginning of thy sorrows. The devil, after all thy painful ploughing in his field, and hard grinding in his mill, in the day of thy life, will turn thee into the stable of hell, with thy galled back, at the night of death.

Do not delude thyself, that because thou art afflicted here thou shalt be spared hereafter; for thy jail in which thou now livest may be to thee, as to many others, the way to execution. Thou mayest go, as prisoners do, from this jail on earth to the gallows in hell. Believe it, God will never pity thee for thy poverty, if thou art one of the devil's ragged regiment. It is the poor in spirit, not in purse; the lowly in disposition, not the low in condition, that are blessed.

David tells us the objects gathered themselves together against him, Ps. xxxv. 15. Some servants are saucy dust, that fly in the face of God and his people: but such must know that the breath

of divine vengeance will blow away such dust. Oh how sad is the state of that servant who now dwelleth in an iron furnace, and must dwell hereafter in the unquenchable fire. Wicked men in a hard service are like naked hands exercised in hedging; they are sure to be pricked and pained much; but they who make religion their business in such places, are like hands armed with strong gloves, they are fenced against those thorns and briers. A godly servant, by looking to God, alters the nature of his hard service: for that bitter potion which is loathsome to him, when given him by the hand of a man, is lovely when presented to him by a loving and gracious God. Though we hate poison when it is mingled with our meat by a malicious enemy, as knowing that it may kill us, yet we take it willingly when it is sent us well tempered by a faithful and skilful physician, as hoping it may cure us.

Secondly, Consider, the holy life of a servant is a great ornament to the gospel. A poor servant may credit religion as well as a rich master. Poor servants carry lanterns and torches, whereby they direct others how to walk without stumbling. A pious servant may shine so with the light of purity as to guide others' feet in the ways of peace.

In the days of Christ the poor received the gospel, and by walking suitably thereunto they adorned the gospel. 'Let servants,' saith the apostle, 'be subject to their masters, and shew all good fidelity.' But what forcible motive doth he use to persuade to this faithfulness? 'That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,' Titus ii. 9, 10;—*i.e.*, though possibly they shall have no thanks from their masters for all their diligence, yet this they shall do, which will bring them thanks from God, they shall adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

The gospel is adorned when it is rendered beautiful and amiable in the eyes of others. Poor servants, if pious, may bring their unbelieving masters to be in love with religion. As Naaman's servant, they may be helpful to cure, and to convert their masters. That dish, which before they could scarce endure the sight of, may be so neatly dressed by a cleanly servant, as may cause them both to look on it and to like it. At least, a faithful servant will take away occasions from a profane master of blaspheming God and the gospel. Sanctity will help to put him to silence, and nothing will command so much reverence as religion. Fire in a wilderness is a good shelter against the fury of wild beasts. When holiness sparkleth in a servant's life, and he is very faithful in the discharge of his trust, it preserveth religion from the rage and rancour of evil men.

On the other side, an unfaithful servant is a disgrace to the blessed Saviour. They who profess godliness, though never so low, if they fall, will have many that are high looking and laughing at them. If a saint step awry, the world will quickly spy it, and then they cry out, This is a gallant and goodly profession indeed ! They will conclude the profession is not of God, if the professors walk like men.

Reader, if thou art a servant, consider the credit of the gospel is engaged in thy carriage. The gospel is thy best friend, and canst thou find in thy heart, by an unholy life, to trample it under thy feet ? It is the greatest love-token which thy God hath sent thee, and doth it not behove thee to be tender of it, and to walk answerable to it ? ' Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed,' 1 Tim. vi. 1. Oh, how much doth the child's unruliness reflect on his father, and the servant's unfaithfulness reflect on his master, in heaven !

Thirdly, Consider, God will reward you for all your faithful service. It may be thou mayest labour hard, and serve thy master with much diligence and conscience, and for all thy work scarce receive a good word from him ; but know this, thy God will give thee a rich and sure reward : he that with good-will doth service to God shall never miss of his pay. A good servant serveth God more than his master, and he serveth God in serving his master ; and therefore may expect that God should give him his reward. ' Servants, be obedient to your masters, with fear and trembling. With good-will serving the Lord, and not man ; and know ye, that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free,' Eph. vi. 5-8. A good servant soweth good seed by his faithful service to his master, and God will take care that he reaps a good crop.

God sometimes gives a good 'servant a reward in this world. Jacob served Laban faithfully many years, and though his master dealt churlishly with him, yet God paid him bountifully in the end. He had full wages for all his work. ' A faithful man shall abound with blessings,' Prov. xxviii. 20. Joseph was conscientious in his mean place under Potiphar, for which he was advanced to be his steward and chief servant, and afterwards he came to be lord of Egypt. ' A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame,' Prov. xvii. 2. Mordecai was faithful when he sat as porter at the king's gate, and God honours him and sets him above all the princes in the court of Ahasuerus.

But if God do not reward thee here, he will not fail to do it hereafter. Though the gratuities or gifts are uncertain, yet the salary is certain. And truly the longer men forbear the interest, the greater will the principal be. 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, in all things; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ,' Col. iii. 22-24. Faithful servants shall have the reward of sons, nay, of heirs. 'Ye shall receive the reward of inheritance.' Heaven is an undefiled and incorruptible inheritance, which God hath prepared for all them that serve him with a pure conscience. When the children of the kingdom shall be cast out, pious servants shall be called in, Mat. viii. 11.

I come now to shew wherein the duty of a servant consisteth.

1. Thy duty is to reverence thy master. The distance in this relation is the greatest, and therefore commandeth the greatest reverence. 'If I be a master, where is my fear?' Mal. i. 6. A saucy servant is a sinful servant. He hath no fear of his Maker, who doth not fear his master. 'Servants, be subject to your own masters with all fear,' 1 Pet. ii. 18. 'Servants, be obedient with fear and trembling,' Eph. vi. 5. Because servants enjoyed spiritual freedom, they were apt to think themselves exempted from corporal subjection; therefore the apostles of Christ are diligent to acquaint them with their duties. Their privilege by Christ, as it should make them the more cheerful in their service, so also the more awful of their superiors.

Some thought that, if their masters were believers and brethren, all were equal, and there needed not any respect or reverence to be shewed to them. Therefore, saith the Scripture, 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honour; and they which have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do service, because they are faithful and beloved,' 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. It seemeth some servants, under the pretence of Christian liberty, would have cast off the yoke of obedience. They objected, that as their masters were in Christ, so were they, and in Christ there is neither bond nor free; but the Holy Ghost answereth, that though there be no spiritual, yet there is an external and civil difference. Servants' relation to their masters is not dissolved by their relation to, and union with Jesus Christ. They are servants still, and ought to give their Christian masters double honour. They should honour them for their relation as masters, and more for their religion, as they are Christian masters.

Others could reverence their masters, they say, if they were religious and courteous; but the apostle Peter bids servants to fear and honour such masters as are froward. 'Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and courteous, but also to the froward,' 1 Pet. ii. 18. If the master be good or bad, courteous or crabbed, it is all one in this particular; for the honour is due, not to the man's nature, but to God's order.

2. Thy duty is to yield obedience to him in the Lord. In the civil law a servant is said to be *ἀπρόσωπος*, one that sustaineth no person, but is a dependent and an adjunct to his master, as one that ought to form himself to his master's mind. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things,' Tit. ii. 9. *Servus non est persona, sed res*, saith the civilian. He is an instrument to be acted at his master's pleasure. The centurion describeth a servant: 'I say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doeth it,' Mat. viii. 9. The apostle also gives his true character: 'His servant ye are whom ye obey,' Rom. vi. 16. He is not a servant, but a master, that must have his own way and will. Such a one putteth off the formal nature of a servant. Servants are bound to be at the disposal of their master and mistress, both for the matter and the manner of their work; though some, like forward lapwings, run when the shell is scarce off their heads; though they be, comparatively, but boys or girls, yet their work must be done at their own time and in their own way. Job's servant was highly faulty, who was so far from acting that he refused to answer his master. 'I called my servant, and he gave me no answer,' Job xix. 16. Sullenness in a servant is a great sin. Silence is sometimes a sign of consent; but when it proceeds from sullenness, it is ever a sign of contempt. Not to answer a stranger is incivility, and against the law of courtesy; but not to answer a master is a great iniquity, and against the law of justice, for the servant's tongue, as well as his hands, is his master's. Servants are too ready to answer when they ought to be silent, and too ready to be silent when they ought to answer. Therefore elsewhere the Holy Ghost forbiddeth servants to answer again: 'Not answering again,' Tit. ii. 9. They may answer, but they must not answer again. They must answer when asked, but may not answer again when reproofed. There is a two-fold answering again.

1. By way of opposition; when servants say somewhat to their masters, but it is by way of gainsaying their minds. Some servants can give their master or mistress word for word, nay, two for one;

this the apostle dissuadeth from. Those that are slow of their feet are swift of their tongues. *Lazy and loud* may be their motto. Others are nimble at their hands, and thence take liberty to be nimbler at their tongues. Few do their work well, who do not by their cutting words spoil all.

2. By way of submission. Coming, and going, and doing are the best answer to a master. Servants may answer in language of reverence, and with the carriage of obedience. A nod of the head or beckoning with the hand should be a sufficient word of command to them, Ps. cxxv. 2. Reader, consider how urgently thou art enjoined by thy Maker to be obedient to thy master: 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ,' Eph. vi. 5. In which words we have,

First, The servant's subjection expressed: 'Servants, be obedient.' A disobedient servant denieth his name, his relation. Obedience should be the garment, the livery wherewith all in such places should be clothed, or otherwise they contradict their title.

Secondly, The restriction of that obedience implied: 'To them that are your masters according to the flesh.' Intimating that the master's dominion is bounded, it is over the flesh, (he hath no liberty to make laws for the servant's spirit,) and so is the servant's subjection limited. Servants are not only to suffer when they have sinned, but rather to suffer than to sin. Conscience bindeth to obedience, but not to obedience against conscience. 'Be not,' saith the same apostle, 'the servants of men; ye are bought with a price,' 1 Cor. vii. 23. Christ hath redeemed servants from sinful slavery, though not from civil servitude. Joseph did obey the sinless laws of his master, but he refused to obey the sinful lust of his mistress.¹ They are masters over the flesh or body, not over the soul; therefore so long as the soul is not wronged, the rule of the servant's obedience must be his master's will, be it irksome or wearisome, not his own. But still, if the master, as Absalom and the chief priests in their commands, oppose God's commands, servants must submit to their punishments, not obey their precepts. It is much better to suffer for forbearance than to sin in obedience. Masters may tell their servants, as that unnatural son did his, that he would excuse them, 2 Sam. xiii. 28. But that proud prince's word was no warrant for his servants' wickedness. Though the master be doubly guilty in commanding, the servant is not guiltless in obeying. Whosoever be the authors, God will punish the actors of sin.

¹ Subjectio potest esse ubi non est obedientia.

3. Diligence is thy duty. Some servants are like gentlemen, humble servants, but it is only in a compliment. They are all for words and show, nothing for works and substance. Their care is to fare well and go fine, but as gaudy pictures, rather than active persons, they are nothing for action. How many hire others to do their work, and pay them with their master's money ! being hereby guilty of double theft, for they rob their masters of their time first, and then of their goods. Eliezer, Abraham's steward, preferred his employment before his natural refreshment, and refused to eat before he had done his errand. But how many servants are all for their belly, their diet, and nothing at their hands, at their duty.

There is a kind of heron called *ὄκνός*, slothful, whereupon there was raised a fable that an idle servant was turned into this bird, which is *ἀργότατος*, most idle. It is frequent with maid-servants to have the green-sickness, and men-servants the scurvy, both diseases which make them lazy. Jacob served Laban with all his might ; though the master was churlish, yet the servant was conscientious. In the heat of the day and the cold of the night, he was careful of his duty, and his faithful pains brought him in much peace.

A slothful servant is his own torment. Laziness, like envy, eateth him up. He walketh through a hedge of thorns, because he will not take the pains to go about, and so pierceth himself with anguish. He is a grief to his master, whilst he hinders him in his estate, and disappointeth him in his hopes. 'As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes ; so is the sluggard to them that send him,' Prov. x. 26. Some servants will labour in their master's presence, but loiter in his absence, which is a clear sign they do not serve him out of conscience. 'Servants, obey in all things your masters ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God,' Col. iv. 22. Servants who look no further than their master's eye are men-pleasers ; those only who set God ever before them, and thence are always diligent in their work, are God-pleasers.

4. Thy duty is to be faithful to thy master. Every servant hath some trust committed to him, to which he ought to be faithful and true : fidelity is the servant's glory, and the master's gain. 'As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him ; for he refresheth the soul of his master,' Prov. xxv. 13.

An unfaithful servant is a rotten pillar, which breaketh under the weight laid on him, the trust committed to him. As an unsound

tooth, he doth frustrate his master of his hopes; and if put to any stress, wounds him to the very heart with torment.

1. Thy duty is to be true in thy words, not lying. Take heed of Gehazi's lie—'Thy servant went no whither,' 2 Kings v. 25—lest thou meetest with his leprosy. Some servants' words are like the writings of Appius, which, saith Josephus,¹ are ψεύσματα συγχύτικα—a dunghill of shameless untruths. But such servants are the devil's sons, for he is the father of lies. A liar is Satan's picture. 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie?' Acts v. The devil hath a hand in most, if not all, sins; but the liar hath the devil in his heart: he is full of Satan who liveth in lying. This practice speaketh the wicked one to have full possession. Why hath Satan filled thine heart? A lying servant hath a great disadvantage whilst he liveth, that when he speaketh truth he is not believed; though the dreadfulest when he dieth, that he is one in the list for the unquenchable lake, Rev. xxi. 8.

2. Be faithful in thy works, not purloining. Servants must beware of making any waste of their master's estate. It is their duty to endeavour the preservation and increase of it, Gen. xxxix. 8, as of their own. Servants are apt to cut large thongs out of others' hides; hence the apostle warns them, 'Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity,' Tit. ii. 9. Those that give away to others, or take to themselves any of their master's goods, without his leave, are guilty of purloining.

Servants endeavour to excuse their thefts to their consciences, but cannot, by all their pretences, excuse them to God. They think sometimes, It is but a small matter that I make bold with, for myself or friend. But let such consider—

(1.) The taking of a little, though but a piece of bread for a friend, or a peek of corn, or anything, without leave, is theft and sin, as truly as the taking of much more: a little pot of water is of the same nature with a river.

(2.) God is the less beholden to that servant that will break with him, and incur his anger for so small a matter.

(3.) He that is unfaithful in a little, will, if opportunity be offered, be unfaithful in more. A little wedge makes way for a greater; he that begins to put his finger in the money-box, will come at last to put his hands in the money-bags. They who will serve the devil for a penny, will do him much more service for a pound.

Again, some servants satisfy themselves with this: Their masters, say they, are hard men, and work them much, but do not reward

¹ Joseph., lib. i.

them according to their deserts, therefore they may help themselves. I answer, Servants ought neither to be their own judges, nor their own paymasters. They ought not to be their own judges: servants are more fit for a bar than a bench; they are parties, and so unfit to determine such a question. Their masters may give them above their labour, when their covetous hearts think all to be under; but if their masters be failing herein, they must not therefore be their own carvers. Because, reader, thy master is a churl, is there a necessity that thou shouldst therefore be a cheat? If he deny thee thy due, the law is thy refuge; if some overplus for thy extraordinary service, patience must be thy remedy: for both, if thou art conscientious, God will be thy reward.

Some, for their knavery in wronging their masters, plead Jacob's policy, Gen. xxx. 37, about Laban's sheep. But Jacob's righteousness will, according to his own expression, answer for him in time to come. For—

[1.] The counsel which Jacob had was supernatural. God revealed it to him in a dream. He referred his cause to God, (which is every servant's best course,) and God directed him such a way as requited him well for all his work, Gen. xxxi. 9, 10.

[2.] The means he used were natural: 'He set the rods which he had pilled in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the cattle conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-straked, speckled, and spotted,' Gen. xxx. 38, 39. It is natural for vision to cause assimilation.

[3.] The contract was plain betwixt him and his master: 'And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word,' ver. 34. Here is a clear bargain, therefore no wrong done. Laban did what he could to cozen his faithful servant, though God had, by his own confession, prospered his flocks for his sake; but God appeared on his side. Now, let servants first see that their cases be parallel with Jacob's; I mean, that they serve their masters as he did, conscientiously, with all their might, and then, when their masters, as Laban did, deny them their dues, do nothing to right themselves but what God shall direct in his word, (for now God doth not reveal himself by dreams,) and in pursuance of a plain agreement betwixt their masters and them, and no good man will blame them. It is thy duty not only to forbear stealing, but also to further thy master's estate. Those apprentices are thieves that endeavour to rob their masters of his customers. Some, when nigh their freedom, have fine devices to call another man's pigeons to

their looters. They will tell their master's best customers that he might afford such commodities cheaper, but he is grown rich, and cares not much for dealing, and therefore is so excessive in his gains. Many other ways they have, like Absalom, to steal away the hearts of such men. But if he that hides his master's talent, and doth not increase it, will be counted at last a wicked and slothful servant, and condemned to eternal sufferings, what will become of him that is so far from endeavouring to enrich, that he makes it his business to impoverish his master? Mat. xxv. 29.

The truth is, servants have degenerated so much from their duty, and there have been so few of them faithful, that the word anciently used for a servant is now used for a thief, as appears by the poet—

‘Quid domini faciant, audent cum talia fures!’¹

3. Be faithful to the name of thy master. Do not reveal his nakedness who giveth thee clothing. It is ordinary for servants to be tattling to others of their master's or mistress's infirmities. Oh how glad are they when they have got a tale to carry to their fellows! But such messages, like Uriah's letters, will light most heavy at last upon the messenger; they are spies in a house to discover its weakness, and may expect the punishment of a spy from God for their wickedness. Soldiers received into a garrison for its defence, if they reveal its wants to the enemy, can look for nothing but the reward of traitors. God hath martial-law for those servants who are taken into a family for its protection, and, by discovering the governor's secrets, conspire its destruction. He or she is unfit to be a servant, that cannot conceal the frailties of their master. Such backbiters shew little love to their superiors on earth, and less to their Sovereign in heaven. They are worse thieves that rob them of their good name, than those that wrong them of their goods. Servants, whenever they speak of their master or mistress, should represent them, as some looking-glasses do our faces, to the best advantage. He who is guilty of Ziba's act, of slandering his master, may expect Zimri's end.

4. Be faithful to the person of thy master and mistress. It was a usual speech formerly, *Quot servi, tot hostes*; how many servants, so many enemies. Some still find it true that their enemies are those of their own household. The servant of Elah slew him; that sword which he took to defend him destroyed him. The Duke of Buckingham, who had been a chief instrument of advancing Richard the Third to the crown, falling into displea-

¹ *Vide* Serv. in Virg.

sure at court, fled to one of his servants named Bannister, who betrayed him, and conveyed him to Salisbury, where, without any arraignment, he lost his head.¹

Some of the heathen have been famous for their faithfulness to their masters. Urbinius Panopian being proscribed fled, and being pursued, one of his bondmen changed clothes with him, let his master out at a back-door, lay down in his master's bed, and chose death by the hands of the soldiers to save his master's life.²

The Mohammedans in the Great Mogul's country are commended for their faithful service to their Christian masters that hire them. They follow their masters on foot, carrying bucklers, or bows and arrows, for their defence.³ One work of servants is to defend the whole body of the families in which they are; how faulty, therefore, are they that seek to destroy the head of it! The two chamberlains of Ahasuerus, in seeking their master's death, found their own graves, Esther ii. 21, 23.

Servants also in their places must endeavour their superior's eternal peace. It may be, reader, thou hast a wicked master, one that scorneth and scoffeth at godliness; it behoveth thee to walk the more watchfully, that by thy fidelity and humility thou mayest move him to like and love it. We say of some servants that they can do what they will with their masters, they have so large an interest in them. Thou dost not know how prevalent thy conscientious carriage may be to draw thy master to Christ.

Austin reports of his mother, that she was cured of her drunkenness by her maid's calling her *meribulam*, a wine-bibber.⁴ I cannot justify the maid's sauciness, though it proved happy for her mistress; but sure I am, a submissive, prudent advice from a servant to a superior may, through God's blessing, tend to his eternal good. It is, without question, lawful for a servant to admonish his master or mistress, so it be done with reverence, and out of conscience. David was brought to repentance by Nathan's parabolical reprehension.

A poor contemptible child that hath his sight, may lead a man that is blind to a costly feast. As mean as thou art, if thou art holy and humble in the discharge of thy duty, thou may help thy master, though he be at present so backward to feed on the gospel dainties. Possibly thy master or mistress hath a respect for thee, and thou dost really love and reverence them. Oh, shew thy love

¹ Speed Chron.

² Diod. Sic.

³ Purch. Pilgrim., p. 1476.

⁴ Austin Confess., lib. ix. cap. 8.

by helping them to lay hold on eternal life ! Study and contrive how thou mayest most probably interest them in durable riches, who give thee temporal rewards. Be more solicitous to preserve their souls from ruin, than to keep their estates from rapine. Those herbs which lie on the ground, and are liable to be trampled upon by every one, have been instrumental for great cures. Blessed is that servant who is diligent to bring others into his Lord's service ; it is no hurt though he be a footstool, so he can lift others nearer to heaven.

A good wish about the duty of a servant, wherein the former heads are epitomised.

The wise and omnipotent Jehovah, who worketh according to his own pleasure, and disposeth of all creatures for his own praise, having by his providence called me to the lowest place, I wish that I may abide in the calling to which my God hath called me with cheerfulness and patience, lest, looking enviously on those persons that are above me, or eying unworthily those things which are below me, I lose the crown which is set before me. Lord, since it is thy will that I should be mean and contemptible amongst men, help me in this relation of a servant to be so faithful that I may be honourable in thy sight. Enable me to be subject to my master according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, not with eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart : with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free, Eph. vi. 5-9.

I wish that, as Manasseh's iron fetters were far more worth to him than his golden chain, being instrumental to his spiritual freedom, so the daily labour of my body may make me more mindful of liberty for my soul ; and the present pains I take, and shame I undergo, may quicken me to be more eager and earnest after the glory to be revealed, and the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Oh, how sad is my life if I be a servant of men, and a servant of sin ! if my outward man be in subjection to an oppressing lord, and my inward man in slavery to damning lusts ! And ah ! how dreadful will my death be, to exchange whips for scorpions, and to remove from a jail to a gibbet ; from Egypt, an

iron furnace, to suffer the vengeance of the eternal fire ! Surely the curse of Ham to be a servant of servants, was a comfort, a blessing to my condition. Lord, help me so to serve thy divine Majesty with a pure conscience and faith unfeigned, (in serving my master,) that I may enjoy the liberty and privileges which Christ hath purchased ; and give me thy grace so to labour here that I may rest hereafter.

I wish that the credit of the gospel may make me more holy and circumspect in my carriage, lest, by my carelessness in my conversation I should give others cause to blaspheme that worthy name by which I am called. By my profession I proclaim to the world that I live to adorn religion. If I, through unfaithfulness, sin, the gospel is sure to suffer, James ii. 8. The disorders of a servant reflect on the master whose livery he weareth. If I walk like a Christian, I gain it esteem and credit. Lord, let me so shine with the light of holiness in my place, that others seeing my good works may glorify thee, my heavenly Father, and that none may ever have cause, through my miscarriages, to speak evil of the way of truth.

I wish that I may have such an eye to the recompense of reward, as to be the more encouraged to fidelity and industry in my work. Though I serve a froward master, that, after all my hard labour, will hardly afford me a good look, yet, if in serving my master, I serve my Maker, my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. In orchards, some trees stand higher, some lower, but the husbandman esteemeth them not according to their height, but according to their fruit. My God valueth none according to the excellency of their parts, or eminency of their places, but according to the integrity of their hearts, and sanctity of their lives. With him there is no respect of persons ; but in every nation, and in every relation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. Lord, assist me so to serve the Lord Christ in serving my master, that howsoever I shall be defrauded, or whatsoever unrighteousness I shall meet with at this day, yet I may obtain mercy at that day, even the mercy of my Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal.

I wish that I may honour my master, as one whom my God hath made my superior. If his portion on earth be small, and his person seem never so contemptible ; nay, though he be a servant of Satan, yet my reverence is due to him by virtue of God's ordinance. As I ought to honour him in the Lord, so also I ought to honour him for the Lord ; for in reverencing my master, I reverence God's order. It is enough to satisfy my conscience, whatever he be in his carriage, that my God hath set him over me, and made me, not

his fellow or familiar, but his servant and inferior. Lord, whilst others make themselves merry at the deformity, impiety, or meanness of their masters, let me, in my affections, words, and actions, carry myself towards him as a humble servant and holy Christian, because thou hast so commanded. Though some contemn his person, let me reverence his power, because of thy precept.

I wish that I may obey my master after the flesh, yet that I may never obey him in any fleshly command. I receive my food and wages to do his work, and observe his will in the Lord. By putting my neck under the yoke, I profess myself to be at his disposal. If I make my own will my rule of obedience, I am both unrighteous to him, and injurious to my own soul. Though his precepts be painful, if not sinful, I am bound to subjection to my power. My God commandeth me to be subject, not only to the good and courteous, but also to the froward. Lord, let me prefer thy will above all the commands of men, and be sure to please thee, whomsoever I displease ; but let the will of my master, when not opposite to thine, be the rule of my work, that I may obey him under thee, and for thy sake. If I am reviled, keep me from reviling again, that I may imitate my Saviour, who, being abused when he abused himself to the form of a servant, committed all to him that judgeth righteously.

I wish that I may not be slothful in business, but diligent in every duty that concerneth me in this relation. My time and strength are not my own, but, under God, my master's. If I, to gratify any lust, or indulge laziness, deny them to him, I am a thief, and rob him of his right. Whether he be present or absent, the eye of my God is ever on me, to record my ways, and reward me after my works. Lord, cause me so to set thee before me, that I may be fervent in spirit about my general, and industriously diligent in my particular, calling. Thou hast said, 'If a man be diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, and not before mean men,' Prov. xxii. Oh let me be so laborious in my place, that at last I may come to stand in thy presence, where is fulness of joy and pleasure !

I wish that I may be faithful in the improvement of every talent committed to my trust. He that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon shall be trusted with the true riches. If I be faithful in a little, my God will make me ruler over much. Oh that conscience to God's precepts may provoke me, and the consideration of my own profit encourage me, to shew all good fidelity in my place ! I would be faithful to his estate, relations, and body, but especially in

the service of his precious soul. If he be bad, by my humble counsel and holy example, I may be helpful to reform and convert him; if he be good, to rejoice and confirm him. My Saviour taught his disciples by a little child. They that could not bring gold towards the tabernacle, brought goats' hair. Lord, help me, either as Naaman's servant, to be instrumental to cure my master of his spiritual leprosy; or make me, if he be a believer, some way or other to further his spiritual welfare. Let him be the better for such a servant, and me be the better for such a master; and both of us the better for thy righteous servant, who, by his knowledge, justifieth many.

Lord, if the service of some men be so desirable, because their natures are so kind and courteous, their work so easy and comfortable, and their pay so sure and bountiful, what a favour, what an honour is it to serve thy blessed Majesty! whose being and essence is love, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose reward is above what eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or the heart of man can conceive. Princes and sovereigns have gloried in being thy servants. Oh be pleased to put me in some place under thee, though never so low and mean! be it but to be a door-keeper in thy house, or to sit upon the threshold there. I shall esteem it above sitting on the highest earthly throne. I confess I have played the prodigal, and wasted the stock thou hast put into my hands. I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; yet, oh make me as one of thy hired servants, then I shall not disdain to do all the offices of thy commands to my fellow-servants, whom thou settest over me. Lord, enable me to serve them faithfully, for thy sake, and to serve thee truly in serving them, that I may hereafter enjoy the privileges of thy servants, in sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in thy kingdom, when the children of the kingdom shall be shut out; where the servant is free from his master, and the weary are at rest; where I shall receive a blessed welcome from thy hands, and hear that happy voice, 'Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

CHAPTER VIII.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in prosperity.

Thirdly, Thy duty is to make religion thy business in all conditions; gracious persons must have a carriage suitable to every providence.

As the year hath summer and winter; the natural day, light and darkness; the sea its ebbing and flowing; and as the sun sometimes shineth forth clearly, sometimes is under a cloud, sometimes is in an eclipse; so the condition of man is liable to many alterations. His life is a mixture of mercies and miseries, and often a transition from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity to prosperity. What then ought a Christian to do, but to take care that his spiritual disposition be answerable to his temporal condition?

Some men, besides their ordinary wearing apparel, have garments ready by them, both for a wedding and a funeral. If they be called to either, they can habit themselves handsomely in a meet and fit livery. The saint must not only have his everyday's gracious attire, but also, if he be called to fasting or feasting, to adversity or prosperity, put on raiment suitable to those seasons.

Some flying insects dress themselves according to the months in which they live. The forester goeth usually in green, in the same colour with the leaves of the trees, and the grass of the field, amongst which his ordinary walk is. Believers must know both how to want, and how to abound, Phil. iv. 7, 8, and clothe themselves in the same colour with the house to which they are called, whether it be the house of mourning or of mirth.

Saints are compared to doves in scripture, Isa. lx. 8; Cant. ii. 14. The turtles, according to the naturalists, can live and thrive both in cold and hot places; nay, in summer, they delight in a cold, in winter, in a hot climate.¹ Christians must ever, whether the world smile or frown, be going forward in their holy course, and learn in prosperity not to be exalted, and in adversity not to be dejected.

It argueth an excellent constitution of body to be able to bear heats and colds without complaint and injury to the outward man. And truly it will speak a special frame of soul to be able to undergo the weight of mercies and miseries without wrong to the inward man. Extremes are very dangerous, whether of the one or the other;

¹ Arist. de Gener. Animal., lib. iv. cap. 6.

the medium between both is least perilous. Drought burieth the seed in the earth, moderate showers refresh the earth, immoderate drown it. Upon which good ground it was that Agur prayed against both: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient, lest I be full and deny thee, or lest I be poor and steal, and so take the name of my God in vain,' Prov. xxx. 9, 10. Extreme want, or extreme wealth, are both extreme temptations to wickedness. A garment that is fit, is much better than one too big, or too little for the body. If it be too big, it is cumbersome; if too little, it is uneasy and troublesome. When Giges, the most puissant king in his days, sent to the Oracle of Delphos a second time, to know who was the happiest man next to Phedrus, (whom the Oracle had declared to be happy before, for dying in the service of his country,) answer was made that Aglaus was happier than he.¹ Now this Aglaus was a plain, honest man, dwelling in a corner of Arcadia, who had a little house and land of his own, in which he employed himself, and with which he maintained his family. A middling staff may help a man in his journey; one very little will do small service, one too big will hinder him.

Because both these conditions have their snares and temptations, they call for the greater care and circumspection. I shall therefore lay down some directions for each, and begin with prosperity.

Prosperity is a condition which consisteth in the fruition of outward good things, as health, strength, friends, riches, honours, and the like. As a constellation is a collection of many stars, so a prosperous condition is a confluence of many temporal comforts. God in his wise providence is pleased to give some persons large draughts of these sugared pleasures, their cup runneth over. They are in themselves mercies for which we may pray with humble submission, and for which we must praise God with holy affections; but through the corruption of our hearts, they often prove prejudicial to holiness. Those fires which were made to warm us, do often black and burn us. Small vessels carrying a great sail are apt to be overturned with every tempest.

A prosperous condition is called a slippery place, Ps. lxxiii. 18: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places.' Those that walk on ice had need to be wary how they set their feet, lest they slip and fall. It is observable that Elisha begged a double portion of Elijah's spirit, 2 Kings ii. 9. Which petition may seem at first sight to savour of presumption, but if we weigh things well, there will

¹ Plin. Nat. Hist., lib. vii. cap. 46.

appear great reason for it. Elisha saw that his master Elijah had been exercised with trials and troubles all his time; that Ahab and Jezebel had been continually beating up his quarters, and thereby forced him to keep a constant watch, and to stand night and day upon his guard; but he foresaw that himself should be a favourite at court, have the prince's eye and ear, and therefore needed a double degree of grace to be preserved upright and vigilant in such a prosperous estate.

Of all winds, the northern, though it be cold and sharp, is most healthful. The south wind, though it be warm, is hurtful, for with its moisture and warmth it raiseth vapours which cause diseases; when the north wind with its cold drieth those vapours and purgeth the blood. Elisha knew that under this warm south wind of prosperity, his soul would go near to contract some distemper, if it were not fenced by an extraordinary degree of spiritual health beforehand. 'If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,' Prov. xxiv. 10. But if thou fallest not in the day of prosperity, thy strength is great. He that is very rich, and yet religious, is richly religious.

Because it is so rare for a person not to decrease in his inward estate, when he doth increase in his outward, God giveth these bodily mercies, with many mementoes, a comfort and a caveat; a comfort and a caveat. 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently: when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware to thy fathers, and shall give thee houses full of all good things, and wells, and vineyards, and olive-yards, then beware lest thou forget the Lord. When thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God,' Deut. iv. 9, 23, vi. 10-12, and viii. 10, 11. These favours are delivered, as it were, under lock and key, to bind the possessor to his good behaviour. Epaminondas stood sentinel, when his citizens were at their feasts. It concerneth thee highly to use much spiritual caution when thou enjoyest many temporal comforts.

I must tell thee that God expecteth a crop answerable to his cost, that thou shouldst be the more holy because of his bounty. There is an island, called Lounda, in the kingdom of Congo, where the water, when the ocean ebbeth, groweth brackish, but when the sea floweth, it is most sweet;¹ if in the low water of adversity thou hast been incorrigible, it is thy sin, and to be bewailed. My work now is to persuade thee in the tide of prosperity to be profitable to thy own soul, and serviceable to the blessed God.

¹ Pur. Pil., vol. ii. p. 919.

First for thine help herein, I shall only lay down three particulars to quicken thee to circumspection in the use of creature-comforts, and then shew thee wherein the power of godliness, or the making religion thy business in this condition, consisteth.

1. Consider what a grievous sin it is not to serve God in the enjoyment of mercies. Some indeed are the more vicious, because God is so gracious. The devil would have stones turned into bread, and they turn bread into stones, and throw them at God himself. As tenants maintain a suit at law against their landlords with their own rent; so they fight against the highest Majesty with his own mercies. The goodness of God, instead of leading them to repentance, occasioneth their riot and impenitency, Hosea ii.; like unruly horses they break those gears, and snap asunder those traces, which should hold them together; no cords of love will hold them. The moorish grounds, the more showers they have from heaven, the more toads and venomous creatures they breed; so many rich men, the more merciful God is to them, the more sinful they are against him; but the horridness of this sin should make us hate it. It is sad to sin under afflictions, (Ahaz is branded for it; 'this is that King Ahaz,' 2 Chron. xxviii. 22,) but most sordid to sin against mercies; this will stop a man's mouth, and leave him without excuse for ever, Ezra ix. 6-9, 13. It is lamentable to offend the justice of God; he who hath that for his enemy, is sufficiently miserable, Heb. xii. 28; but it is abominable to provoke the love and goodness of God. If mercy be thy foe, thou hast no friend in this or the other world.

Michael Balbus is chronicled for a monster of mankind, for murdering his prince the same night in which he had received his pardon from him. Popilius Lenas is registered to be a most unregenerate wretch, because he struck off Cicero's head, who had before saved his life. O! what monstrous unthankful persons are they, who, like rebellious, unnatural Absalom, proclaim war, and fight against their own father, conspire and endeavour to rob and ruin that God who doth maintain and enrich them!

To abuse a friend upon whom thou hast a continual dependence, and by whom thou hast thy daily subsistence, is far worse than to abuse a stranger. The more our obligations are to any person, the more of baseness and unworthiness there is in our unsuitable practices. The unkindness of a neighbour is not so bad as of a servant; the disobedience of a servant is not so evil as of a son. It was the holy Israelites' greatest grief, that they had not served God in his great goodness, Neh. ix. 35. Heathens will give that love to

others which they receive from others, and do good to men who do good to them; and wilt thou be worse than heathens? Truly, if thou sinnest against the favours of God, thou sinnest against the very light of nature, Mat. v. 46. Though nature love some, yet she loathes this sin. Lycurgus, the Lacedæmonian, made no law against ingratitude, because he thought no man could act so irrationally as to be unthankful for courtesies.

Beasts manifest some respect to them that feed and tend them. The Holy Ghost saith, 'Be not like the horse and mule,' Ps. xxxii. 9. He is too bad who resembleth a beast; how bad is he then who is worse than a brute! 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,' Isa. i. 3. Shall the ox and the ass, the dullest of irrational creatures, acknowledge their master, and will not thou thy benefactor? 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, (saith God :) for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner,' Isa. i. 2. They live at God's charge, and yet not to obey his command, is such a grievous, astonishing sin, that even heaven and earth, those senseless creatures, seemed to abhor it, and to be amazed at it.

None sin at so dear a rate as they who sin against the riches of mercy. God is never more incensed than when his goodness is abused. When Haman wronged David's ambassadors, which he sent to him out of good-will, there ensued a deadly and a bloody war. Truly, reader, if thou abuse thy honour by making it fuel to thy pride, and thy riches by making them instruments of revenge, which God giveth thee out of good-will, expect that God should both take them from thee, (for what prince will suffer weapons in the hands of rebels? and what parent will not take away food from children that spoil it?) and also be highly provoked to destroy thee, Amos. ii. 13. He that is higher than others in mercy, if he abuse it, must expect to be lower than others in misery. The greatness of thy burden (be it of never such precious commodities) will sink thee the deeper into hell; the largeness of thy estate will but enlarge thy condemnation; though both be bad, yet it is much better to go to hell out of a cottage, than out of a court. It is infinitely more eligible to have Job's botches and boils, with his poverty, than, like Judas, to carry the bag, and betray the Saviour. Ah, how pitiful is that plenty which makes way for eternal poverty!

2. Consider that prosperity will try thee to purpose. The warm summer discovereth those poisonous roots which were in winter hid in the earth. As strong liquors try men's brains, and very hot

climates try men's bodies ; so prosperity will search and try men's souls. Afflictions are called bands, Ps. lxxiii. 4, and cords ; now when men's hands are tied down, it cannot be known what they are ; the fierce, cruel nature of beasts doth not appear when they are in chains.

Cornelius à Lapide observeth, on Prov. i. 32, that the Hebrew word for prosperity is translated by the Arabic *investigatio*, searching, because prosperity will search men to the quick. Walking on the top of high pinnacles will try whether men's heads are apt to be giddy or no. When the weather groweth very hot, then diseases appear.

It is a remarkable expression which Elisha useth to Hazael, when the prophet had told him that his present weeping was caused by a foresight of the courtier's future wickedness : ' Because I know the evil which thou wilt do unto the children of Israel. Their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.' And Hazael said, ' But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ?' And Elisha answered, (observe it reader,) ' The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king of Syria.' No more. Power in thy hands will quickly discover the pravity of thy heart. Thy heart is now a vessel full of corruption ; thy prosperity and preferment will broach it, and then that poisonous matter will be discovered to thyself and others. It had never been known how evil some men were, if they had not enjoyed much outward good. When such liquors boil over a good fire, then their froth is seen at the top.

3. Consider, Prosperity most commonly is abused to profaneness. We say, It is pity fair weather should do any harm ; yet it often doth, causing a famine and scarcity of food ; sure I am it is a thousand pities that the mercies of God (as friends, riches, and honours) should do any hurt, yet they often do, causing neglect of God, and a famine of godliness. It was the saying of Frederick the emperor, concerning Sigimbird Flisk, afterward Innocent the Fourth, advanced by him to the popedom, I have lost a cardinal, a friend, and got a pope, a foe. God, I am sure, may say of many whom he hath exalted, I have lost seeming friends, and got real enemies. ' Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked,' Deut. xxxii. 15. Men, like beasts, the better feeding they have, and the fatter they grow, are the more wanton and unruly. Those that eat much food often surfeit, and are always the more unfit for use and for service. Foolish flies burn their wings about these candles of outward comforts. The camel's bunch on men's backs hindereth them from entering in

at the strait gate. The Sodomites were infamous for impiety, and as one occasion of it, they were famous for prosperity. Their wickedness was grievous.¹ 'The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly,' Gen. xiii. 13. This phrase, 'before the Lord,' speaketh the high degree of their sin, it being common with the Hebrews to add the name of great² when they would increase and heighten the sense. Their wealth was great. Sodom was a pleasant place, by reason of the overflowing of the sweet streams of Jordan; it is called Eden, the garden of the Lord, for its fruitfulness. Carnal hearts are ever like highways, the more dirty for the showers of heaven. Lunatics are worst when the moon is at the full. When the kidneys of beasts are overgrown with fat, they quickly die.³ Cyrus therefore would not suffer his Persians to change a barren habitation for a fruitful, saying that dainty habitations make dainty inhabitants.

None throw such ticklish casts as those that bowl from some high ascent. Saints themselves have by these long garments been brought to stumble and fall, and much hindered in their journey to heaven. How few were ever the more pious for prosperity! David was tender, when hunted as a partridge; but when he prospered, he declined in piety. Ah, how much did this man after God's own heart disgrace religion, after his caves were turned into a crown, and the dens, in which he had lurked, into a diadem. We read of David's first ways; it is recorded to the honour of Jehoshaphat, 'That he walked in the first ways of his father David,' 2 Chron. xvii. 3, which expression intimates that his first ways, when Saul persecuted him, were his best ways: David by rest contracted rust. The Israelites were religious in Egypt, but rebellious in Canaan. Children, when strangers abuse them, run to their parents, but mind not home when they fare well abroad. The sweet fruit-trees of Canaan bred strange worms; the Jews, in that place of dainties and delight, committed strange wickedness. The ranker the ground was, the ranker the weeds grew. The tenderest and finest flesh soonest corrupts and putrifieth. As men abound in prosperity, too too often they abound in profaneness. Severus⁴ the emperor was wont to say, That the poorest soldiers were the best; for as they grew rich, they grew riotous. Coldest airs are most wholesome; the hottest are many times unhealthy. The papist, who when he was a monk seemed very pious, and spread his fishing-net for his table-cloth, to shew his original, did, when he came to be

¹ Pererius.² Qu., "God"?—Ed.³ Arist. De Animal., lib. iii. cap. 17.⁴ Liv. in Vit.

abbot, grow very proud, and cast it by, giving this for his reason, that he had been all this while fishing for the abbot's place, which now he had caught, and therefore had no further need of his net ! When men have served their ends on God, their serving of God hath an end ; while the corn is growing, the field is well fenced, but when it is carried in, the field is thrown open. When men are in expectation of mercies, religion is regarded ; but when they enjoy them, it is neglected.

I shall now lay down some directions for thy carriage in prosperity, and shew thee wherein the power of godliness, or the making religion thy business in that condition, consisteth.

1. Be especially watchful against those sins which a prosperous estate is most liable to. As there are sins proper to every calling, and to every constitution, so also to every condition. Anglers have their summer as well as their winter baits ; they have their distinct coloured gaudy flies for several months, with which the silly fish are caught. Satan hath his baits for prosperity, as well as for adversity ; he can put himself into the livery of the season to take souls, and cast them into the eternal fire. Thy duty is to watch that door, at which he standeth to enter, and there especially to keep a strong guard. Believe it, in these worldly thickets he layeth most dangerous ambushments to surprise thee at unawares.

In general, take heed of atheism ; let not earthly prosperity lessen either thy love to, or labour for, heavenly things. When there is much wool on a sheep's back, it is sometimes caught in the thorns and famished. Much wealth, much bodily mercy, hath many times so hampered and entangled a man, that his soul is starved. Ah, how hath Satan (as Delilah Samson) tied many a soul with the green withes of carnal comforts ! which they being not able, as he was, to break in sunder, their spiritual strength departeth from them. It is not seldom that that proves an occasion of forgetting God, which should be a means of remembering him. How wretchedly do some thrust him out of their minds, whilst he thrusts fat morsels into their mouths ; Hosea xiii. 6, ' According to their pasture, so were they filled ; they were filled, therefore have they forgotten me.' The sun of prosperity shining powerfully on the hearth of their hearts, did put out that fire of piety which seemed to glow there.

When the moon is at the full, then it darkens the sun most, to whom it is beholding for its fulness. When men are at the full of outward favours, they frequently obscure most the author of them. Themistocles told the Athenians, his ungrateful countrymen, that he was their oak ; in a storm they would call for him, and cry to

him. Who but Themistocles then ! But when the storm was over, they despised him ; then they could banish him, then they could cut down their oak and burn it. Truly, thus too many serve the blessed God ; if poverty, or disgrace, or sickness surprise them, then none but God. He is, say they, the best, the only friend ; then they complain to him, and lament after him ; but when their afflictions are removed, and estates, or honour, or health restored, then they can do well enough without him, and banish him their hearts and souls.

Job acquainteth us with the parts and fruits of some men's prosperity, Job xxi. 6-16. God's bounty to them is described in life and death ; 1. In life, in reference to their persons : ' They live, become old, yea, are mighty in power,' ver. 7. Life is a mercy ; it is the Lord's mercy that we live, saith the church, in a low estate ; but they do not only live, but are lusty, so the word signifieth. Sickness doth much embitter life, but they have health, nay, live long ; their life is a summer day, long, as well as clear and shining. They become old, yea, are mighty in power ; they sit in the chiefest seats, and are placed upon the highest pinnacle.

In reference to their relations : ' Their children are established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes,' ver. 8. ' They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance,' ver. 11. Children are great blessings and comforts : ' The children which God hath graciously given thy servant,' saith Jacob. Many are a greater mercy : ' Blessed is he that hath his quiver full of them.' For parents, whilst they live, to see these young plants removed into another soil, and there to thrive and prosper, is an extraordinary increase of the favour ; but they enjoyed all this.

In reference to their habitations : ' Their houses are far from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them,' ver. 9. Their houses are full of outward happiness, know not what misery meaneth ; their dwellings are full of outward blessings—peace and joy, not strife and grief. In regard of men, there is no force nor violence offered to them. In regard of God, he doth not execute any vengeance on them ; they are free from the divine rod, as well as human robberies.

In reference to their possessions : ' Their bull gendereth, and faileth not ; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf,' ver. 10. Their flocks are fruitful as well as their wives ; both the male and the female help to increase his herds. Where there is such a constant conception, there must needs be an extraordinary multiplication.

Thus whilst they live, they spend their days in wealth. They are

not pinched with want. Their whole time is spent in a serene clime, and they enjoy a perpetual calm.

When they die, 'in a moment, they go down to the grave,' ver. 13. They die quickly and quietly; as they live in much pleasure, so they die without much pain.

Here are persons who enjoy a prosperous condition in its various and largest dimensions. But what is the fruit of these favours? One would think, if there be any men in the world who will please and praise the blessed God, these are the men. It seemeth impossible but such pleasant streams should lead them to the ocean and fountain of all their happiness. Who would not expect a holy conclusion from such happy premises? Can any be so far possessed with a devil as to break these cords of love, and burst these bands of kindness in pieces? Alas! alas! bitter fruit groweth on this sweet root. 'Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?' ver. 14, 15. Who would not wonder at such monstrous wickedness, that such horrid blasphemy should be the child of such heavenly bounty! That illative particle 'therefore' may call and cause heaven and earth to be astonished, 'Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us.' It had been rational, angelical arguing; therefore they say unto God, Draw near to us. If the streams are so sweet, how sweet is the fountain! If God be so good in his creatures, how good is he in his own nature! If these candles give such light, oh, what light is there in the Sun of righteousness! Surely it is good to be near him. But it is the logic of hell to conclude as they did, Because his hand is open to us, therefore our hearts shall be shut against him. Oh what mad, what Bedlam reasoning is it! Because he is so bountiful a benefactor, wherever he cometh, therefore we will expel him out of our borders.

Reader, doth not thy heart rise against this abominable ingratitude? Take heed it be not thine own case, that thou dost not fight against God with his own mercies. Naturalists observe, and experience teacheth us, that in summer, when the sun shineth hottest, then the deep springs are coldest. Be not more remiss in thy duty, because God is so intense in his mercy. Evagrius notes of Mauritius, that notwithstanding his prosperity he retained his ancient piety. This was rare, for usually the rankest corn is soonest laid. As the days lengthen, the cold strengthens. Beware, lest as the sunshine of thy prosperity increaseth, thy love to God should cool.

In particular, take heed of pride, carnal confidence, and sense-

lessness of others' sufferings, which three sins prosperous men are prone to.

(1.) *Pride.* Prosperous men are apt to be proud. Poor men beg, and rich men boast, Ps. lii. Their blood and their goods rise together. Bladders filled only with wind do swell; so do men with wealth and outward mercy. 'There are no bonds in their death; their strength is firm. They have more than heart can wish; they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men.' But did this heap of goodness make them humble? No: their hearts grew big with their herds. Like the peacock, they were proud of their gay feathers; 'Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain,' Ps. lxxiii. 4-6. As they were high in condition, so were they also in disposition. Men in high places grow giddy and often fall, when those that walk in low valleys are safe. Satan serveth many, as the high wind doth the trees, first lifts them up, and then throws them down; first he lifteth up with pride, and then throweth them down into perdition.

The fire shrinks and shrivels up things to nothing, when the water swelleth them. The fire of adversity makes men little, yea, nothing in their own eyes, when waters of a full cup wrung out to men (the periphrasis of prosperity) occasioneth their height and haughtiness of heart, Job xxxiii. 17; Hosea xiii. 6.

Those that were truly gracious and habitually humble have, in a confluence of outward comforts, manifested too much pride; as the waters of Nilus, though all the year else they kept within their channel, yet in times of wheat harvest will overflow the banks. David, who at other times was as sweet and lowly as the violet, yet when God prospered him grew proud. His inward corruption broke out in this scabby expression, 'Go, number the people from Dan to Beersheba,' 2 Sam. xxiv. 2. If the sun fall backward ten degrees for Hezekiah, his spirit riseth higher, and goeth ten degrees forward.

Oh, it is hard to keep a low sail in a high condition, and for a child of God not to applaud his own deservings as the cause of his Father's gracious dealings. This rich wine flieth into men's brains that they know not where they are; they think themselves better men than others, because they have better means. A little of the earth makes them great (and others small) in their own eyes.

Reader, in the highest tide of earthly comforts, keep thy heart within the channel. The more mercies thou enjoyest, consider, the more thou art indebted to God; and surely it may humble thee that thou art in bonds for greater sums than millions of others.

Should stage-players be proud of their borrowed robes? and why art thou of thy borrowed riches? Be thou like a vessel, the fuller thou art, make the less sound; and like the stars, the higher they are, the lesser they seem to be; and like trees, ever least at the top of all.

(2.) Carnal confidence. Man by nature relieth upon the creature; his earthly inheritance is the foundation of his confidence. The world saith to man, as the bramble to the trees in Jotham's parable, 'Come and put your trust in my shadow,' Judges ix. 15. I will refresh you in scorching seasons; and men generally trust in these lying vanities. 'The rich man's wealth is a strong city, and an high tower in his conceit,' Prov. x. 15. 'A strong city.' As soldiers look upon a strong city as a good place which they may retire to for safety in times of flight, so worldly men in their distress and danger esteem their wealth the only means of relief and succour; or as a marching army expects supply, if need be, from a well-manned and victualled city, so men in their fainting fits, and under dreadful crosses, expect to be revived by their earthly cordials. 'And an high tower in his conceit.' A tower fortified by nature and art, and raised very high, is trusted to as an impregnable place. Rich men have as high conceits of their outward comforts as soldiers have of their strongest castles. Hence it is that riches are called 'strength,' Job xviii. 12; not only because strength is requisite to get and keep riches, Prov. xi. 16, but because of the world's corrupt opinion of them. They esteem them their strength, and hence give them their hope and trust.¹ But the world was never true to them that trusted it. 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God,' 1 Tim. vi. 17. That which is uncertain is no fit foundation for trust. The whole world is called a sea of glass, Rev. iv. 6, because of the slipperiness of it; glass yields no good footing, nor the world to them that stay themselves on it. Trust must have a sure bottom; it must be the quiet repose of the soul, in the hands of an almighty God and an immutable good. No creature hath strength sufficient to bear the weight and stress of its fellow-creature. Men, by leaning on these thorns, as Christ calleth them, cause them to run into their sides, and thereby pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

The huntsman catcheth the elephant by sawing a tree almost quite through, which the beast leaning on falleth down, and not being able to rise is taken. Thus Satan catcheth souls by men's

¹ Arist. *divitias appellat vires*, lib. i. *Polit.* cap. 8.

leaning on, and trusting to, the comforts of their bodies. Such men deny God, and therefore God will deny them. 'If I said to gold, Thou art my hope, and to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, I should have denied the God that is above,' Job xxxi. 24, 28. Trust is the fairest respect of the creature to his Creator; it is one of the most sparkling diamonds in his crown of glory. Now to give this to any other is idolatry. As the heathen, so many nominal Christians, pay their devotion, their trust, to this goddess wealth. Reader, thy work is to keep the world at a due distance, and not to give thy greatest heap the least of thy hope. Alas! these things are called water, and are as weak as water. Water may be strong enough to drown thee, but is too weak to revive thee in thy distress, though thou drinkest it down. Thou canst never rest too little on these reeds, nor too much on the Rock of ages. To trust God in adversity is honourable, but to trust him in prosperity is heroical.

(3.) Senselessness of others' miseries. It is hard for him who feeds high to have his bowels pinching with others' hunger. When men eat the fat and drink the sweet, they are apt to forget them who feed on ashes, and mingle their drink with weeping. They that drink wine in bowls, and eat calves out of the stalls, too too often forget the afflictions of Joseph, Amos vi. 4. Those that lie on down-beds can scarce feel their brethren's cords; their robes and golden chains make them unmindful of others' rags and iron fetters. 'He that is ready to slip with his feet is a lamp despised in the eyes of him that is at ease,' Job xii. 5. There is a twofold slipping of the feet: 1. A slipping into sin or corruption. 'My steps were almost gone; my feet had well-nigh slipped,' said the psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 2; he meaneth into that grievous crime of abandoning piety upon occasion of wicked men's prosperity. Every sin is a slip, a fall, as well as the first sin, Rom. xiv. 21; 1 Cor. x. 12. 2. A slipping into suffering or affliction. When a man descendeth from glory to ignominy, or slideth from wealth to want, or declineth in outward favours, he slippeth with his feet. The settlement of a person in safety is set out by this, 'He will not suffer thy feet to be moved,' Ps. cxxi. 3; and the change of a man's condition by this, 'Their feet shall slide in due time,' Deut. xxxii. 35. The firmness of a man's feet notes the firmness of his estate, and the slipping of his feet foreshews his fall. But as we have in the verse Job describing this man's condition, 'He that is ready to slip with his feet,' so we have others' carriage towards him, 'He is a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.' Those that are at ease condemn such as are in pain. They who enjoy a day of light and

comfort scorn and laugh at a lamp, especially when its oil is spent to the last drop. Distressed David was the song of the drunkard. The same Hebrew word signifieth both to be rich and to be at ease; we translate that Job xvi. 12, 'I was at ease;' the vulgar Lat., 'I was rich,'¹ to note that rich men usually mind their own ease and pleasures, not others' sorrows and sufferings.

Some observe that the Egyptian priests gave their god Apis (a deity which they worshipped in the form of an ox) water out of a pit or well, not the water of Nilus, and that, not because they thought those waters profaned by the crocodile, but because the waters of Nilus were fattening waters, therefore Apis must not drink them, lest they should make him senseless of the sufferings of his servants, and careless of their safety. It is certain fattening waters make men secure, and unmindful of others' woe.

But, reader, consider, God's command is that, in thy greatest plenty, thou shouldst sympathise with others' poverty: 'Weep with them that weep,' Rom. xiv. As it is with the strings of a viol, if one be touched, though the rest be not meddled with, yet they all quiver and tremble. So when the hand of God toucheth others in their names, or estates, or liberties, though it passeth by thee, thou oughtest to quiver, to tremble at it, and to be sensible of it. Surely Nehemiah was a nonsuch, who, though he enjoyed much prosperity, being in great favour and high honour with his prince, yet even then suffered in the church's sufferings, and was troubled with the church's troubles. Oh, how holy was that heart, which could willingly leave a rich, pleasant court for a ragged and tottered² city! and forsake the company of illustrious lords for twelve years to toil and moil like a day-labourer! Blessed soul! when he delivered wine to his sovereign, (for he was the king's cup-bearer,) he thought of the water which the poor subjects of Christ drank; and though his own particular condition called him to be merry, yet the sepulchres of his fathers caused him to put on mourning, Neh. i. and ii.

2. Value thyself, not by thy estate in this, but by thy inheritance in the other, world. Grace will teach a saint in poverty to have nothing, and yet to possess all things; in plenty to have all things, and yet to possess nothing, 1 Cor. vii. 31. It is a sure sign of saintship when a Christian, in the greatest confluence of creatures, can rate himself only by his estate in the covenant; and a special part of godliness for a person who hath large possessions to overlook all, and esteem himself wholly by his eternal portion. Grace is the

¹ Fui opulentus.—*Vulg.*

² Qu., "tattered"—ED.

freight, spiritual riches the lading of the vessel, outward good things are but the ballast. The mariner doth not value himself by his ballast, but by his freight. As Job's friends erred, on the one hand, in judging him wicked because afflicted, so many err, on the other hand, in presuming themselves to be pious because they are prosperous, and rating themselves for heaven according to their riches on earth. Ephraim argued, because he was rich, therefore he was righteous, Hosea xii. 8. He had gotten him substance, therefore he was guilty of no sin. Dionysius, because he found after his sacrilege a favourable wind, fancied that the gods favoured his wickedness. Some are as foolish as children; they value themselves by their gay coats and gaudy clothes. A man may have a shop full of earthenware, and yet be worth little. The tenth part of that room in silks and satins will speak a man to be worth more. A great deal of earth will not prove thee to have any real worth. A little grace, one drachm of God's special love in Christ, is worth millions. 'My fruit is better than silver, and my revenues than choice gold,' Prov. viii. 19. As a painted countenance is no sign of a good complexion, so neither is a fair estate of a gracious or happy condition. They may be high, and have large possessions on earth, whose portion shall be in the lowest hell. A monkey is but a brute, notwithstanding its golden collar and silver bells. God may, as men, give larger entertainment to strangers than to his children. The worst in the world have often most of the world, Job xxi. 7-16. Some live in a serene clime, and enjoy a constant calm here, who must dwell hereafter amongst terrible tempests, and in an eternal storm. The unclean beasts, as the bear and vulture, may be spared, when the clean, as the lamb and dove, may be sacrificed. Vessels which are empty swim at the top, when those that are full of gold sink to the bottom. Hearts empty of grace may prosper, when they which are full may perish, Eccles. vii. 15. Some indeed have their estates, as children their provision, from a loving father, but others, as prisoners, their allowance till the day of their execution.

There is a great difference between a glistening tumour in the face and true beauty, and as wide a distance between outward plenty and inward prosperity. Many say, 'Who will shew us any good?' Ps. iv. 6. God may shew them much good, to whom he sheweth no good-will. 'I am sore displeased,' saith God, 'with the heathen that are at ease,' Zech. i. 15. These heathens were at ease when they had no true rest; for at the same time they were under God's wrath, Heb. xii. 6.

God punisheth some in mercy, and prospereth others in fury.

Jerusalem's case was never worse than when God said, 'My fury shall depart from thee; I will be quiet, and no more angry,' Ezek. xvi. 42. The fire of God's anger is never more hot than when it is thus kept in, and not suffered to break out. When he intendeth to use the axe or sword he spareth the rod. Prisoners escape whipping who are to be hanged or to be executed. We do not lop or prune those trees which we intend within a short time to cut down for the fire. Alas! reader, it is ill valuing thyself by the sunshine of common providence, when thousands have it who shall miss the undefiled inheritance. Many enjoy fair weather as they pass on to endless woe. The dolphin sports most before a tempest. When the air is most clear, then cometh the greatest thunder. Thou mayest be like stubble laid out a-drying to burn in hell. Marullus telleth a story how Ambrose came to a great man's house, who boasted to him that he had never suffered any affliction, whereupon the father hastened away, lest, saith he, I should perish with the man that ever prospered; but he was no sooner out of doors but the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up man and house too.¹ God may defer thee when he doth not discharge thee; nay, as an arrow, the more drawn back by a strong hand the deeper it pierceth; so the longer it is before God reckoneth, the greater will be the sum of wrath when he cometh to pay thee. Esteem thyself therefore so much worth, as thou art for the other world. Rate thyself by thy treasure in heaven, by the pardon of thy sins, by thine interest in Christ, and by the durable riches and righteousness. These only are the mercies which are worth thousand millions; others are but painted cards and brass counters to these. Outward mercies serve the flesh, and last for a brittle life; but these mercies concern the soul and relate to eternity.

3. Let God alone have the glory of outward mercies; do not crown thine own head with laurel, but pay thy rent of laud and praise to God alone, who is the true landlord. The merchant, for non-payment of custom, forfeits his commodities.

It is God's bounty which filleth thy heaps, and therefore his glory must fill thy heart. Art thou rich? 'The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich,' 1 Sam. ii. 7. He maketh their persons; the needy and wealthy are both his workmanship. He is the maker of their portions; it is from him that some have plenty and others poverty, Prov. xxii. 2. He is the maker of the partition. Civil differences as well as spiritual are from God; earth drops out of heaven. The crumbs of this life are God's gift, as well as the

¹ Mar., lib. v. cap. 3.

crown of a better life. This is the blessing of his throne, that of his footstool. It is the son of Joseph who causeth the cup of gold to be put into Benjamin's sack. No man cuts out his own fortune, or contrives his own condition.

Hast thou honour? God is the author of it. 'Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another,' Ps. lxxv. 6, 7. Not any wind from any quarters of the earth can blow one man above another. High mountains are of God's making, as well as the low valleys and mole-hills. None ever mounted into the saddle of preferment but God's providence held the stirrup for him. It is reported of one of the kings of France, that he should say, 'Thousands were born the same day (in my dominions) that I was, yet none of them born to such dignity as I am; how much therefore am I bound to God! God may speak truly what Satan did falsely, of the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world: 'All these are mine, and to whomsoever I will I give them,' Luke iv. 6. Now as all these comforts are from God, so the credit of them all must be to God. As golden vessels do not retain the beams of the sun which they receive, but turn them back, and double them by reflection, so men who receive from the Sun of righteousness many warm, refreshing mercies, must reflect them back in glory and praise to the author of them. Reader, if thy lot be fallen in a fruitful land, be not unthankful, do not bury God's blessings in the grave of ingratitude. Many a man is like a bucket, which being empty, and let down into the well, doth, as it were, open its mouth to receive water, but being once full, sheweth its back only to the well that gave it. Their mouths are open for mercies; as the chapped earth gapes for rain, but when satisfied, shutteth again. When they enjoy their desired blessings their hearts are shut, and they turn their backs upon God. Beware of this sin. As the beams of the stars return (as far back as they can) to glorify the face of the sun, which giveth them their beauty, so thy soul should be enlarged, as far as is possible, to praise God for his bounty. The bird, when got on a high tree, singeth more sweetly than on the ground; the more highly God advanceth thee, the more sweetly thou shouldest sing his praise and advance him.

It was a fault observed and condemned in the Carthaginians,¹ that whereas they were sprung from Tyrus, and used yearly, when they were mean and poor, to send tithe of their incomes to Hercules, the peculiar god of the Tyrians, when they grew rich and

¹ Diod. Sic., lib. xx.

wealthy they neglected to send. How many serve the true God as these heathen their false god—owning him when they have little, but set light by him when they are laden with benefits! Holy David was of another carriage. When God blessed him in bestowing real mercies, he blessed God in acknowledging them to his glory. ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,’ Ps. ciii. 2. The holy Jews, by giving fit names to persons, seasons, and things, which were monuments of God’s mercies, kept his favours always in memory, Esther ix. 21, 22; Gen. xlii. 51, 52; xxii. 21, 22, and xxxiii. 20; Exod. xvii. 15. The benefit hereby will be to thyself, not to God. As an orator by his speech addeth no real worth to the person whom he commendeth, but only declareth what is in him, so by giving glory to God thou only acknowledgest what is in God, addest nothing to God; but as the vapours which are sent from the earth, thick and foggy, are returned to it in silver showers, so thy praises of him, though imperfect, will be returned back, and much to thy profit.

It may be, reader, thou art one whom God hath exalted from a poor and low to a plentiful and high condition. Remember thy former poverty to his praise. Do as David did; he took special notice that God took him from following sheep to feed his people Israel. If God remember thee in thy low estate, thou mayest well remember him in thy high estate. God gave special command to the Israelites, that when they came into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, they should bring a basket of the first-fruits, and set it down before the altar of the Lord, and say, ‘A Syrian ready to perish was our father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and the Lord brought us forth with a mighty hand into this land. And now behold, we have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given us,’ Deut. xvi. 1–12. The reason of this command was, because the acknowledgment of their former penury did enhance the price of their present plenty, and thereby tended much to God’s glory.

It is storied of Agathocles, king of Sicily, that having been before a potter’s son, he would always be served in earthen vessels, to put him in mind of his former meanness. But as our proverb is, The priest forgets that ever he was clerk; men usually are forgetful of what they were, and so the less thankful for what they are.

4. Love God the more for the mercies he bestoweth on thee. We ought indeed to love God principally for himself. His own perfec-

tions, not our possessions, must be the original of our affection. That servant is mercenary who worketh only for wages; and that love of a wife is spurious which is placed on the husband's portion. True love is fixed on his person; yet as fire which hath fuel enough to burn of itself, flameth out the more by having oil poured upon it, so the mercies which flow from God must increase that fire of a Christian's love, which is founded in, and abundantly fed by, those excellencies that are in God. The love of the man after God's own heart was much helped by the bounty of God's hand. 'A psalm of David, in the day wherein God delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and from the hands of Saul. I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,' Ps. xviii., title, and ver. 1. The heat of his love was great. 'I will love thee dearly and entirely,' saith the original; 'from the very bottom of my bowels.' David's affection to God was not only without dissimulation, but also above his expressions. His heart was too hot for his tongue; it was little else but a live coal, or lump of love. But, reader, if thou wouldst know what was the bellows which blew it up into such a heat, truly God's blessings. His deliverance from his foes made him such a debtor to the fountain of it, and his heart was so exceedingly taken with it, that having little else to give, he bestoweth his highest, his hottest love. As the ear of corn, the more it is laden, bendeth the more to the earth, the original of its fulness; so a gracious soul, the fuller it is of favours, the more it bendeth and inclineth towards God, the author of them.

Some, indeed, who have abundance of outward favours, fall in love, like children, with fine clothes, and affect them above their fathers. But as Augustine saith, That love is adulterous, and the love of a harlot, which is greater to the gift than the giver. Temporal comforts may be in our houses, but the God of consolations must be in our hearts. Bodily blessings are compared to thorns, Mat. xiii. Thorny hedges are about our fields, not in them. Our estates may be about us, but not within us. Thorns may do well enough in a man's hand, but if they once pierce his heart he is in danger of death. It is observable, that all these things here below are said to be 'put under our feet,' Ps. viii. 6. Why under our feet? but because they, as a stirrup, or footstool, should raise our hearts higher, and mount our minds nearer to our God. A trunk of silver, if above us, will press us down, if under us, will lift us up.

Engagements to a bountiful benefactor work much upon an ingenuous spirit. 'Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts,' Prov. xix. 7. But how should our infinite obligations to the blessed

Creator work upon us ! The ice, we know, which hanged on the eaves of the house, though it endure the blasts of the wind, yet it is dissolved by the shining of the sun. Though under the cold of adversity thou hast been frozen, yet let the sunshine of prosperity thaw and melt thy spirit into the love of God. As men by presents woo, and endeavour to gain the affections of maidens, so God by mercies seeketh to get the love of men and women. ' I beseech you, by the mercies of God, give up your souls and bodies a living sacrifice to God,' Rom. xii. 1. The flint, though it be not broken upon the hard pebbles, yet it is upon the soft pillow. The goodness of God should lead thee to repentance.

It is sad for thee, like the Dead Sea, to drink in the pleasant streams of Jordan, and to be never the sweeter, to receive many kindnesses from God, and not to be the more in love with God. Reader, do thou rather say, as the psalmist, ' I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication,' Ps. cxxvi. 1. That God may say of thee, as once of Israel, ' With loving-kindness I have drawn him,' Jer. xxxi. 3. Blessings are binders. We read of cords of a man, and bands of love ; let them draw and bind thy heart close to God. A pewter dish set against a good fire will reflect much heat back towards the fire again. Surely the great fire of God's love may well make thee reflect some love back to him again.

5. Do God the more abundant service. The more liberally God soweth, the more liberally he should reap. The more wages men give, the more work they expect. Where the sun shineth hottest, there are the biggest and the best fruits. Some observe, that Solomon's altar was four times as large as that which Moses made, Exod. xxvii. 1, to teach us, that as our peace and plenty increase, so must our piety in a due proportion. ' Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, and be rich in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. Those that are rich in goods and wealth, must be rich in good works. To do a little good will not be sufficient for them who have received much good. As men increase in their estates, so they advance in their attire and behaviour. The rents which men pay are answerable to the land which they enjoy. Hezekiah returned somewhat to God, but he returned not to the Lord according to his benefits ; therefore there was wrath upon him from the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. The greater thy receivings are in this world, the greater will thy reckonings be in the other world. He that receiveth five talents, by trading gaineth five more. If he had got but two more, as he did who received but two, his lord

would not have counted, and called him a 'good and faithful servant,' Mat. xxv. We look that our beasts should serve us according to their keepings; the better they are kept, the more service they should do us. Surely God may expect the same of us. Fat pastures and lean souls do not agree. Those good trees, whose roots spread farthest, and derive most of the earth's fatness, do bring forth the more fruit for it. Shall plants and beasts thrive answerable to what they receive, and man only in his work be unsuitable to his master's charge? The ship, the fairer the wind is, moveth the more swiftly; the bird, the larger her wings are, flieth the more speedily. And shall man be shamed by these?

Those who enjoy many mercies, as the father saith of rich men, have more tools to work with than others; they have more opportunities for closet duties and public ordinances; they have more influence upon inferiors, who have many times some dependence on them; they have many advantages to do good, and receive good, which others have not; when others are working hard to earn bread for their families, or they must starve, these men may go to their chambers and beg hard for the bread of life; they have more time and more talents to trade with, and must do much more work, or they will hear at last, 'Cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.' The man did not waste his talent, but because he did not improve it [therefore he was condemned.]

Most come short of trading suitable to their talents. As bells when raising strike thick, but when raised are set and still, so many, when in hope of outward good things, do somewhat for God, who, when they are largely blest with them, will do little or nothing. Plutarch observeth that the ass hath the fattest heart, and is the dullest of all beasts. They who have the fattest possessions are generally the dullest in the matters of religion. Like the sun, they move most slowly when highest in the zodiac. Oh, it is far better to be a low tree and fruitful, than a tall one and barren. In this, it were well if great men would resemble the sun. Though other planets are above him, for he is seated in the middle, yet he is most serviceable. Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars are before him in place, but he is before them in use.

God, in the fore-quoted place, commandeth persons who prosper, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. God, therefore, makes some poor, and some rich, that the one might be able to give, and the other to receive. The fuller the clouds are, the more they refresh others with their showers. The more mercy thou receivest, the more thou art to shew. Seneca

calleth uncharitable rich men *arcas'* chests, made only to hold and take in: they are all for keeping, for laying up. 'Thou hast goods laid up,' not a word of laying out. The superficies of the earth is most barren, not capable, say the naturalists, of the least improvement, where the richest mines are in its bowels. But saints have not so learned Christ. They know it is one thing to be rich in this world, another thing to be rich for a better world, and that an opportunity to give is a favour and grace, 2 Cor. viii. 1, and accordingly they improve it. David's heart was much affected with this favour, that he had ability to give anything to God. 'Our God, we thank and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. What a mercy did he esteem it, that God should give him both means, and a mind to give them back to him.

The great luminary of the world draweth up vapours into the air, not to keep them there, but to return them to the earth for its relief, and the advantage of many.

Bernard reporteth of Pope Eugenius, that meeting an honest, poor bishop, he gave him certain jewels to present him with. Sure I am, that all that wealth which we give to God, either by poor persons, or other pious uses, is given us first by God.

We blame that gentleman, who, being nobly entertained at his friend's house, doth not remember the servants. Surely he is more sordid and base, whom God feedeth, nay, and feasteth daily, if he doth not remember the servants of God. This kindness God takes as done to himself, and puts it down in his own debt book, resolving to pay it. 'He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him,' Prov. xix. 17. God paid Jonathan, in Mephibosheth, for all his kindness to David, and seemeth to say to every rich, charitable person, as Paul wrote to Philemon concerning Onesimus, If that poor man or woman owe thee anything, set that on mine account. 'I have written it with my own hand, I will repay it,' Philem. 19. Suitable to which is the form of begging in Italy, *Fate ben per voi*. Not as ours in England, bestow somewhat for the Lord's sake, but, do good for your own sake: giving is the best way of thriving. Wells that are drawn spring more freely. The widow's oil increased by pouring out.

6. In prosperity, prepare for adversity. Summer will not last all the year, therefore men provide for winter.¹ The wind will not

¹ Ælian. Var. Hist., lib. ii.

always set in one corner. The south wind of prosperity now bloweth, but expect the north wind of adversity. If thou hast two heavens, thou hast more than Christ himself had. Babylon indeed said, 'I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow,' Rev. xviii. 7. She saw her state was high—a queen; and she presumed that it was firm by her posture in her place, 'I sit as a queen.' But the greater her presumption was, the greater her destruction was. Prosperity is not tied to us, as Dionysius thought his kingdom was to him, as chains of adamant. Job iii. 26, 'The thing that I feared is come upon me.' There is a fear of wisdom and caution; as also a fear of torment and vexation. Job's fear was the former; like Noah, being moved with fear, he prepared an ark before the flood came.

The atheist, by his prosperous condition, is wholly unfitted for affliction. He is so used to great fires and soft beds, that when he cometh to sharp air and stormy weather, he sickens and dieth. As Hannibal's soldiers were so much effeminated by the pleasures they enjoyed at Capua, that their bodies being used to fine raiment, could not bear the weight of heavy armour; and their heads being used to silken nightcaps, could not endure iron head-pieces. I fear that neck, saith Tertullian, which is used to pearl chains, will hardly offer itself to the sword. But Christians are better taught than in such times to neglect preparations for trial. Some observe this piece of providence in the hedgehog, that in summer she hoardeth up food in some hollow tree, where she hideth herself in hard weather.¹ Surely the Christian should not be inferior in prudence to this creature, but lay up against a dear year. The Egyptians in time of plenty laid up abundantly against the seven years of famine, or otherwise they might have starved. The Christian must in fair weather provide for a rainy day; in health and life, prepare for sickness and death, or he will be undone eternally. Oh how cutting is affliction! how killing is death to them whom they surprise on a sudden! Sudden, extraordinary mercies have, like a great quantity of strong waters, slain some; but what, then, will sudden, extraordinary miseries do? Sudden evils are the sorest evils, the most searching evils.

He that is ready armed, and prepared for his enemy, hath a very great advantage of him who is surprised on a sudden, and when he is not aware. Some say of the cockatrice, if a man see him first, he dieth, but if he see the man first, the man dieth. If a Christian see affliction first, by a provident foresight, it loseth all its rigour and venom: it can do a man no harm; but if that see a man

¹ Arist., lib. de Gen., cap. 5.

first, it often killeth him. As strong physic meeting with a very foul body, it hasteneth his end.

The ship must be rigged before the storm, for then it will be too late. Cæsar cashiered that soldier who was found whetting his weapons when he should have been using them. It will be sad with thee if thy grace be to get, as it was with the five foolish virgins, when thy grace is to use, and God should call thee to a winter of affliction before thou hast laid in provision. It is very sad, but certain, many a man's work is to do when his time is done.

Naturalists observe,¹ that whilst the halcyon bird is breeding her eggs, and bringing forth her young, there is usually fair weather, whence we call good times halcyon days. She neglecteth not any of those days, but sitteth close on her nest, and is very diligent in bringing forth, lest, if there should be a change of weather, the waters should grow high, and her young ones be in danger of drowning. Reader, now God giveth thee health and strength, and Sabbaths and seasons of grace, do not loiter, but improve them to the uttermost, in laying up a good foundation against the time of need. Alas ! thou knowest not how soon the weather may alter. God may speedily call thee to great changes in thy life. He will certainly call thee to a great change at death, and how wilt thou do to undergo them, if thou dost not make preparation for them ? It is preparation for suffering which will cause them to be, not mortal, but medicinal to thy soul.

As Anaxagoras said when he heard of his son's death, *Scio me genuisse mortalem*, I know that I begot one that was mortal. So when a Christian shall be called from wealth to want, from prosperity to persecution, if he can say, I know that Christ and his cross usually go together ; I know that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and that I must, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven ; I know that religion might cost me my estate, my limbs, my liberty, and my life ; that if I would reign with Christ, I must suffer with him. All this I know beforehand, and I resolved upon it, and provided for it. The cross will never break the back of this man. The holy apostle did believe that bonds and afflictions did abide him in every city, Acts xx. 23, and being forewarned he was forearmed. He looked for those guests, and provided against their coming ; hence it was that he was so pious and patient under, and so victorious over, them all. A person who now enjoyeth honours and riches, who

¹ Plin. Nat. Hist., lib. x. cap. 13.

prepareth for disgrace and want when God calleth him to it, is like one that descendeth from the uppermost room in a high house, to the cellar, the lowermost, by stairs ; he cometh safely down ; whereas another, who is unprepared, when he is brought from a high to a low estate, doth, as the devil would have had Christ, cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and thereby break his neck. 'A prudent man,' saith the wise man, 'foreseeth evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished,' Prov. xxvii. 12. Afflictions are often called falls in Scripture. A wise man when he falls, possibly from freedom to fetters, from soundness to sickness, from life to death, he falleth forwards, which is a great advantage to a man ; his hands will help therein to secure his head. He falleth into those troubles he did foresee, and for which he did provide and forecast. But when a simple man falleth, it may be from glory to ignominy, from a palace to a prison, from life to death, he falleth backward, like old Eli, and breaks his neck. He did not think of it beforehand, nor prepare for it, and therefore his fall is his downfall. He, many times, never riseth more. When once he is thrown, he is overthrown for ever. To help thee herein, I shall advise thee to these two things :—

First, Be sure thy peace be made with God. When the back is sound, a man may carry a burden cheerfully, but if the back be wounded and sore, a small burden will put a man to much pain, nay, he will be ready to flinch, and shrink, and throw it off. So when the conscience is sore with the guilt of sin, and curse of the law, and wrath of God, and fear of hell-fire, what torture and torment will afflictions put this man to. A small sword with these edges will cut deep, a little potion imbittered with these ingredients will make his back and belly, his head and heart, and all to ache to purpose. But when the conscience is sound, as being healed by the blood of Christ, and thereby reconciled to the blessed God, this man may bear a great burden with courage, and bid whatever befalls him welcome, as knowing it comes from a God in covenant : Rom. v. 1–3, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' We glory in tribulation. We glory in disgrace, we triumph in troubles ; *καυχώμεθα*, the word speaketh the highest note that joy can possibly reach ; joy with boasting, with exultation. But mark, reader, the rich wine which did thus raise the spirits and rejoice the hearts of Christians : 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' Peace with God hath such a sweetening property, that it will make the bitterest potion pleasant. They need not fear the saddest fits, whoever carry this

rich cordial about them ; what dangers and deaths may not they look in the face who have a reconciled God to countenance and encourage them ?

A person who hath secured his eternal life, may with courage bear any temporal losses. What is sickness of the body to him who hath a sound soul ? How little are they troubled at the frowns of men, who enjoy the favour of God ! The Hebrews could take the spoiling of their goods joyfully, knowing that they had a more enduring substance, Heb. x. 34. They who have all their portion and happiness in outward things, may well lay the loss of them to heart, for they are undone ; they were worth but a little, and this little is lost. But he that hath God for his friend may abide the most fiery trial without fear.

When there cometh a storm, and the ship leaketh, how can it do otherwise than sink ? Friend, if a storm of some extraordinary civil danger, or of sickness or death come, and the vessel of thy soul leak, be found in a carnal, unregenerate state, having God for thine enemy, and hell for thy heritage, it is impossible but thou shouldest sink into the gulf of misery and desperation. Oh how wilt thou do to behold or undergo that danger, which for aught thou knowest may both kill thee and damn thee ! Saints themselves, when they have but a little crack by some sin in their peace with God, have sounded but harshly when they have been stricken and afflicted.

Sin is the sting of every suffering ; if that be taken out, trouble may hum and make a noise, but it can never harm a Christian. Get but thy sins pardoned, and thy God pacified, and thou needest not fear the wrath of men, or rage of devils. He that hath drunk poison, vomits it quickly up, or if he drinketh after it he dieth. When thou art overtaken in sin, be quick in thy repentance, and petition for pardon, that so affliction may not surprise thee before thou hast made thy peace. The great question to every affliction must be that which the elders propounded to Samuel when they trembled at his coming, 'Comest thou peaceably ?' 1 Sam. xvi. If it answer, Peaceably, from a God at peace with thee, all will be well ; thou mayest bid it welcome, though it be death itself, for it cometh purposely to anoint thee, (as Samuel did David), to a glorious and eternal kingdom.

2. If thou wouldest in prosperity prepare for adversity, get thine affections mortified to all the comforts of this life. Though outward favours cling about thee, yet let thine heart climb above them. He who counteth all worldly gains to be small, will never count any

worldly loss to be great.¹ Excessive love to the creature causeth excessive grief in the loss of creatures. A man may pull off his glove quickly and quietly, but not his skin, because this sticks close to his flesh. The closer the world cleaves to us, the harder it will be to part it from us.

Jacob was overmuch perplexed at Joseph's supposed death; though his children came to comfort him, he refused to be comforted. But mark the cause of his impatient carriage, he over-loved, he over-valued him, Gen. xxxvii. 35. What we over-love in the fruition, we over-lament in its amission; we never err in our actions, till we err in our affections; and we never err in our affections, till we err in our judgments. According to the price we set upon things, such is our pleasure and joy in their presence, and our pain and sorrow in their absence; they who esteem the world as their portion, may well weep and wail at parting. He who wisely rates the world according to its true worth, (vanity of vanities, all is vanity,) will neither be proud of its smiles, nor perplexed much at its frowns.

Holy Paul was ready for all conditions: 'I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.' It was all one to him whether God called him to a prison or to a palace, to a pleasant dinner or a painful death. But what made him so indifferent, and so ready for worldly afflictions? Truly, because he had mortified his earthly affections. He was crucified to the world; as a dead man, he did neither hear its music, nor fear its furnace; as a crucified person, he was neither tickled with its favours, nor troubled at its fury, Acts xxi. 13; Gal. vi. 14. It is easy to cut off the limbs of a dead man; whether he be used courteously or cruelly it is all one to him, for he takes notice of neither. He who is dead to the world, is the only man that lives indeed.

He may defy earth and hell, and be happy in spite of both, who hath but a heart weaned from the earth, and placed in heaven.² Reader, thou wilt patiently bear the loss of that to which thou hast but little love. It will be no hard thing to persuade thee to live apart from the world, if beforehand thou hast given it a bill of divorce. Study the emptiness of sublunary things, and when God puts them into thy hands, do thou put them under thy feet; hereby thou wilt be contented to leave them at God's call.

The meteors which are caused by fogs that arise out of the earth, never imprint any real evil on the sun and stars, which are far

¹ Eum nulla adversitas dejicit, quem nulla prosperitas corrumpit.—*Greg. Mor.*

² Fidem secunda poscunt, adversa exigunt.—*Senec. in Agamem.*

distant ; but in the lower region, by reason of their nearness to the earth, they often break out into thunder and lightning.¹ When earthly comforts lie near the heart, they must needs cause strange storms and tempests ; but when the heart is far from them, and much above them, there is no danger of evil by them. Therefore, friend, love heaven as thy paradise, and look on earth but as the place of thy pilgrimage, then thou wilt cheerfully travel in all ways, whether fair or foul, it will be enough that they lead to thy home.

What I am now writing is of no mean concernment to thy soul. Troubles will come possibly, nay, probably in the day of thy life, however in an hour of death, and what wilt thou do to meet thine enemies if thou art unarmed ? Tacitus speaketh of Cæcina (Annal., lib. i.,) that he was acquainted with dangers beforehand, and therefore so provident for them, as not to be fearful of them. None feel evil more when it comes, than those who would not prepare for them.

Thus, reader, I have finished what I intended to offer touching thy godliness in a prosperous estate. Shall I persuade thee so to demean thyself in it, that thy temporal benefits may not prove spiritual curses, but spiritual blessings ? Josephus tells us² that James, the son of Alpheus, was by commandment of Annas the high priest thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, and so lost his natural life. Alas ! how many hath Satan thrown down from the pinnacle of their high places and preferments to the loss of their eternal lives ! He catcheth those fish in a glistening pool, which he could not in a troubled sea ; though he could not get Christ to turn stones into bread, yet he gets men to turn bread into stones ; the mercies of God into the weapons of unrighteousness.

Plancus Plautius, hiding himself in the time of the proscription, was found out only by the smell of the sweet oils wherewith he was wont luxuriously to anoint himself, and so slain.³ Take thou heed, reader, lest what is given thee for meat to be nutritive, be turned into poison, and prove destructive ; but consider God's end in all his gracious acts, and endeavour to answer it, ' He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness : and gave them the land of the heathen : and they inherited the labour of the people ; that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord,' Ps. cv. 43-45.

¹ Tempore sic duro est inspicienda fides.—*Ovid*.

² Antiq., xx. cap. 8.

³ Camerer. Med. Hist. Cent., i. cap. 20.

A good wish of a Christian in prosperity, wherein the former heads are epitomised.

A prosperous condition, being a sweet fruit of divine beneficence, and a strong obligation to obedience, both as it encourageth me to serve so bountiful a master, and as it affordeth me more talents and instruments of doing his work, I wish that I may never turn his grace into wantonness, nor suffer the showers of heaven's mercy to increase or ripen the weeds of my corruptions; but that as the heat of the sun putteth out the fire, so the warm beams of divine love may extinguish the fire of lust in my soul, and my heart may be so affected with his bounty as to be the more abundant in duty. Oh that, though others feed their hellish flame of uncleanness, drunkenness, pride, revenge, and atheism, with such fuel, as if they were delivered to do all these abominations, yet I may fear the Lord and his goodness, and the goodness of my God may lead me to repentance! Lord, since the renovation of my nature, and the reformation of my life, is the message upon which thou sendest thy mercies, let me never cause thee to miss of thine end, nor them of their errand; but let thy mercies prevail with me, to present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, to thy Majesty, which is my reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1.

I desire that I may often and seriously consider the horrid, heinous nature of sins against divine favours, the more to quicken me to caution, lest I should abuse my God's compassions. If the word of God brand Ahaz for sinning in his distress, with how black a coal shall I be marked by God himself, if I sin after deliverances! If not to hear the voice of the rod bring down such wrath, what fury will be my portion if I am deaf to the entreaties of mercy! When justice pursueth me, mercy can protect me; but if by abusing mercy I make it my foe, how can I ever hope to have justice my friend! If it be unworthiness and a high wickedness to fight against a prince, with a costly sword which he had sent his subject as a present, what is it for me to fight against God himself with his own favours! Christians must do good for evil. How contrary am I then to a Christian, if I return evil for good! Heathen themselves will requite good with good, and have abhorred the contrary; and shall I put off the nature of a man? The ox, though a dull beast, knoweth his owner, and shall I be below a brute? If my God be provoked with them that return evil for evil to their fellow-creatures, how much will he be incensed if I return

evil for good, and that to himself, the infinite Creator? Great persons cannot endure that their favours should be slighted, and will my God bear it, if his mercies be abused? Lord, should I, as Benhadad against Ahab, war against thee with that life which thou hast given me, would it not at last prove my death? And ah! how miserable would it be to be pressed to death with the weight of mercies, and to sink into hell under a load of loving-kindness! Oh let me never be guilty of such monstrous ingratitude! but since grace, and reason, and nature itself are against unthankfulness, cause me to hate it with perfect hatred, and out of thankfulness to thee, to walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all my days.

I wish that my desire to evidence my uprightness to my own conscience, may make me the more holy in my highest condition. Godliness in prosperity will best speak my sincerity. The day of light and comforts is a fitter season to discover the colour and complexion of the soul than the night of darkness and sorrows. An Ahab may walk softly when a writ is sent out against him, or upon a commination; a Pharaoh may cry for mercy when he is arrested upon an execution; but he is a Job, a rare person indeed, that can walk in a high place and not be giddy, abound in grace when he abounds in goods, and keep his heart within the compass of its duty to God and man when he is laden with comforts. Lord, though the hottest seasons discover others' spiritual diseases, and, like wild beasts, when the chains of affliction are taken off, that they enjoy their liberty, they bewray their wantonness and lusts, let me be faithful to thee, when thou art merciful to me; and the more thou discoverest thy love, the more let me discover that thy law is written in my heart, by a gracious and exemplary life.

Because prosperity is too often abused to profaneness, I wish that, as the dove, when I fare best I may fear most, and I walking in such a slippery place may walk the more warily. Bees are suffocated in their own honey, their combs being melted by the heat of the sun. How many, like those poor insects, find their death in that which they laboured for with so much diligence! In the warmest climates men live the shortest lives. Grace, like the palm-tree, seldom groweth in hot soils. Man's corrupt nature hath ever a will to commit wickedness, but sometimes it wanteth power. Now prosperity gives him strength and opportunity, which he useth, or rather abuseth, to his ruin. The prosperity of fools slayeth them. Nay, wise men have stumbled when they have drunk of this strong drink. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned

in water, is himself no sooner delivered but he is drowned in wine. Lot is scarce preserved out of Sodom but he is polluted with sin. Yea, Solomon, the wisest king that ever the world had, was as notorious for apostasy as famous for prosperity. Lord, let others' falls make me to fear. Alas! if such torches were like to be blown out with the strong gales, in what danger is my poor rush-candle! If their load of benefits weighed them down, notwithstanding their strength, how surely will such burdens, though of precious things, break my weak back, unless thou puttest under thine everlasting arm! Though thy mercies be as the sail and wind, to further the vessel of my soul in its heavenly voyage, yet, except thy Spirit steer, they will drive another way. Oh, let thy grace to me, and thy grace in me, like the unicorn's horn, so heal those waters, which are apt, through corruptions, to poison my soul, that I may drink of them without danger, and be so refreshed thereby as with more speed and cheerfulness to run the ways of thy commandments.

I wish that I may keep a strong watch at that door at which Satan waiteth to enter; I mean, that I may be specially careful against those sins to which a prosperous estate makes me most prone. Ephraim and Manasseh, plenty and forgetfulness, are brethren. I am most apt to forget my God in my high estate, when he hath remembered me in my low estate. The more wealth, the more wanton. After good showers worms crawl; flies will settle on these sweet conserves; sin cleaves to wealth as rust to money. Men, like apes, when they climb high, discover most of their deformities. How prone am I to be proud when I prosper, to suffer my heart to swell with my heaps, and to boast myself in the multitude of my riches! Though the more mercies I receive, the more I am in debt here, and the greater will be my account hereafter; yet, as a new-blown bladder, my heart is ready to be puffed up with every blast, and, as a beggar, to be proud of my borrowed clothes. Lord, the greater sum in thine eye, let me be the lesser in my own; keep me humble in my highest estate, knowing that thy mere mercy, not my merit, is the sole cause of all my comforts, for I am much less than the least of all thy mercies.

I wish that my trust may have a surer foundation than these things which are vain and fading. My confidence is due, not to dead goods, but to the living God. My God can brook no rival, especially in that which is his prerogative-royal. If I make an idol of creatures, he will quickly make nothing of them; by leaning on these staves I break them in pieces. Should I rely on them,

I take the way to make them take their wings and fly away. Besides, if I say to gold, Thou art my hope, or to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, I deny and dishonour the God that is above. It is sinful for a wife to give that respect to her husband's picture which belongs only to his person; but it is abominable to give it to some small present which he sendeth her. I may not trust my graces, much less my riches. Lord, though I am rich in this world, preserve me from the inflammation of pride. Whilst I condemn others for their poverty, I wound thee in thy providence, who givest every one his portion. Let me not, therefore, be high-minded, or trusting in uncertain riches; but enable me to trust in thee, the living God, who givest me all things richly to enjoy.

I wish that this rich wine may never so fly up into my head, or so possess my heart, as to make me mindless of what I do, or senseless of what others suffer. Prosperity not seldom begetteth security. They who drink wine freely, little think of others' water or wormwood. Experience of misery is a strong provocation to mercy. Israel did the more pity strangers because they were strangers in the land of Egypt; but they who live all their days in ease are little affected with others' pain. I have read that the Jews, when they build a house, will leave some part of it unfinished, in remembrance that Jerusalem lieth desolate; at least some part unplastered, wherein they write in great letters, *Zecher Lechorban*, the memory of the desolation. Lord, in my greatest plenty, help me to mind and feel others' poverty, and in my most prosperous condition keep me from forgetting the afflictions of thy Joseph.

I wish that I may esteem myself, not by the abundance of creatures, but by the unsearchable riches that are in Christ. All my outward comforts are but ciphers, and signify nothing of special love, or of my right to eternal life. He that was rich on earth, faring deliciously every day, is a beggar in hell, frying in those unquenchable flames. The fairest trees are soonest marked for felling. How beautiful is a field of corn one day, when it is cut down the next! Many are high in place, whose portion is in the bottomless pit. The money-changers were scourged out of the temple, as having little interest amongst God's people. The poor of the world are the heirs of heaven; the rich have commonly their portion in this life. Why should I value myself by that which God gives to his foes, and denieth to his chiefest favourites? Can I carry my earthly favours into hell with me, to bribe my flames, or corrupt my tormentors? No. As I came into this world naked, so I must go out of the world naked. Neither my glory nor my

goods shall descend after me. Or can I with my possessions buy out my pardon before I come thither? No. The redemption of my soul is more precious, for all my treasure it must cease for ever. Lord, suffer me not to 'lay up for myself a treasure on earth, which rust or moth may corrupt,' but let me provide myself 'bags that wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.' Let me ever esteem myself by thy favour, and not by these things which thy saints have trampled under their feet.

I wish that I may acknowledge my God to be the giver and author of all my mercies, that so I may bless him when he blesseth me. Though I reap a rich harvest, yet my God sowed all the corn; if I refuse to pay my rent I forfeit my lease. I can rationally expect the showers of blessings no longer than I continue to send up vapours of praises. Unthankfulness is the devil's sponge, wherewith he would wipe God's mercies out of my mind; but thankfulness is God's treasure and honour: 'He that offereth praise, glorifieth me.' Oh that I might never be worse than a Samaritan, in denying to praise him who prospereth me. The Philistines, upon the receipt of mercies, would offer sacrifice to their Dagon, the Romans to their Jupiter Capitolinus. When the god of this world hath his trophies erected, shall the God of heaven, who loadeth me and mine with benefits, go without? 'O Lord my God, how many are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to me-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered,' Ps. xl. 5. I beseech thee, enable me to use all thy favours to me and mine, as so many stones to rear up and raise a pillar and monument of praise to thy name, and let the name of it be written on it, 'Ebenezer, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' Yet I desire that when I am offering this sacrifice of thanksgiving to my God, my heart may be most affected with, and enlarged for, spiritual blessings. My God is worthy of glory for giving me health, food, raiment, friends, and all temporal benefits, when many others are racked with sickness, vexed with hunger, and pinched with poverty; but oh! what thanks doth he deserve for his gospel, his ordinances, his Spirit, and his dear Son! If the favours of his left hand, which his enemies may enjoy, call for praise, what hallelujahs may the favours of his right hand, the favours of his favourites, command? Lord, it will be the work of eternity to give honour, glory, praise, and thanks to thy Majesty for redeeming me to thyself by the blood of thy Son; help me to

ply this duty beforehand, that my soul may be put in tune here, to make the better music in heaven.

I wish that my heart, under the sunshine of prosperity, may (like wood laid out a-sunning) be the sooner fired, and the more inflamed with love to my God. His mercies are love-tokens, his kindnesses are cords of love; by these gifts which he presents me with, he wooeth for my affections. I can love my father, my friends, from whom I receive some small favours; and shall I not love my God, who is the fountain and father of all my mercies? Lord, let thy great love to me, as the beams of the sun united, kindle love in me; thou lovest, that thou may be loved. Circumcise my heart, that I may love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength. Though I love thee much for thy compassion to me, let me love thee most for those perfections in thee; for thou art altogether lovely. When I was nothing, before I had a being, thou didst love me; when I was worse than nothing, in my blood and pollution, thou didst love me; the time of loathing was a time of love. In the womb, by thee I was wonderfully and curiously wrought; in my body I have not so many limbs as tokens of thy love. But oh! in my soul, capable of thy fear and favour, of thy love and likeness, how lively doth thy love appear! From my birth to this moment, all thy paths towards me have been mercy and truth. In my infancy thou wast my nurse, to preserve me from those knocks and falls to which I was liable. As I grew up, mercy grew up together with me. The journal of my whole life is but a volume of thy love. And shall (as too much wood puts out the fire) the multitude of thy mercies lessen my love? Lord, suffer me not to be so ungrateful, but as thou art infinitely both loving and lovely, let me think all my love too little for so worthy an object; and let my only measure of loving thee be to love thee without measure. Though others love thee only for their own sakes, because thou fillest their houses with good things, hence (as Amnon served Tamar, who was first sick for her, and having satisfied his lust was as sick of her) when they have served their own ends, they leave off to serve thee; let me love thee for thine own sake, as well for thy purity and holiness, as for thy mercy and goodness; let me love thee as my King and Lord, not only because thou art able to advance and prefer me, but also because thou dost command and purify me. Let me love thee striking me as well as stroking me: when thy hand is against me in the greatest affliction, let my heart be towards thee with the greatest affection; yea, cause my love, like lime, to be the hotter

for all waters of opposition, to be always increasing, till it comes to its perfection.

I wish that I may be a faithful steward in the improvement of my talents, and that the work I do my God may be answerable to the cost and charge he is at with me. My God is the owner of all I have—the fee-simple is his; I am but the possessor to employ it for his praise. Other creatures thrive somewhat answerable to their keeping; the better the pasture, the fatter is the beasts. Hares have longer legs behind than before, and therefore run the faster up hill; why should not I, who have more helps than others, make more haste than they up thy holy hill of Sion? Those whom my God calleth to the highest places, he calleth to the greatest service. If he planteth his vineyard in his best ground, he expecteth the most plentiful clusters of grapes. Oh that the rent which I pay to him might be somewhat proportionable to the lands which I hold of him! My God hath made me to be, not a cistern to hold in, but to be a conduit-pipe to convey out, the water of his blessings; I would not therefore, as the moon, who receiveth from the sun a full light, but reflecteth only a faint light again, return less than I receive from my God; much less, as fatted beasts, be the more unfitted for service, or like a carcase, be the more unsavoury for the hot beams of mercy. But, Lord, help me to be the more fruitful in holiness for the showers of thy goodness; let thy Spirit enable me to trade answerable to my talents, and let thy grace encourage me to be always abounding in thy work, believing that thou wilt at last recompense me with a glorious and eternal reward.

I wish that I may be so prudent and provident, as in a summer of prosperity to prepare and provide for a winter of adversity. Though the heavens are now clear and shining, yet they will be cloudy and showering. I cannot imagine that the day of my life should have no foul weather on it; there is no mountain so firm but may be moved with an earthquake. If men in policy will prepare a cloak for the wet, lay in provision for winter, shall I lay in nothing against a rainy day? This life is a valley of tears, and shall I think always to laugh? This world is a sea, and though now it be calm to me, yet I must expect tempests, and shall I not rig and fit the vessel of my soul before the storm cometh? Even silly pismires will in harvest provide for winter. The bee will gather honey whilst the flowers are in the field, to prevent her famishing in frost and snow, and some say, will foresee bad weather, and therefore go but a little way from her hive, that upon the least

alteration she may return speedily home. My God hath made me their master, but I may well be their scholar, to learn this lesson from them. Oh that, whilst health, and life, and time lasteth, I might prepare for sickness, death, and eternity ! To deny myself, and take up my cross, is a hard lesson ; but that scholar will say it best when called to it, that cons it most beforehand. How sore will those evils be which surprise me on a sudden ! like an enemy that comes behind me, and is unseen, they may easily kill me. Lord, cause me in my greatest plenty and best estate to think of and prepare for poverty, and the worst estate that can befall me.

To this end, let me be always suing out my pardon in thy gospel-office, that the evil of sin and the evil of suffering may not seize on me at the same time. How deep will the sword of affliction wound me, if sin sharpen its edge ! I may bear many miseries through thy mercy, but the least sin is a burden too heavy for me to bear. Affliction without sin is physic, which, though not toothsome, I can drink, if my Father put it into my hands ; but sin mingled with it, turns the potion into loathsome poison. Lord, let me, a poor condemned prisoner by the law, never be satisfied without some hope and sense of my pardon ; that so, whatsoever officer of affliction thou shalt send me, I may be nothing affrighted, being confident he cannot come to drag me to execution.

That I may be ever ready for the greatest losses and crosses ; I wish also that my heart may be loose to all the comforts of this life. If I give my heart to them, when they are taken from me, I may well be heartless. Alas ! my estate and my comfort will be buried in the same grave. Affections unmortified will be soon wounded, as a scalded head is soon broken ; the young man whose heart was set upon his heaps, could not think of parting with them without much heaviness. If I lay the stress of my affections on the things of this world, as the cripple his full weight on his crutches, no wonder if, when they are taken from me, I fall and bruise myself. When the vapours are gotten within the bowels of the earth, they may well cause concussions and earthquakes. Oh that my affections might be so weaned from all earthly possessions, and so placed on heavenly comforts, that I may be able to bless my God taking from me as fully as when he giveth to me. Lord, though I take outward mercies, let them never take me. Though I use the world, let me enjoy none but thyself. Thou madest me to be master of the work of thy hands, and hast put all things under my feet ; oh let me not be their servant by laying them in my heart. As thine apostle, when he had nothing, pos-

sessed all things; so, though I have all things, let me possess nothing.

Finally, I wish that, as a skilful alchymist, I may extract gold out of iron, improve these temporal blessings to my spiritual benefit; that whilst they are millstones to others, through their wicked hearts, sinking them into hell, they may be loadstones to me, through thy Holy Spirit, drawing me towards heaven. Lord, if the mercies of thy footstool be of such a price, how much worth are the mercies of thy throne! If uncertain riches bring such comfort, and are of such value as to answer all things, of what virtue are durable riches and righteousness! If the honour of men be so desirable, how amiable is that honour which cometh from God! If corporeal liberty be so precious, how precious is the glorious liberty of thy children! If a table spread with creature enjoyments be such savoury food, surely thy gospel dainties make a costly feast. If bodily health help me to relish these outward comforts, will not thy saving health sweeten the bitterest cup? If thou art so liberal to thy foes, how bountiful wilt thou be to thy friends and favourites! Put me not off with a portion in this life. Give me not my reward, my consolation, in this world; but whatsoever thou deny me, give me those mercies that accompany salvation. Though thou grantest me a plentiful allowance in my minority, let it not hinder me of the inheritance when I come to age. Whilst I have these things in possession, let me esteem thee only as my portion. Oh look upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou art unto them that love thy name. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

*How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in adversity.
Containing motives to it, and the nature of it.*

Adversity is a condition of life which consisteth in the want of outward good things, and presence of outward evil things, as sickness, disgrace, poverty, imprisonment, and the like.

1. The efficient cause of it is God. Whosoever or whatsoever be the rod, it is his hand that gives the stroke.¹ Though he abhorreth the thoughts of tempting men to sin—‘Let no man say when he is

¹ Afflictio est malum quod patitur creatura rationalis, cedens in gloriam Dei et electorum salutem.—*Polan. Syntag.*, lib. vi. cap. 4. Metonymice dicitur ira Dei.—*Rom.* i. 18. Metaphorice calamitas; Synecdochice, Visitatio.

tempted, I am tempted of God : for God tempteth no man,' James i. 13—yet he challengeth the power of bringing men to suffer. 'Is there any evil in the city which I have not done?' Amos iii. He created the natural light, and he formeth civil darkness, Isa. xlv. 7. The heathen hammered at this, that the same power dispenseth both comforts and crosses, when they painted fortune in two forms, with two faces of contrary colours, the foremost white, the hindermost black, to signify that good and evil came both from goddess Fortune,¹ 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7.

2. The meritorious cause of it is sin. The evil of corruption doth naturally beget the evil of affliction. Sin is the vapours and wind which causeth all these storms and tempests. 'Why doth living man complain? man suffereth for his sin,' Lam. iii. 39. Sin and suffering came into the world together : man had never tasted these sour herbs if he had not eaten of the forbidden fruit. Sin is the worm at the root of our tree of comforts, which, when it spreads fair, and is fully laden, makes it wither and die. And sin is the only mother that breedeth and bringeth forth all these Benonis, sons of our sorrows. Indeed, every affliction is not for sin; yet every affliction is from sin. Sin is sometimes the natural cause of affliction, as intemperance of sickness, but it is ever the moral cause of affliction, 1 Kings xiii. 24; Micah vii. 9.

3. The formal cause of it is the absence of something necessary or convenient for us, or the presence of something troublesome or tedious to us. No affliction at present is joyous, but grievous. It is a potion which, though profitable, is not pleasant—a medicine which may be wholesome, but is not toothsome. Afflicting days are therefore called evil days, Eccles. xii. 1. And those that are afflicted find and feel them to be evil, and for that cause are said to be in heaviness, and to have no pleasure in them, 1 Pet. i. 6.

4. The final cause of it is either to prove or to purify.

(1.) Sometimes God afflicteth to prove men. Some men have strong backs, and therefore God layeth on them heavy burdens, that their strength may appear to his honour. The master who hath excellent scholars desireth that they may be examined, and posed thoroughly, because their profiting doth thereby appear to his praise. The Lord of hosts hath in his army of saints some heroic spirits, who delight to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field, against the world and wicked one for his sake. Now he calleth

¹ In rebus adversis cogitandum est homines et diabolum posse esse illarum ministros et instrumenta; verum a Deo tanquam potissima causa immitti.—*Pet., Mart. Neces. in viii. cap. Exod.*

those valiant soldiers to dangerous services, that their noble exploits and conquests might redound to their general's renown and credit.¹ Job and Paul shall be picked out and sent upon the forlorn hope, to proclaim to the whole earth, that weak, dying man can overcome hell itself, through the assistance of Heaven. When the servant is put upon some extraordinary work, and performeth it well, both his master and himself are honoured thereby, Job ii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 7.

(2.) God usually afflicteth to purify. He sendeth sharp frosts to kill the weeds of sin; Isa. xxvii. 9, 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away their sin.' He useth his knife to cut out what is rotten in the fruit, and his hatchet to hew off the hard knots from his timber.² As refiners of sugar take much sugar out of a chest, some of which they melt often, and some but once, and the reason is because they intend to make the former more pure and white; so God giveth some affliction as physic, which they take but seldom, at spring and fall, when he giveth it others as diet drink, which they take constantly every day, (as in some sinners there is a legion of devils, so in some saints a legion of distresses,) and the end is to make the latter more healthy, more holy. 'He chastiseth for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. As by black soap we make our clothes white, so doth God, by heavy afflictions, make holy persons. Affliction is like a sink, in itself unsavoury, but the whole house is the cleaner for it.

My work, reader, is to direct thee how thou mayest, like Samson, fetch meat out of this eater, and take this physic which is so unpleasing to thy flesh, for the greatest profit and advantage of thy spirit. If thou wilt take Scripture for thy rule, the wind of affliction may make the coal of thy graces to blaze the more by its blowing on them. Sweet spices, the more they are pounded, the more fragrant smell they send forth. The gold of grace shineth most brightly in the fire. The vulture feedeth and fetcheth nourishment from things of ill savour, and so may the Christian from what his God calls him to suffer. Wine will draw much good out of the flesh of vipers. The believer may gather grapes from those thorns, and figs from these thistles.

¹ Augustinus assignat fideles castigari, tribus de causis. 1. Ad demonstrationem debitæ miseræ. 2. Ad emendationem labilis vitæ. 3. Ad exercitationem necessariæ patientiæ.—*Tractat. in Johan.*, 124.

² Afflictiones humiliter sustinentes, cœlestia multiplicant.—*Greg. Homil. Super. Evang.*

Saints in this life must look to suffer. Affliction is their portion. They must not be Christians if they will not take up their cross. It was a notable speech of Sir Horace Vere, Baron of Tilbury, when in the Palatinate a council of war was called, and a Dutch lord said that it was dangerous to fight, for the emperor had many pieces of ordnance. My lords, if you fear the mouth of a cannon, you must never come into the field. They who fear hardships must not set out for heaven. In the world ye shall have tribulation; in this sea ye must expect tempests, John xvi. 33. Saints are ships richly laden, therefore will have many pirates watching for them, to rob and spoil them. Every one will have a cudgel for a tree laden with fruit. The thief striveth most to meet the traveller that hath most money in his purse. The highest and richest Christian is most eyed and envied by the enemies of our salvation.¹

Satan's rage is greatest against the people of God. It is the corn, not the chaff, he takes such pains to winnow. The tiger is enraged at the smell of sweet odours; so is the devil at the sweet scent of the saints' graces. If Christ's soldiers will storm heaven, and take it by force, he is resolved they shall have hot work of it, for he will raise all the powers of hell to oppose them. Many of those storms which vex the saints, as that which blew down the house of Job's children, are raised by Satan. He troubleth the waters, thinking that then it is the best fishing. The prince of the air raiseth the winds of affliction, hoping that the vessels of Christians' souls will be brought thereby to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Though all his winds tend, by God's over-ruling providence, to settling, yet he hopes thereby to overturn those trees that are planted in the house of the Lord. When we hear of any troubles and hardships befalling them that are holy, we may ask the question, which David did to the widow of Tekoah of Joab, Is not the hand of the devil in all this? He hath hand in most of their sins, and at least a finger in most of their sufferings. Like a dog, he barketh seldom at those of his own family, but always at strangers.

The world hateth the saints, and this is another cause why they meet with so many crosses. When the wind and tide cross each other, then are the greatest tempests.² They that are after the spirit are contrary to, and therefore persecuted by, them that are after the flesh. Contraries never meet but they fight. Saints are

¹ *Dura fidelium militia, ut exerceatur eorum fides.—Calvin in Ps. xxxix.*

² *Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum, Tendimus in cœlum.*

strangers here—‘ I am a stranger in this earth,’ Ps. cxix. 19—and it is ordinary for natives to gather themselves together against, and to abuse, strangers. Even princes in disguise,—such all God’s children are,—suffer many affronts.

God hath decreed the saints to distress. As he foreappointed them to heaven, so he foreappointed them to heaviness and hardships. ‘ Unto which also ye were appointed,’ saith the apostle, 1 Thes. iii. 3. The same God that appointed them to a crown as their end, appointed them to the cross as the way ;¹ and that they must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven. The wilderness is the road to Canaan. Christ went by Bethany, the house of grief, to Jerusalem, the vision of peace. What was said of Christ may be said of a Christian, ‘ Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory ? ’ Luke xxiv. 26. None ever yet went to heaven without combats and conflicts. Christians must therefore be always ready for, that they may be steady in, these storms. The wise man saith, ‘ If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,’ Prov. xxiv. 10. Yet it is true, he that standeth in a day of misery, his strength is great. Adversity hath strong temptations attending it as well as prosperity. Those who have conquered the world’s allurements, have been foiled by its affrightments. More clothes are required in winter than in summer. Though a small candle may be kept alight in a close room, yet in the open air, in a windy night, a torch is needful.

The philosopher tells us, they are the stronger sheep that hold the frost when it falleth ; those to be weak that through feebleness shake it off.² He is a skilful pilot indeed that can steer his vessel aright in storms, amidst rocks and sands.

Reader, in the prosecution of this particular, viz., that thou mayest exercise thyself to godliness in this estate, I shall,

1. Propound some motives to quicken thee to caution in this condition.

2. Speak to the matter, or shew thee wherein the power of religion doth manifest itself in affliction.

3. Offer thee some means or helps for the performance of it. I begin with the motives.

First, Consider, affliction will search whether thou art sound or no. Great troubles are great trials. Hence it is that afflictions

¹ Nulla calamitas casu aut cæco infortunio et sine voluntate Dei contingit, sed juxta æternum Dei consilium ; nam si ne pilus capitis, multo minus magna calamitas, sine voluntate Patris venit.—*Polan. Syn.*

² Arist. Hist. Anim., lib. viii. cap. 10.

are called temptations: 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,' James i. 2—*i.e.*, into divers trials. Grace is brought to the proof, when it is brought to persecution; as gold to the trial, when to the touchstone. A saint comes to the test, when he comes to tribulation. The soldier's knowledge or ignorance, courage or cowardice, will appear when the enemy, strong and subtle, meets him in the field.

Many trees are thought sound and fast in the earth, till a high wind turneth them up by the roots, and discovereth them to be rotten. Much scouring will manifest whether a vessel be gilded only, or all gold. The hearts of some had never been known to have been so unholy, if they had not been brought to great hardships: Mat. xiii. 20, 21, 'He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution because of the word ariseth, he is offended.'

Locusts and grasshoppers are only for the summer season, the winter killeth them. The cuckoo and lizard hide themselves the four cold months. The hypocrite, like the hedgehog, if the wind change, will alter his nest, and be sure to make it in the warmest place. As the river Novanus in Lombardy, though at mid-summer he may seem to overflow the banks, yet in mid-winter he is clean dry.

Magistratus indicat virum. Magistracy will discover the man, and so will misery. Nature vexed betrayeth itself;¹ when the winds blow, the waters roar: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,' Rev. iii. 10. Crystal looks like pearl, till it comes to the hammer. So do they that have common grace, like those who have true special grace, till they come to the trial; but when the winter is approaching, the former fall off, like leaves in autumn.

Satan, the great politician, knew that some heavy cross, if anything, would bring Job to curse God: 'Touch him, and he will curse thee to thy face,' Job i. Do but touch him with some affliction, and like one that hath a boil or great sore, he will kick and fling to purpose. And indeed he guessed shrewdly; for had not Job been upright, the rod of God's hand would soon have discovered the rottenness of his heart. If the house of his holiness had had no higher foundation than that wherein his children were, and had

¹ Natura vexata prodit seipsam.

been built on the sand, that touch would have thrown it down. If worldly advantages had been the weights which had caused the wheels of his soul to move God-ward, when they had been taken away, he would have stood still.

Reader, hath God brought thy soul into great sufferings? I may say to thee, as Simeon did to the pillar, which he whipped before the earthquake, 'Stand fast, for thou shalt be shaken: take heed, for now thou art trying.' Give not God cause to say of thee, as once of Israel, 'When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria,' Hosea vii. 1. God was wounding Israel, that he might heal it;¹ he lanced their sores, and then their imposthumous matter did appear. Nay, as a physician when he gives physic to remove one disease, by the working of it discovers many; so when God, by his judgments, Hosea vi. 5, would have purged away Israel's sin, they discovered many more sins, and were impatient of their physic, hated to be healed, and like madmen railed and raged against their physicians. Affliction shakes the glass, and then the dreggy settlement in the bottom appears. Affliction, as a drift rain, searcheth the house, whether the windows be well pointed, and the roof well tiled, and often discovereth many places where it leaks, which were not before thought of.

Secondly, God intendeth to sanctify thee, and to make thee better by affliction.² He sendeth prosperity to quicken thee to praise, and he sendeth adversity to stir thee up to patience and prayer. He hath many ways to make his scholars learn their lessons,³ and one is by the rod, which Luther calls *Theologiam Christianorum*, the divinity of Christians; 'Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, and teachest in thy law.' He forceth thee, like the ark, to sail in deep waters, that thy soul might mount the nearer to heaven. The musician hangs his viol within scent of the fire, that when played on, it might make the sweeter music. The blessed God giveth thee bitter aloes to purge away the ill humours in thy heart, and keepeth thee in an afflicted estate, that thy prayers and performances may be more upright, humble, and spiritual, and thereby the more melodious in his ears. The husbandman throweth his seed into deep furrows, and is glad of a sharp winter, because it will thrive the better.

¹ In fornace ardet palea, et purgatur aurum.—*Aug. in Ps. lx.*

² Aurem cordis tribulatio aperit quam sæpe prosperitas claudit.—*Greg. in Moral.*

³ Tanquam in schola aliqua in vita præsentī per morbum, per afflictionem, per tentationes, per paupertates, per cætera item quæ mala esse videntur, erudimur, ut apti efficiamur ad futurorum bonorum perceptionem.—*Chrysost. Homil. Decim. in Epist. ad Roman.*

David taught the men of Ammon by making them pass through the brick-kiln, 2 Sam. xii. 31. He taught them more manners than to abuse his ambassadors, and so wickedly to despise the signs of his good-will. It may be, reader, thou art one that hast slighted God's messengers and message; thou hast taken little notice of his love-letters, his gospel, and his love-tokens, his favours of all sorts. Well, he makes thee pass through the brick-kiln; he brings thee to affliction, to teach thee to prize his ministers, and to value his mercies.

In the promontory Nimphæum, there cometh out a flaming fire, out of a rock which burneth the more for rain.¹ God sendeth the shower of troubles to increase the heat of thy zeal for him, and love to him. Therefore do not frustrate God of his end, let not his labour be lost. If thy friend send a servant to thee, thou wilt not send him away without his errand. If a king send a messenger to thee, what a stir wilt thou make to succeed his message! Affliction is a servant, a messenger from thy sovereign, and thy best friend; do not therefore dismiss him till his business be done, especially pondering that thy God hath sent him for thy profit.

Thirdly, Many are the worse for affliction. Beasts rage the more for being chained up; so do beastly men for the restraint afflictions put upon them. It was a true saying of a martyr, in the days of Queen Mary, to the smith who was fastening the chain with which he was to be bound, Be sure you make it fast, for the flesh will have its course. The flesh, like a violent stream, roareth the more, and riseth the higher, for being stopped. Though the fire heateth the water, and makes it more serviceable, yet it wholly consumeth the wood.² The same flail that purgeth the corn, bruise the stalk. Afflictions that better a saint, and make him more holy, harden a sinner. Sheep when it thundereth cast their young; and how many, when trouble comes, cast away their faith and confidence! Aristotle tells us goats are more impatient of cold than sheep. Ahaz in his distress sinneth more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 22, 23. As a beast by baiting, a wicked man by beating groweth mad and desperate. Every plague on Egypt increased the plague of Pharaoh's heart; his heart, like the smith's anvil, did but wax the harder for being smitten so often. When physic doth not work kindly, but co-operate with the disease, it leaves the patient much worse than it found him. Those that by suffering, as some men by

¹ Plin. Nat. Hist., lib. ii. cap. 170.

² Ignis non est diversus, tamen diversa agit; paleam in cineres vertit, auro sordes tollit.—*Aug. in Ps. xxxi.*

sickness, have been forced to keep their chambers, and have lost their stomachs, yet when they have recovered out of their afflictions, they have had canine appetites, fallen hungrily to their corruptions, and have committed iniquity with the more greediness.

The titmouse is a great destroyer of bees, and the better to obtain his prey, will in winter watch at the door of their hives ; and if any come forth, he snatcheth them ; if none appear, he will knock with his bill, and they flying out to know the cause, are taken and killed. Satan is Apollyon, the great destroyer of souls ; he watcheth, especially in the winter of affliction, to seize and surprise us. He is a cunning fowler, that then especially layeth his snares and lime-twigs, wherewith he taketh and killeth silly birds. When these fore-mentioned flying iusects are benumbed with cold, then mice and rats rob and plunder them.

Physicians tell us, men are never more subject to receive infection, than when their spirits are lowest, and therefore then they prescribe cordials. Experience teacheth us, that when their conditions are lowest, they are apt to take the deadliest contagions. How many, foolishly thinking to rid themselves of their misery, have poisoned their bodies ; and others, to get out of affliction, have polluted and poisoned their souls ! The very sheep of Christ have lost some of their fleece amongst the thorns. Sharp frosts have killed some flowers, and much nipped others.

Indeed the cedar of which the temple was made, was not liable to putrefaction, nor is it possible for the saint to fall finally by affliction : yet when he walketh in these stony ways, if he use not the more watchfulness, he may fall so foully as to wound his conscience, and his comfort, and to make him limp whilst he liveth.

Fourthly, If godliness be thy business, under the cross thou mayest expect God's company. The worse the ways and the weather are in which thou travellest, the more need thou wilt have of good society. Good company will be comfortable, when thou art called to journey in a dangerous road ; especially such a companion will be a mercy as will bear thy charges and thy cross all the way. Truly such a friend will thy God be to thee, if thou goest therein upon his errand. He is not so unkind a master as to leave his servants in the lurch when they fall sick in his service, and even in their sickness are solicitous about his business. Ah, *see thou to that*, may become a wicked Jew, (when his slave is dying in his cursed cause,) but it will never come out of the mouth of the blessed Jesus, Mat. xxvii. 3, 4. The captain of our salvation, as a faithful general, ever goeth foremost to look danger in the face, and seeth

all his soldiers safe before he leaves the field. The Christian's tide of comfort hath not seldom been at the highest, when the waters of affliction have been at the deepest. If the sick child carry himself dutifully, he need not fear but his mother will bring out her sweetmeats and cordials, which were denied him in his health.

Naturalists tell us that those violets are the sweetest which grow near garlic, and such strong-scented herbs, because they draw away any noxious nourishment; sure I am the saints' inward comforts are then often greatest, when their outward conditions are lowest. Under a shower of stones about Stephen's ears, his eyes saw the best sight that ever was seen, Acts vii. 56. If God's sons be in danger of death, then his bowels yearn over them, and he thinks nothing too good for them. Israel had the rarest manifestations of God, when they were in the wilderness. On a watery cloud the sun causeth curious and beautiful colours in the rainbow. Whoever be neglected, the sick child shall be tended, and that not by the maid, but by the mother herself. Though God may leave his prospering saints to angels, yet his afflicted ones shall be sure of his presence and favour, both in the water and in the fire, Isa. xliii. 3, 4.

The hare is called in Greek *δασύπους*, of her hairy feet;¹ this defence nature hath given her, to keep her tender, fleshly feet from galling when she is forced to much running. The only way to keep thy feet from being hurt when thou art pursued by thine enemies, is to be holy, to have thy feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. It is the godly person that, as the Irish, can tread lightly, and run swiftly over those bogs in which others sink and perish.

Reader, I would here only give thee one caution, and then proceed to the second particular. Take heed that thou dost not bring affliction upon thyself, either through thy wickedness or thy wilfulness. All men gather those rods themselves with which they are scourged; but some silly Protestants, like superstitious papists, whip themselves. The lion will beat himself (if there be none to vex him) till he be angry. Some Christians bring themselves into sufferings; every one ought to take up his cross and follow Christ, but they make their crosses either by being evil-doers or busy-bodies. That man can expect little countenance from his parents, whose prodigality and pride hath cast him into a prison; nor that person any encouragement from God, who hath put fetters upon his own legs, and then entreats him to set him at liberty. If, like turpentine, thou drawest fire to thyself, expect to be burnt. The

¹ *Δασύπους* pro lepore a *δασὺς* densus et *πός* pes.—*Arist. Hist. Anim.*, lib. iv.

Lord make me so holy as to choose suffering before sin, and yet withal so wise, as to know for what I suffer. If I sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind, it will be but as the offering up of swine's flesh, an abomination to the Lord. Zopyrus wounded and mangled himself that he might attain his own ends. But though pirates by sea, and thieves by land, often suffer much, yet none pitieth them.

I come now to the second thing, to direct thee how thou mayest so behave thyself in this encounter, that, like Joseph, thy bow may abide in strength, though the archers should sorely grieve thee, shoot at thee, and hate thee. Nay, that every stone thrown at thee, may become a precious stone to adorn and enrich thee. Health and strong persons, saith Plutarch, concoct serpents, when weak stomachs nauseate delicates.

As to the nature of making religion thy business in this condition, it consisteth partly in avoiding those sins which an afflicted estate is prone to, as despising God's hand, impatience, envying at those that prosper; and partly in exercising those graces which are required, and proper in adversity, as faith, rejoicing in the Lord, contentedness with thy condition, &c. But I shall propound them to thee in these particulars.

First, Be sensible of God's hand; it is a sin to faint under it, but it is a duty to feel it: 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,' Heb. xii. 5. A Christian must carefully avoid these two extremes of despising the chastening of the Lord, or despairing when he is chastened, and walk in the golden mean between them both. To despise God's hand is not patience, but pertinacy, and much nearer a stoical apathy, than Christian magnanimity.

When the proud Greeks had lost two castles, Zembenie, or Coiridoeastron, the hog's castle, and Maditus, upon the Turk's first setting foot in Europe, they said vainly, There is but a hog-sty lost.¹ And afterwards, when they were deprived of Callipolis, they would, in a jeering manner, say, The Turks have taken from us but a bottle of wine. But they are most undutiful children who laugh when their father is scourging them. It is an ill sign when the chirurgeon lanceth the sore, and the patient is not sensible. Wounds that bleed well, do much the better. Till men be sensible, affliction will never be profitable.

Holy Job, when God rent his possessions and his relations from him, rent his garments, to shew that his heart was rent. When

¹ Turk. Hist. in Life of Orchanes.

God humbled him with sufferings, he humbled himself with sorrow. Had his limbs, (his children which came out of his loins,) been cut off, and he not felt it, certainly he had been cauterised; but when God cast him down with the strokes of his hand, he cast himself down by sensibleness of heart: 'Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped,' Job i. 20.

God cannot bear it, that his blows should not be felt: 'Thou hast stricken them, and they have not grieved,' Jer. v. 3. They are not affected with aught that hath been inflicted upon them, either by Sennacherib, Pharaoh-Necho, or the Chaldeans. Though thy rod had fetched blood from their backs, yet it hath not fetched tears from their eyes, Isa. x. 5, 6; 2 Kings xxiii. 37, and xxiv. 17.

It is reported of Galienus the Roman emperor, that hearing how Egypt was revolted from him, he said, *Quid! Sine lino Ægyptio vivere non possumus?* What! Can we not live without the hemp of Egypt? ¹ So many, when God takes some part of their estates, or one child, Let him take all if he will, say they; we can do well enough without them: 'The bricks are fallen (say they, Isa. ix. 10,) but we will build with hewn stone.' It is an unhappiness, but we know how to help it. These stocks and stones, instead of moving God to pity them, provoke him to punish them more severely. When the rod will not do, the jail must, with the stubborn servant.

Reader, doth God call thee to suffer? Bear thy cross as thy burden; do not make a fire of it. If thou fearest thy God, thou wilt feel his rod. Do not slight any suffering, like the dog, that when he gets out of the water, into which he was cast, shakes his ears, runs away, and makes nothing of it. But as thou wouldest hear the voice of the rod, do thou feel the strokes of it. The scholar will never mind his lesson, who is regardless of whipping. It is a dreadful sign for any to be, like Pharaoh, sleeping when God is thundering. Surely those that can snore when their house is on fire, as if they were no whit concerned, will be consumed in its flames.

Affliction is a messenger sent by the great God to us, about business of concernment. Now as David could not bear it, that those servants which he sent to the Ammonites out of good-will, should be despised, so neither can God endure it, that his messenger should be slighted. He that slighteth the messenger, affronts his master.

As thy duty is to be sensible of God's hand, so also to be submissive to it. Though we must groan and feel God's hand, yet we

¹ Turk. Hist.

must not grumble and fret at his dealings. Obedience is due to his severest precepts, and patience is thy duty under the sharpest providence. He is too just to be questioned, too good to be suspected, and too great to be quarrelled with. Holy Eli, when he heard such news, as like a sudden clap of thunder made the ears of such as heard it to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, calmly and quietly submitted to it: 'It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth,' 1 Sam. iii. 18. He doth not fly in God's face in a passion, but falls down at his feet in a humble submission: 'It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth.' So Aaron, when God was speaking, (for his rod hath a voice, Amos vi.,) had the manners and the grace to be silent: 'And Aaron held his peace,' Lev. x. 3. If we consider the greatness of the punishment, we shall find the more cause to commend the greatness of his patience. Stars shine in the night that were not seen in the day.

1. He lost his children. The loss of a man's estate is nothing to the loss of a child. The child is the father's bowels, Philem. 12. How strong is the stream of parents' love to their children! Truly so great, that the blessed God expresseth his infinite affection to his chosen by this comparison, Ps. ciii. 12. Therefore Satan, the arch-politician, reserved the loss of Job's children, as the great cannon, till the last onset, knowing that if any loss brought him to curse God this would do it. How sadly doth Rachel screech out, 'Give me children or I die.' It was the lack of children that Abraham so much lamented: 'Lord, what wilt thou give me, if I go childless?' Yet at the loss of children Aaron is contented: 'And Aaron held his peace.'

2. He lost two children. How pathetically doth David bewail the loss of one! 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Rebekah could not think of losing both her sons without extreme sorrow: 'Why should I be deprived of you both in one day?' Gen. xxvii. 45. Yet Aaron loseth two children in one day, in one hour, and saith not a word: 'He held his peace.'

3. He lost two sons. Sons are in themselves greater blessings than daughters. The masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine. When God would give Abraham a child to his great comfort, the promise runs to Sarah, 'Thou shalt bear a son,' Gen. xviii. 10. Sons bear their father's name, and bear up their families. Parents are most desirous of sons. Elkanah's speech to Hannah implieth it: 'Am not I better to thee than ten sons?'

The Shunammite's words express it: 'Did I desire a son of my Lord?' 2 Kings iv. 28. And their greatest delight is in sons: 'God hath given me a son,' saith Rachel, Gen. xxx. 6. 'And fear not, thou hast born a son,' was thought to be a cordial strong enough to revive a dying mother, 1 Sam. iv. 20. Yet Aaron loseth two sons, and is not sullen, though he held his peace.

4. He lost his two eldest sons. If two of his younger sons had died it had been a great affliction, but to lose his eldest, his first-born, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, did sharpen the edge of the dispensation. The greatest grief in this world, even the grief for crucifying the Lord Jesus, is set out by a parent's sorrow for the loss of his eldest son: 'And shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,' Zech. xii. 10. Yet Aaron, at the loss of his two eldest sons, is silent: 'He held his peace.'

5. He lost his two eldest sons by a sudden death. Sickness is usually the usher of death, to prepare the way before it. Had he been forewarned, he would have been forearmed. What we fear, for that we prepare. David took the loss of his young child patiently—the disease had fitted him for his death; but he took the sudden death of Absalom passionately; that serjeant arrested him before he was ready. Yet Aaron loseth his two eldest sons by a sudden death, when he might have thought they had been rejoicing in their new office, and under this sharp providence held his peace.

6. He lost his two eldest sons by a violent death. Though they had died suddenly, so they had died naturally, from some inward distemper, the cause of grief had not been so great; but they died not in their natural beds, but by a supernatural rod. 'And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord,' Lev. x. 2. Though they were consumed by fire, yet Aaron was not in a fury, but held his peace.

7. He lost his two eldest sons suddenly by a violent death, in such a manner as might speak God's anger. A religious father had rather lose all his children in the favour of God, than one child in the fury of God. But the way of their suffering pointed out their sin, and gave fear that they died in their sins.¹ Strange fire was their sin, and strange fire was their punishment, which might occasion Aaron to fear it was but the forerunner of the un-

¹ Duo fecerunt contra mandatum Dei. 1. Quod igne extero usi sunt. 2. Quod locum sacrum ingrediebantur, quod ne summo sacerdoti licbat, nisi certis legibus certoque tempore.—*Jun. in loc.*

quenchable fire. He might think, Surely my sons were overjoyed at their new office, the first time they were called to their honourable work; they were so unworthy as to manifest abominable wickedness, and the jealous God would not bear it, that man's will should be the rule of his worship; wherefore I fear he hath sent them from their mirth to mourning, from solace to the place of eternal sorrows. The head of this arrow seems keen enough to pierce any sensible man to the heart! Yet whatever pain he felt he was not impatient against God, for Aaron held his peace.

Reader, when thy flesh is prompting thee to passion, lay before thee this pattern of patience. Do not say, None is afflicted as thou art. Consider Job's and Aaron's trials in all their circumstances, and let thy tribulation work patience. Compare thy condition with many others on earth, and in hell, and thou wilt find infinitely more cause to extol him with praise than to wrangle with him for thy pain. Hast thou lost thy friend, thy child, thy husband, thy estate? Truly here is no loss, so long as thou hast not lost thy soul and thy Saviour. Dost thou think of them whose souls, whose God, is lost for ever? I may say to thee of thy loss, compared with theirs, what the Turk said of his master's loss at the battle of Lepanto, compared with the Venetians' loss of Cyprus: My master's loss is like the shaving a man's beard, which will quickly grow again, but the loss of the Venetians is like the cutting off an arm, which can never be recovered. Thy loss will be made up, but theirs never.

Holy Greenham endured much torture with much content. He could lie spread upon his form, quietly looking for the chirurgeon's knife, and bind himself as fast with a resolved patience as others with the strongest cords, and endure the carving of his flesh, and rifling of his bowels, whilst others are passionate at the pricking of a vein.

Some men are like flints, they are no sooner smitten but fire issueth out of them. If God scourge them they are full of fury, and in their wrath and rage will not spare heaven; as the Thracians, when it thundereth, impudently shoot up their arrows against heaven. But it is brutish, and the voice of an ass, to say, Why smitest thou me? and exceeding childish to strike at the thing that hurts us.

Heathen themselves have been famous for their courage under crosses, though they wanted our Christian principle. Valerius Maximus, when he heard that his mother and wife, whom he loved dearly, were slain by the fall of a house, and that his younger son, a hopeful youth, died at the same time at Umbria, never changed

countenance, but went on with the business of the commonwealth as if no disaster had befallen him. When Pompey the Great, in his travels, called at Rhodes to see Possidonius the philosopher, whom he found much affected with the gout, and told him he was sorry he could not hear his lectures, he answered him, That for all his disease he could discourse; and when the torches were put to his feet he spake excellently, That nothing was good but what was honest, and nothing was evil but what was criminal; and after such discourse, at last concluded, Oh pain, in vain dost thou attempt me, for I will never confess thee to be evil as long as I can honestly bear thee. Plato, being asked how we might know a wise man, answered: He is a wise man who, being praised, will not be proud, and being punished or rebuked, will not be passionate. Socrates said, My mind and my means are matched. Yet some Christians, when called to the cross, though they have higher hopes, and every way greater helps, are hearty in nothing but crying and complaining.

The truth is, an impatient person is his own punishment; he that murmurs at God, martyrs himself. Affliction, like the high wind, doth not hurt the stalks of corn that yield to it, but rents in pieces the sturdy oak that resists it. Massurius Sabinus tells us, that the image of the goddess Angerona, was, with a muffler on her mouth, placed at the altar of Volupiae, to signify that pleasure will be their portion who bear sorrows with silence. But the discontented both lose the comfort of their present mercies, and double their misery. They lose the comfort of their present mercies, for, like children, because they have not that piece which they desire, they will have none at all. Because Rachel had not children, as an aguish palate she tasted no savour; she could relish neither life, nor health, nor food, nor husband, nor any of those millions of mercies which she enjoyed. The hedgehog is an apt hieroglyphic of such a person. Naturalists tell us she will gather many great apples upon her bristles, and then go to a hedge-side to eat them; but if she happen to let one fall by the way, she throweth down all the rest, and will not so much as touch them. An impatient person also doubleth his misery. The prisoner that kicks and flings about because of his chains on his feet, galls himself the more with his fetters. The bird that flutters about with his wings on the lime-twigs, is the more entangled.

Thirdly, Justify God in the greatest affliction which befalleth thee. Doth God lay heavy things on thee, in the loss of thy health, or estate, or liberty? Have thou high thoughts of him. Though

he condemn thee, do thou acquit him? 'Glorify the Lord,' saith the prophet, 'in the fire,' Isa. xxiv. 15. In the fire—that is, in affliction. In the fire, God purifieth us; and therefore in the fire we must glorify him. Nay, in the fire he magnifieth us, and therefore in the fire we must magnify him, Job vii. 18. It is observable that the children of God have lifted him up very high, when he hath cast them down very low. As men in a deep well or pit in the day-time have seen the stars, when they that were on the top of the earth could not behold them, so a Christian in deep waters, in deep affliction, hath many times seen the goodness and justice of God to shine forth clearly, when they who prospered could not behold them. Holy Job doth notably commend that power of God which he felt to his smart and punishment, Job ix. chap. *per tot.* The psalmist acknowledgeth God to be good, even then when he suffered much evil, when he was plagned very sore, Ps. lxxiii. 14. When the church was under the heaviest cross, at the lowest ebb, when God poured on her his fury like fire, even then she findeth cause to justify him, Lam. i. 18. The Lord is righteous. Her apprehensions of him were honourable when her condition was most sad and miserable. Though God dealt hardly with her, yet she would not speak hardly of him. In the darkest night of dread and terror, saints can see the righteousness of God to sparkle gloriously.

Sinners sometimes do this forcedly. Their confession, as water out of a still, is caused by the fire. 'I have sinned,' saith Pharaoh under the rod; 'the Lord is righteous,' Exod. v. These, as persons condemned by the Dutch to die, are racked, and their acknowledgments extorted from them. Toads, if beaten, vomit up their venom; but saints do it freely. Their confessions are as water out of a spring. When the children of Israel were grievously oppressed, they acquitted God. 'O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, but to us confusion of face, because we have sinned. For the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice,' Dan. ix. 7, 8, 14—*i. e.*, Lord, though some may be apt to accuse thee of severity, when they hear of thy chosen's captivity, yet we acquit thee. Thou art righteous; we have not the least wrong; we may thank ourselves for all our sorrows. The pain which we feel is of our own procuring; the rods which scourge us are of our own gathering; our own sins are the spring and source of all our suffering; our own wickedness is the original of our woe; the web in which we are entangled, like the spider's, is woven out of our own bowels; we obeyed not his voice. Nay, they are so sensible of their sins that they acknowledge his dealings in

regard of rigour and sharpness to come far short of their deservings : Ezra ix. 13, ' And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, seeing thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' Mark, Ezra first confesseth their iniquities to be the mother of all their misery, and then their many afflictions to be less than the merit of their transgressions. Do we drink water? thinks he; we might have been drinking blood. Have we grievous burdens on earth? we might have been burning in hell. Our God is not only righteous in laying thus much on us, but also gracious that he layeth no more : ' Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.'

It is recorded of Themistocles, that, having invited many philosophers to supper, he borrowed all his dishes of one Amyntas, who came in the midst of supper and took away half of them. One of the philosophers asked Themistocles how he could bear such an affront. He answered mildly, He might have taken away all. So saith a Christian when God takes away part of his estate, or one of his children, and some of his comforts, He might have taken away all.

Wicked men, ordinarily, when they are tied with the cords of their own corruptions, instead of indicting themselves, arraign God ; and when they should fall down at his feet, fly in his very face. ' And they (*i.e.*, the wicked Jews) shall pass through it, (meaning the land of Judah,) hardly bestead, and hungry, and shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward,' Isa. viii. 21. As a pot boiling with a good fire under it (this metaphor is included in this word *fret*) casteth up its scum and filth, truly so do ungodly men in affliction.¹ They rage under the rod, and instead of blessing, blaspheme the name of God, Rev. xvi. 9, 10. As the ravens in Arabia, when they are hungry, screech horribly, and the Syrians, when they come to die, roar dreadfully ; so when sinners come into dangers and civil deaths, their spirits boil with wrath, and their mouths are black with blasphemies against the Lord. ' The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord,' Prov. xix. 3. The apostate Julian shot up his darts against heaven when he was in distress.² As rusty hinges of a door, when the door is opened and shut, they shriek and make a noise, because they want oil ; so wicked men in affliction fly out, and cry out against God himself sometimes ; but the reason is, they want the oil of grace.

¹ In eadem afflictione mali Deum detestantur et blasphemant ; boni autem precantur et laudant.—*Aug. De Civit. Dei*, lib. i. cap. 8.

² Niceph., lib. x. cap. 35.

Reader, whatsoever the rod be with which thou art scourged, do thou kiss it. Though God should dishonour thee, do thou glorify him. When he punisheth thee, do thou praise him. Bless God taking from thee, as well as giving to thee, and this will turn thy blows into a blessing, the grievous cross on thy back into a glorious crown on thy head. It is easy and ordinary, as to commend a person when we are hired with large presents, so to speak well of God, when he dealeth well with us; but it is hard and rare, as to extol one who vilifieth us, so to advance God when he debaseth us. The hypocrite is in and out with God, as he dispenseth himself towards him in blessings or crosses; as men will commend the bee when they taste of its honey, but are out of patience with it when they feel its sting. Thou art a Christian indeed, if, under the saddest dispensation, thou canst say, as the holy Emperor Mauritius, when his wife and children were slain before his eyes, Righteous art thou, O Lord, and in very faithfulness hast afflicted me—if thou canst bless him when he maketh breach upon breach on thee.

Possibly thou art the man that hast seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. God hath shewed thee great and sore troubles. Thy whole life, it may be, hath been a winter, and most of thy days accompanied with stormy weather. In this case, it will be much for thy credit and comfort if thou canst justify God under the cross.

When thy sense and reason are at a stand, that thou canst not apprehend the ground and cause of such severe corrections, set faith awork, and believe God to be wise and righteous and gracious, even then when thou canst not see him to be so. God's paths are often in the seas, and his goings in deep waters. His judgments are a great deep, which our short reason can never fathom or find out. There are as hard chapters, and as dark texts, in the provinces¹ of God, as in his prophecies. Now, because we cannot expound them, we are apt to accuse them. Job was somewhat rash, according to some, 'Behold I cry out of wrong, but am not heard; is it good that thou shouldst oppress?' But observe the reason, 'Who is this,' saith God, 'that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge,' Job x. 2, ix. 7, and xl. 2. Samson's friends quarrelled with him, because they could not understand his riddle. Some of God's friends have been ready to question him when they could not find him. Pompey, when beaten by Cæsar, said, there was a mist over the eye of providence, when indeed the mist was over his own eyes. How many wrangle with God, merely because they cannot reach God; and reprehend him, because they cannot comprehend him. But herein

¹ Qu., "providences"—Ed.

appeareth the excellency of Christianity, that when sense is tired, and reason nonplussed in the conflict, faith will believe God's justice, and bring the soul off with conquest. Hence Jeremiah, when he could not see God to be righteous, would say that God was righteous: Jer. xii. 1, 2, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord; let me plead with thee of thy judgments.' His carnal part seemed to plead against it, but his spiritual part would be sure to premise it, and profess it. Human reason is no fit judge of divine actions; not that any of God's works are against reason, but because many of his ways are above our reason. God's actions are the highest, the truest reason, yet such reason as is above our natural reach.

As a stick in the water seemeth crooked to the eye of sense, through the refractions of a double medium, the air and water, when the eye of our understanding seeth and knoweth it to be straight; so the dealings of God with his people seem to the eye of sense many times to be harsh and rigid, as if in the ways of his providence he did tread awry; but even then the eye of faith seeth them to be right, and knoweth assuredly all his footsteps to be equal and straight. Faith believeth men may do justly, but faith is confident God cannot but do justly. Papists tell us, saith Luther, that the Pope may do what he will, none must question him. Sure I am, what they falsely ascribe to the man of sin, faith doth most truly and fitly in the darkest dispensations ascribe to the holy God. He giveth not account of any of his matters, and who may say to him, What dost thou? God's works are sometimes like a printer composing his sheets, who setteth his letters backwards. Now we feel and see the letters, but cannot read them, nor spell out the meaning of them; but in the life to come, we shall fully know the sense of them, and see infinite reason and wisdom in every passage of divine providence.

Fourthly, Wait God's leisure for deliverance. There is a twofold patience required in every Christian.

1. A patience of bearing the evil inflicted; and,
2. A patience of forbearing the good promised. God, indeed, hath engaged to deliver his people out of all their troubles; but between the seed-time of the promise, and the harvest of the performance, a sharp winter often interposeth; therefore the Christian must wait. David had a promise that he should be Israel's prince, yet, after this, he is hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. What, therefore, doth he do in the meantime? 'Truly, my soul waiteth on God; from him is my salvation,' Ps. lxxii. 11, 5; or, as it is in the original, 'Nevertheless, my soul is silent to Jehovah;' as

if he had said, Though I, who have a patent from heaven for the crown, am in lieu thereof laden with crosses; though the providences of God towards me are so grievous that they seem to contradict rather than to confirm his promises, yet my soul hath not a word to say against God, but I am contented to suffer his pleasure, and to stay his leisure, knowing that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. Nevertheless, my soul is silent to Jehovah.

It was a great sin in Israel, that though they had had such experience of his power, they would not take his word for a drop of water: 'They waited not for his counsel, but limited the holy One of Israel,' Ps. lxxviii. 41. God must come at their call, at their time, or else they conclude he will not come at all. It was a witty speech of a king, that he liked a circle about his head, meaning his crown, but he could not endure a circle about his feet; he would have them at liberty to go and come when he pleased. It is dishonourable to God to be limited. What an affront is it to a prince to be made his subjects' prisoner! and it is unprofitable to man. Mercies in haste, or deliverance before God's time, is like meat overdriven, which will not take salt, but quickly corrupteth and putrefieth; or like fruit that children cry for before it is ripe, which breedeth worms and diseases. Jacob had a promise of a blessing, but he is too quick with God for it. He stayeth not God's leisure, but hasteneth its accomplishment with a lie. Now, what doth he get by it? indeed, he obtaineth the blessing, but with many blows, the smart of which he felt to his dying day. Had he stayed till the vintage, where the grapes of the promise had been ripe, he had found them sweet and cordial; but because he gathered them green, no wonder that they were sour, and set his teeth on edge so long. His sufferings for so many years are attributed to his unwillingness to wait on God some few days.

Reader, hath God laid on thee some heavy cross? be not impatient, but let God take his own time to remove it. Chirurgeons know best how long wounds must be kept open; the patients that skin them over, because they put them to pain, and heal them up in haste, do it to their own hurt. Men in misery are like prisoners in the jail, who are sure to be released, if they will but stay quietly till the assize; but when they are hasty for their liberty, and take indirect courses, breaking the prison to get out, they are taken again, fastened with more fetters, and either stay longer for their freedom, or are dismissed from the jail and sent to the gallows. If Saul in distress will turn to a witch, it doth but increase his woe.

A man that washeth himself, sometimes ventures past his depth before he is aware ; now this man, being in danger of drowning, hastily catcheth at what comes next to hand, possibly on sedgy weeds, that do but entangle him and draw him deeper under water, and there keep him down from ever getting up, till he, by that whereby he thought to save himself, be drowned indeed. Thus, whilst many, unwilling to wait God's leisure for deliverance out of distress, catch at what comes next to help themselves, they do but plunge themselves further into a labyrinth of evils, out of which they never escape.

It is a true saying in this sense, I am sure, Haste makes waste, and, 'The more haste the less speed.' Many have by woeful experience found the truth of those proverbs. Friends, God's time is the best time. 'The Lord is a God of judgment,' saith the prophet ; therefore, 'blessed are all they that wait for him,' Isa. xxxvi. 18. Judgment is here not opposed to mercy, but to folly. The Lord is a God of wisdom, and can time and order all affairs to the best. Though it be a burden to wait upon a fool who maketh rage or weakness his rule, yet they are blessed who wait for the resolutions of the only wise God, to whom angels are comparative fools, Job iv. 17, 18, who maketh reason the rule of all his actions, who will not let his promises bring forth to his people before they have gone their full time, lest the birth should prove abortive ; and who will not let them stay a moment beyond their reckoning, but then will cause them to fall in labour, and to bring forth in full feature and favour answerable to their conceptions. O reader ! thou wilt never repent of thy patience, when those vessels of the promises, which stayed so many years in the Indies, come home richly laden with their silver and golden wedges. With the sense of thy Father's love, the fruits of thy Saviour's death, and freedom from all thy fears and fetters which now affright thee, how wilt thou with the church sing victory, shout for joy, and cry up thy wise and faithful God with an *Ecce* of admiration : 'Lo, this is my God ; I have waited for him, he will save me. This is the Lord ; I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoice in his salvation,' Isa. xxv. 9.

Fifthly, Rejoice in God in the meantime. Saints are compared to lilies, afflictions to thorns. The lily is fresh, and looks fair in the midst of thorns. A Christian may be cheerful under the heaviest bodily cross. He hath fair weather overhead, the sunshine of God's favour, therefore he may go merrily on though it be dirty under feet. 'The king shall rejoice in God,' saith David, Ps. lxiii. 2, when he wandered as a poor exile in the wilderness of

Keilah ; when he had neither relations nor possessions, for he was banished from both, to rejoice in, he had a God still.¹ So, when his condition was more dangerous, and indeed seemed to be desperate, his estate was plundered, his wives and children captivated, and his own life endangered, for his own soldiers spake of stoning him. 'But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God,'² 1 Sam. xxx. 6. In cold weather, the blood and spirits retreat to the heart and inward parts, which are the source and fountain of them. In the hardest season a believer may retire to, and be refreshed by, the fountain of his being and blessedness. The Lacedæmonians use music in their wars ; truly so may the saint in his wars with the affrightments of the world, and make the joy of the Lord his strength. There is mention made of some poor Christians banished, and one standing by and seeing them pass along said, It is a sad condition these persons are in, to be hurried from the society of men, and to be made companions of beasts. True, said another, it were sad indeed, if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God ; but let them be of good cheer, God goeth along with them.³

The bells ring as pleasantly at a funeral as at a wedding. The godly man may be merry in the absence, as well as in the presence, of outward mercies. When the streams are dried up, he hath the spring. The upper city of Jerusalem built on Mount Zion was called Millo—fulness or plenty—because, amongst the people of God, there is want of nothing, whilst they have him who is all things. This was the church's consolation in her most dreadful condition : 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul ; therefore I will hope in him,' Lam. iii. 24. She could not say friends were her portion ; her lovers and friends were put far away. She could not say honour, or riches, or pleasure were her portion : 'The enemies wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem. They that did feed delicately were desolate in the streets ; they that were brought up in scarlet, embraced dunghills,' Lam. ii. 15, 16, and iv. 5. The Chaldeans had robbed her of all such jewels ; but that which kept her head above water, and her heart from sinking, when those boisterous waves went over her soul, was this, 'The Lord is my portion.' He that hath God for his portion hath all things, even when he hath nothing. Hagar's provision and patience were both spent at once ; her bottle and her hope both out together ; because her

¹ *Tua præsentia, Domine, Laurentio ipsam craticulam dulcem fecit.—Aug. in Ps.*

² *Qui habet habentem omnia, habet omnia.—Augustine.*

³ *Aug. de Civit. Dei. lib. ii. cap. 26.*

water was gone she falls a-weeping, but had she seen the fountain so near she would have saved her tears. There is a witty conceit mentioned of one of the Dukes of Florence, that he should have for his arms a fair spread tree, having one branch only lopped off, with this motto, *Uno avulso non deficit alter*; intimating that, whilst the tree was well-rooted, there was no fear though a branch or two were lopped. A godly man may rejoice though he lose his estate, for he hath a better treasure in heaven; he may rejoice though he lose his children, his liberty, nay, and his life; for though those branches are lopped off, he hath his God, the root of all.

It was the speech of Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken by the barbarians, *Domine, ne exerceas ob aurum et argentum; tu enim es omnia*; Lord, let me not be troubled for my silver and gold which I have lost, for thou art all things.' As Noah, when the whole world was overwhelmed with water, had a fair epitome of it in the ark, having all sorts of beasts and fowls there; so he that in a deluge hath God to be his God, hath the original of all mercies. He who enjoyeth the ocean may rejoice, though some drops are taken from him. But he, indeed, who hath no god, may well mourn when he is deprived of his goods. A consumptionate man, when he cometh into a sharp, searching air, sickeneth and dieth because his vitals were not sound, but he who hath good inwards, is the better for a cold winter.

Aristippus having lost a farm, by a law-suit, to one that bewailed his loss, made this answer, I have two farms left still, and that is more by one than you have, or than I have lost. When wicked men, though it be but seldom, pity a saint in distress, a saint with a compassionate heart may answer him, as Christ did the woman who followed him weeping, Weep not for me, but weep for thyself, and the misery that is coming upon thee, unless thou reformest thy life; for notwithstanding my sad losses, yet I have my Saviour, my soul, and my eternal happiness left still, and that is far more than you have.

The lapwing hath his name in Latin *upupa*, and in Greek *ἐπύψ*, because she hath always, whether she be full or hungry, a sad, querulous cry cry, Pu, pu. Every sinner hath cause to be sad, whether he be full of comforts, or be under crosses; therefore it is no wonder that in distress his heart, like Nabal's, dieth within him. Creatures on the earth are all for accumulation, as the ant and bee, and they cannot live without it; but those, as birds that mount up to heaven, neither sow nor reap, yet have their merry notes.

Saints have rejoiced in their greatest sufferings, and triumphed in their most grievous tribulations. They have gloried in their disgrace for Christ: 'And they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name sake,' Acts v. 41. Their spirits have been most enlarged, when their flesh hath been most straitened. Paul and Silas in the stocks could sing; the fetters on their feet were more precious and honourable in their eyes, than the costliest chains of gold about their necks could have been: Acts xvi. 25, 'At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God.' Wicked men, like common birds, can sing in summer; but saints, like special birds, can sing in winter.

It is a privilege to imitate Christ in his passion; the Philippians were to count it a favour that God called them to suffer, Phil. i. 29. These are God's gems and precious jewels, said Munster to his friends, pointing to his sores and ulcers.¹ Ignatius triumphed in his journey to Rome to suffer, considering that his blood should be found among the mighty worthies, and that when the Lord makes inquisition for blood, he will count from the blood of Abel, not only to the blood of Zacharias, but also to the blood of mean Ignatius. To die for Christ, saith Philpot, is the greatest promotion that God can bring any to in this vale of misery; yea, so great an honour that the glorious angels in heaven are not permitted to have.² It were easy to instance and shew how many of the martyrs were merrier when they were going to the fire, than ever carnal wretch was when he was sitting down to a delicate feast: Mat. v. 10-12, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.' Leap and skip for joy, as wanton cattle do in spring-time, when they graze in good and pleasant pastures, so the word, *σκιρτάω*, signifieth.

It is an honour to weak, sinful man to be scourged by the great and glorious God; it is a favour that he will condescend to correct us. Some saints are more famous for their crosses, than ever Cæsar or Alexander for all their victories and conquests. The rod wherewith they are afflicted, is a sceptre wherewith they are adorned: 'My brethren, count it (saith the apostle) *πάναν χαρὰν*, all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations,' James i. 2. Though the nature of affliction be evil, and so not joyous but grievous, yet the concomitants and consequents of it are so excellently good, that the Christian may rejoice in it.

The Neapolitans wore garlands, and triumphed when Pompey

¹ Joh. Manl., *Loc. Com.*

² Acts and Mon., p. 1744.

was sick at Naples, out of respect and honour to him. Those infidels had better thoughts of sufferings than many Christians. Two sights, saith Luther, the devil delights in—to see a wicked man merry, and a saint sorrowful; but two sights do intolerably vex him—to see a sinner mournful for his sins, and to see a saint joyful in his sufferings. David, saith he,¹ made psalms, and sung them; we sing psalms as well as we can to the honour of our God, to spite and deride the devil and his spouse.

Sixthly, Take heed of envying wicked men in prosperity. Men who are at the bottom of the hill, are apt to envy those that are at the top. When David was chastened every morning, and in great adversity: 'I was envious at the foolish,' saith he, 'when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. 'When I saw;' his sight was an inlet to this sin. The basilisk is called *rex invidorum*, because the strength of its poison is conveyed by the eye; it kills with its look. The envious man is described by his evil eye, Mat. xxi. 22. The bright and glorious sunshine of wicked men's prosperity did pierce and pain David's sore eyes; and the truth is, it hath been a pearl in many of the saints' eyes, Jer. xii. 1–3; Hab. i. 13. Corrupt nature first looked out at this window, Gen. iv. 'The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy,' James iv. 5. Those especially who are afflicted, are prone to conceive evil at the good which others receive.

He who doth but consider the state of wicked men, will rather pity than envy them in the most prosperous condition. Alas! the devil, like an indulgent father, doth not disturb them, because they are his own children, as the crocodile, according to Aristotle, suffereth the bird trochylus to enter into his mouth, and pick his teeth, and then to fly away without any harm.

Reader, if thou art sick of this distemper, use David's receipt for its cure. It is a tried remedy, received out of the sanctuary. David considered that their prosperity is neither full nor fast; it is not full, it is but bodily at best, and usually but skin deep; their mirth is rather in their brows, than in their breasts: 'In the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits,' Job xx. 22. Like the kidney of a beast, he is lean, even when he is covered with fat. All his heaps cannot cure the itch of the head, or afford one hour's quiet of heart: 'As a dream, O Lord,' saith the psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 7. He compareth their prosperity to a dream; now we know the comfort or satisfaction which a man enjoyeth in a dream, is but fancied and imaginary, not solid or substantial. All their laughter is from the

¹ Luth. Colloqu. Mensal., cap. 37.

teeth outward. Haman, in the midst of all his honour and favour at court, had somewhat lay like a lump of lead on his spirit to im-bitter all: 'All this availeth me nothing,' saith he. Because he wanted a bow from Mordecai, all his comforts were nothing worth. The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. A small bird sings pleasantly in his little bed of down, when the bigger birds in their great nests of briers and thorns have but harsh notes. Great men have such gnats of cares to sting them in the night that many times they cannot sleep, when the sleep of a labouring man is sweet. How many of them possess a great estate, who enjoy nothing! Eccles. ii. 26. As the stag hath great horns, but no courage to use them.

Their prosperity is not fast. Their riches and honours do but shew themselves like a rainbow in all their dainty colours, and then vanish away: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places,' ver. 18. They stand on ice; are as soon off almost as on. How quickly is the beauty of all worldly blessings blasted! 'The triumphing of the wicked is short,' Job xx. 5. Though their pains shall be for ever, yet their pleasures of sin are but for a season: They are rich in this world, not in the other world, 1 Tim. vi. 17; 'They live in pleasures on earth,' James v. 5. The place of their pilgrimage is the only place of their pleasures. They have a time of mirth, but they shall have an eternity of mourning. God hath some work for wicked men to do, (though they observe not his precepts, yet they serve his providence,) and till that be done, his providence will serve them; but when the building is erected and finished, the scaffold, as high and as sure as it is seated, shall be taken down: 'Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work on mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria,' Isa. x. 12. When those busy bees have done all their work, and that will be in a short time, they shall be smothered with smoke, and destroyed.

Their prosperity is fatal. Their sins are the greater, and their sufferings will be more grievous. How certainly do their mercies, like perfume to one sick of the plague, convey the infection by its sweet smell! As the moon at the full darkens the sun most, so in the abundance of favours they dishonour God most. Vatablus expoundeth that clause in Ezek. iii. 20, 'I lay a stumbling-block before him,'—that is, I will prosper him in all things, and not keep him from sin by affliction. I will not hedge up his way with thorns, but lay all common, and suffer him to wander whither he will. God strikes most heavily when he doth not strike at all: Isa. i. 5,

'Why should they be smitten any more? ye revolt more and more.' Their sufferings are the greater also. They are raised to their ruin: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places, and turnest them down to destruction,' ver. 18.

Naturalists tell us that the eagle lifteth the shell-fish very high, and lets it fall on some rock, whereby it is broken, and then devoured. Ungodly men are lifted up high on earth, to be thrown the lower into hell:¹ 'The prosperity of fools slayeth them,' Prov. i. 32. Like the Roman monster, they hang themselves with their silken halters. As the phoenix is consumed in a bed of rich spices, so are profane men by all their hoards and heaps. Their comforts are but as a vessel of rich wine, presented to one sick of a high fever, which he drinketh largely of, whereby he is inflamed and dieth. The more wealth they have in this world, the greater their woe will be in the other world. As a river dammed up for a time, when that which hindereth is removed, poureth forth with the greater violence; so that flood of wrath which is stopped for a time by God's infinite patience, when it comes to break forth, will rush upon thee with the more dreadful vengeance. Prosperity, like physic to an incurable disease, hasteneth death, and makes it more painful.

Who will envy a fellow that goeth up a high ladder to be turned off and hanged? Who would grieve that his enemy hath a curious, richly enamelled knife, when with it he cuts his own throat? Surely none can grudge them their sweetest morsels on earth, who believe the bitter reckoning which they must pay in hell. He is brutish in his knowledge, that can envy a beast its high and sweet pasture, when it is but thereby fitted for the slaughter. What man would not think of Theramenes rather with pity than envy, who being one of the thirty tyrants at Athens, though he escaped when his house fell down on him, yet afterwards was tortured to death by his colleagues!

It was the speech of a soldier going to execution for stealing grapes, to one that asked him, What! are you eating grapes now? Oh, saith he, do not envy me; my grapes they cost me dear, they must cost me my life. Truly so may sinners bespeak envious saints: Do not envy us our honours, our high seats; do not envy us our carnal pleasures, and our huge treasures; do not envy us our plays and our pastimes, our sinful sports, and our vain delights. Alas! they must cost us dear, they must cost us our lives, nay, the life of our very souls; they must cost us our heaven, our God, our

¹ *Parci sibi putat cum excæctur, et servetur ad ultimam opportunamque vindictam.—Aug. in Ps. ix.*

Saviour, and that for ever. Who would envy a beast the garland and ribands with which the heathen adorned them when they went to be sacrificed? 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb, Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2.

A man may see a trade and not know the mystery of it, and the various and curious contrivances in it. A country fellow may see a picture excellently drawn, and yet be wholly ignorant of that rare art which appeareth in it. There is embroidered wisdom in God's works, which men are not aware of. 'When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever,' Ps. xcii. 7. When with those wisps he hath scoured his vessels, he will throw them into the fire.

Besides, the best of wicked men is infinitely inferior to the worst estate of a saint. The palest gold is better than the brightest brass; persecuted piety is better than prospering profaneness. They have but the bran, the dregs, thou hast the flour, the spirits, of outward things. Thou canst say, God is thy portion; and dost thou complain of thy part? Nay, canst thou forbear saying, Ps. xvi. 5, 6, 'The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, and I have a goodly heritage.'

It was an aggravation, and a great one, of David's sin, that being a rich man, and having great flocks, he should take away the poor man's only lamb; so it is a sad heightening of thy sin, if, when thou art rich, and hast multitudes of real mercies, (the covenant of grace, the blood of Christ, the love and image of God, which are worth thousands and millions, and which will do thee good to all eternity,) thou shouldst envy a poor sinner who hath only a little sleep, and meat, and drink, with many an aching heart, and gripes of conscience, like a condemned prisoner, till the set day appointed for his execution. Thales being asked how a man might be cheerful and bear up in affliction, answered, If he see his enemy in a worse condition than himself. His expression savours of vitiated nature, and is contrary to grace; but if the misery of an enemy can make a heathen merry in affliction, sure I am it may preserve a Christian from envy.

Queen Elizabeth envied the milkmaid when she was in prison; but had she known the glorious reign which she was to have for forty-four years, she would not have repined at the poor happiness of so mean a person. Christians are too prone to envy the husks which wandering sinners fill themselves with here below; but would they set before them their glorious hopes of a heaven, how they

must reign with Christ for ever and ever, they would see little reason for their repining. Alas ! what a pitiful nothing is the portion of the world's greatest potentates, compared with the inheritance of the saints in light. Those fowls that fly aloft have so small a spleen, saith the great naturalist,¹ that it can hardly be discerned, and he gives this reason, because those birds that mount in the air have least of that part which is terrestrial, for the spleen is the seat of melancholy, which hath an earthly quality, being dry and cold. Sure I am, those saints have least of this spleen of envy, who mount up to heaven oftenest on the wings of faith and meditation, and take a view of their future happiness.

Lastly, Study and answer God's end in thy afflictions. This indeed, though named last, is the first and chiefest of all. The errand upon which a messenger is sent from a great prince is much to be minded. It is not enough to forbear fretting at him, or to rejoice with him, but to interpret his language, to spell out his meaning, is required. A disease once known is half cured. It is a great piece of prudence to find out God's end, and a special part of piety to answer God's end when found out. God spake as truly by his ten works, his ten plagues to Egypt, as he did by his ten words, his ten precepts, to Israel. Every affliction comes to thee with a message, as Ehud did to Eglon—'I have an errand to thee from God'—with an errand and message to thee from the great God.²

Gideon took briers and thorns and taught the men of Succoth. God takes these sharp prickles of affliction, thereby intending to teach thee his statutes :³ Ps. xciv. 11, 'Blessed is the man whom thou correctest and teachest in thy law.'

I shall first shew thee what God's ends are, and then help thee to find out his end in thy particular affliction.⁴

God's ends in afflicting are divers.

First, It may be to try and discover thee to thyself ; to try the strength of grace. Thou couldst hardly have thought thy faith to have been so weak till thou wast, like Peter, walking on these tempestuous waters, and ready to sink in them. Thieves, when endeavouring to break into a house, and are prevented, do this courtesy often to the master of the house, that they shew him the weakest part of his dwelling. Satan, by the troubles he brings on saints, doth them often this kindness, that by his rough waters

¹ Hist., ii. cap. 15.

² Qui beneficiis non intelligitur vel plagis intelligatur.—*Cypr. in Dementia.*

³ Crux est velut instrumentum quo Deus nos expolit.—*Polan.*, lib. vi. cap. 39.

⁴ Verberat et lacerat ; non est s.evitia, certamen est.—*Senec. de Prov.*, cap. 4.

their leaks are made known to them. To try the truth of grace, God therefore led Israel many years through the wilderness, when he could have carried them a nearer way in a few days to Canaan, 'to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts,' Deut. viii. 2. The Psilli, a people, saith Pliny, (lib. xxviii.) whom no venom will hurt, if they suspect any of their children to be none of their own, put an adder to its breast; if it be stung, and the flesh swell, they cast it away as spurious. It is not affliction, but a holy enduring of it,—'if ye *endure* chastening,' Heb. xii. 7,—which is a sign of adoption. A father will sometimes cross his child to try his disposition. I have read a story of a little child about eight or nine years old, that being extremely pinched with hunger, looked one day pitifully necessitous on her mother, and said, Mother do you think that God will starve us? The mother answered, No, child, he will not. The child replied, But if he do, yet we must love him and serve him. Here was language that spake a well-grown Christian. For indeed God brings us to want and misery, to try us whether we love him for his own sake, or for our own sakes; for those excellencies that are in him, or for those mercies we have from him; to see whether we will say, with the cynic to Antisthenes, *Nullus tam durus erit baculus*, &c. There shall be no cudgel so crabbed as to beat me from thee.

Secondly, It may be to purge out some sin which thou harbourest; the stock is purged by salt water. A garment is stricken with a staff that the dust may be beaten out. Tribulation comes from *tribulus*, a flail, because it makes the husk fly off. Crows, when sick, take stones which make them vomit, and then they are well. Affliction doth, as a serjeant or bailiff, it comes to bring our sins, our debts, to remembrance. Joseph spake roughly to his brethren, to make them remember themselves, and repent of their sin; when that was done, he discovered himself, and spake kindly to them. So God dealeth severely with his children, to make them mindful of, and mournful for, their sins. When once he hath brought them to that, he smileth on them. David hath one psalm which he calls 'A psalm to bring to remembrance,' Ps. xxxviii. 1, which treateth of his great afflictions, because they, like Pharaoh's dream to his butler, make men remember their faults.¹

Art not thou in love with the world? No wonder that then God makes it an iron furnace, that thou mayest no longer value it as an ivory palace. He turneth earth into a kind of hell to thee,

¹ Sciebat enim quam facile et cito evanescent pœnæ divinitus inflictæ, quibus in totam vitam nos erudiri decebat.—*Calv. in loc.*

because thou hast made it thy heaven. God carried Israel about in the wilderness, because their hearts hankered after Egypt. He rubs wormwood on the breasts of the world to wean thee from it.

Art thou not secure? No wonder then that he applieth blisters to thy neck, cupping-glasses to thy back, and wax-lights to thy feet, to awaken thee out of thy lethargy. Shouldst thou be suffered to continue sleeping, thou wouldst sleep the sleep of death. He beats up thy quarters, to make thee stand upon thy guard. When enemies flank an army, it makes them orderly in their march, and keeps them from straggling.

Art thou not proud and conceited? If so, he gives thee a thorn in thy flesh, to prick thy bladder of pride, lest thou shouldst be puffed up above measure. He makes thee low in thy condition, that thou mayest be lowly in thy disposition. That which lessens our heaps and estates, often lesseneth¹ our hearts. God therefore brought the Jews to great hardships, to make them humble, Deut. vi. 2. The poor useth entreaties, saith Solomon.

Hast thou not dallied with mercies? Now God removes them from thee, that by the want of them, thou mayest know the worth of them. Naturalists tell us, if musk hath lost its scent, by being put into a sink, it will recover it again. Hunger and fasting will make thee relish thy food; sickness will make thee prize thy health. The spring is more pleasant after a sharp winter; harmonious sounds are much commended to us by the darkness and silence of the night; the bells sound best near the waters; no meat so delightful as those dishes wherein sour things are conveniently mingled with sweet.

Possibly thy heart is hard; thou wast hardly ever sensible of thy own sins, or others' sufferings. Now there are but two ways to cure the stone in the bladder, either to dissolve it by soft medicines, or by cutting the party. God tried mercies with thee, soft means, and could not dissolve the stone of thy heart, therefore he is now cutting thee, with an intent to cure thee. A good fire will melt the hardest metals. In Silesia, there is *Fons Solis*, the Fountain of the Sun, out of which at mid-day, when the sun is nearest, floweth cold water; and at midnight, when the sun is furthest, floweth hot water. Those who have been cold in bewailing their sin when they have prospered in the world, when they have been visited with affliction, their reins chastising them in the night seasons, have been hot and fervent at it.

Possibly thou didst rely on creatures. Thy leaning on those staves hath broken them in pieces, which otherwise would have

¹ Qu., "lesseneth"?—ED.

been helpful to thee in thy journey. Many a time hath our Father made the creature our grief, that it might not be our god. If any of these, or any other sin, be the end for which thou art afflicted, search it out. As the mariners in a storm inquired for whose sake it came, and never ceased till they found him out, and had thrown that Jonah overboard ; so do thou search as narrowly for thy lust as for thy life—expect no calm till this be done. When thou hast found out the sin, go to God speedily, confess it thoroughly, with all its aggravations, and bewail it heartily. When the Jews had found out Paul, whom they supposed to be a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, they cry out, ‘Men of Israel, help : This is the man that teacheth everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place : and further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this place,’ Acts xxi. 28. So do thou cry to God, Help, Lord ; this is the sin that hath so much provoked thy majesty, profaned thy name, grieved thy Spirit, and polluted my own soul ! Lord, help me to mourn for it, and help me to turn from it. Let the hatred wherewith I shall hate it, be greater than the love wherewith I have ever loved it. Help, Lord ; this is the sin that hath caused all my sorrows, all my sufferings.

When God had afflicted that noble worthy, he tells God, ‘Thou inquirest after my iniquity, and searchest after my sin,’ Job x. 6. Now if God by affliction searcheth after thy sin, it concerneth thee to search and try thy ways, Lam. iii. 4 ; for if thou dost not find out thy iniquities, be confident thy iniquities will find thee out ; and then thou mayest say, as Ahab to Elijah, ‘Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ?’ for it will come to thee, as the prophet to the king, with dreadful, doleful tidings indeed.

Thirdly, It may be, the end of God in afflicting thee is to increase thy graces. Wisps scour vessels and make them the brighter. ‘I will bring a third part into the fire, and refine them as silver is refined,’ Zeeh. xiii. 9. The fire purifieth the vessels of gold, and makes them more meet for the master’s use. True Christians, like the vine, bear the more fruit for bleeding : Dan. xi. 33–35, ‘And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white.’ Here are the three ends of affliction. Some refer their fall to the sad afflictions which they suffered in the days of Antiochus, of which there should be this threefold use :—1. Some should be tried ; 2. Some should be purged ; 3. Some should be made white. Those frosts and showers should whiten and purify the faithful.

Israel in Egypt, the more oppressed, the more they multiplied.

The camomile springs the more and the better for being trodden on. Pliny, in his *Natural History*,¹ writeth of certain trees growing in the Red Seas, which, being beat upon by the waves, stand like a rock, immoveable, and in a full sea they are quite covered with water; these trees are bettered by the roughness of the waves. A Christian that is by faith planted into the Red Sea of Christ's blood, doth not only stand fast in, but also flourisheth the more for, the billows of afflictions.

It is reported of the lioness that she leaves her whelps till they are almost killed with crying, and hereby makes them the fuller of courage. So God often leaveth his children till they are even ready to despair; he lets his David cry out till his throat be dry, and his moisture turned into the drought of summer, before he sendeth from heaven and saveth him, and hereby he increaseth his faith and patience. 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints,' saith the apostle, speaking of great afflictions, Rev. xiii. 10. Here it is exercised, and here it is increased; for frequent acts of grace strengthen the habits of grace. The fire strengthens our liquors; the better they are boiled, the stronger they are. The hottest cordial water, and strongest spirits, are distilled and extracted by fire. The fire of affliction increaseth the strength of our graces. As in winter the outward cold fortifieth our inward parts, by forcing in, and uniting our natural heat; so adversity strengtheneth the Christian, by forcing him to use and unite all his courage.

Now it is probable thou wilt say, I would willingly answer God's end, but how may I find it out? I cannot understand the language of the rod, and so cannot obey its voice.

To satisfy this query, I would advise thee,

1. To observe the kind of thy affliction. Sometimes the sin is written in broad letters on the forehead of the punishment. When Absalom killed Amnon, and defiled his father's concubines, and was afterwards slain by Joab, David might easily see his sin in the face of his suffering. Because he neglected to do justice on Amnon, therefore God suffered Absalom to murder him unjustly. Because he defiled the wife of Uriah secretly, God permitted Absalom to lie with his wives openly. Because he cockered Absalom, though the blood of Amnon required blood, therefore God let out the blood of Absalom by the hand of Joab. The Sodomites burned with unnatural fire, that was their sin, and God punished them with supernatural fire. The Egyptians killed the Jewish children,

¹ Lib. xii. cap. 5.

and God slew their first-born; punishment often bears the image and superscription of the sin upon it.

Art thou oppressed in thy estate? Consider whether thou never didst oppress others, as the greater fish devouring the smaller. Art thou cheated and cozened of thy right? Look back upon thy life; didst thou never defraud others of their due, like a beast of prey, tearing away by thy power others' portions? Art thou disgraced? Examine thyself, whether thou hast not slandered others, as a cupping-glass drawing their worst humours, and revealing their faults, when thou hast concealed their virtues. So, whatsoever thy affliction be, put the question to thy soul, whether thou hast not to others occasioned the same suffering? God payeth some in their own coin. If sickness or continual pain be thy affliction, consider whether thou hast not been intemperate, and so brought thyself to the rack. The sinner sometimes reapeth the same seed which he soweth; you may read who is the father of the child, what sin begot the affliction, by the favour and features of the child's face, it doth so much resemble its father.

2. If thou canst not find out the cause of thy disease by that symptom, hearken to the voice of conscience. Look into that book, and see what debts thou owest to divine justice, for which thou art now arrested. When the debtor doth not mind his payments, the serjeant or bailiff is sent to quicken him. Is there no way of wickedness which thou allowest? Though in the day of prosperity carnal pleasures make such a noise that the voice of conscience cannot be heard, yet in the silent night of adversity conscience often obtains audience. And in affliction, like an officer, it sheweth the *mittimus*, which mentions the offence for which the malefactor is committed to prison.

It is possible God may be reckoning with thee for some old debt which thou hadst forgotten. Look into thy remembrance, thy register-book, and there thou mayest find it. It is observable that the patriarchs had committed a great sin in the sale of Joseph, which passed many years unregarded and unrepented. The golden dust of prosperity had so covered the looking-glass of conscience, that they could not behold in it the ugly face of their crimson fault; but when they came to be in great perplexity in Egypt, adversity did them that friendly office, as to wipe off that dust, and then conscience makes a true representation to them of their sin. As what is written with the juice of lemons, their sin was legible when brought to the fire. 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he be-

sought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us,' Gen. xliii. 21. Affliction untieth the tongue of conscience, that it speaketh plainly to men and women—this is the sin, this is the lust, that hath brought this load of sufferings. And affliction unstoppeth the ears of men and women, that they hearken to its cry. Oh! it is true indeed, we did thus and thus, conscience charged, and God commanded us to the contrary, and we would not hear; we are verily guilty, therefore is this distress come upon us.

3. If thou hast been faithful in empannelling conscience upon the indictment, and that bring in an *ignoramus*, go to God, and entreat him to acquaint thee with his mind in his providence, and with the meaning of thy punishment. When the children struggled in Rebekah's womb, she said, 'Why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb,' Gen. xxv. 22. So now thou art in the midst of strivings and strugglings, go to God, inquire of him; possibly he may answer thee, Two parties, two princes, are within thee, flesh and spirit, Christ and Satan, and they are striving which shall be the conqueror. Or do as Job under his sore troubles, 'Lord, do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,' Job x. 2. Lord, my troubles and crosses are well known; the eyes of others see them, and my heart feels them; but the cause of them is unknown. There is a veil upon my understanding, that I cannot discern thy meaning; there is a curtain drawn between me and the ground of my crosses. Oh scatter these mists that hinder my sight, that I may know the reason of my sufferings; for though I know that I am a sinner, and am guilty of many weaknesses, yet I know also that I am not wicked. I have examined myself, and am not conscious of any ungodliness or close hypocrisy, much less of any profaneness or scandalous enormity, which should provoke thee thus severely to punish me. I do not desire to know it as suspecting thy goodness and holiness, but as suspecting my own evil heart. Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me, whether it be for sin or no; if for sin, for what sin; that I may repent of it, and return to thee. If not for sin, shew me for what end, whether to prove and try me, or to purify and strengthen me.

There is no better way for a prisoner to know the reason of his confinement, than to ask the justice or magistrate that committed him; there is no surer way to know the cause of our sufferings, than to go to that God that sends them. Every wise agent can give a rational account of his actions. Though God's will be a sufficient answer to all our queries,—'he doth whatsoever he pleaseth

in heaven, and in earth, and in all deep places,'—yet he wills nothing without infinite reason, and is pleased to let his friends know what is his end in his actings. 'The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him,' Ps. xxv.

But, reader, when thou goest to God by prayer, to know why thou dost suffer, do it in a serious, solemn manner, and with a settled purpose to answer his afflicting providence. An ordinary seeking will not serve turn in extraordinary sufferings. When a famine was in the days of David upon Israel three years, year after year, the holy king doubtless did often desire of God to know what fault in Israel had incensed him to send a famine on Israel. It is not probable he would suffer so mortal a distemper to infect the body politic so long, and never look after its cause and cure; yet he could not find it out, till at last, after the end of three years, he goeth to God, by that grand and most solemn way of inquiry, by Urim and Thummim, and then God answers him, 'It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,' 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Upon which he hangs up some of Saul's sons, and the judgment was removed. If thou canst not by thy daily fervent prayers find out the cause, set apart a day, or days, of humiliation and fasting. As some devils will not be cast out without fasting and prayer, so the reason of some distresses will not be found out without fasting and prayer. On such a day of prayer unbosom thyself freely and fully to God. Oh, it is sad to be hiding thy sins when God is searching for them. Entreat him to try thee; say, as the psalmist, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,' Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. Bewail thy original pollution, which is the grand remote cause of all affliction, though some particular corruption may be a nearer cause, as the brittleness of man's body is the natural remote cause of death, though some one disease be the next and immediate cause. Bemoan also all thy actual transgressions, which thou canst possibly remember, and accent them with their crying circumstances. After this, condemn thyself for them, and resolve, through divine help, to forsake them. If God make known to thee which is thy darling sin, that hath cost thee so much sorrow, which is the Absalom, (that had he received his due, had been hanged long before for the murder of Christ,) that now is in arms to rob thee of thy crown and life, causing such disturbance and distress unto thee. As thou lovest thy soul, entertain not any favourable thoughts of him. Do not wish, Oh that he might be spared, and dealt gently with for thy sake; but with the

greatest hatred hasten his execution. Let such a day be as the fast among the Jews, wherein all their blasphemers were put to death. Let no one malefactor be hid, like Joash, in a secret chamber, to avoid the stroke of vengeance. After this renew thy covenant with the Lord, to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all thy days. Resolve upon every known duty, and against every known iniquity. Call aloud to Jesus Christ, to stand bound for thee, and to be thy surety for thy good behaviour; and if thou art but sincere and faithful in these particulars, thy affliction may be removed. When the wound is well the plaster falls off; the messenger departs when he hath done his errand; or however it is sanctified to thee, and sanctified misery is a greater mercy than the whole creation. Now thou mayest 'rejoice in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in thy heart.'¹ Though thy chastisement be no infallible sign of God's love, yet thy improvement of it in this gracious manner is a sure sign of his special favour. If the philosopher Zeno, after his shipwreck, blessed fortune for his prosperous misfortune, because it made him a better scholar, having deprived him of that which had diverted him from his studies, surely thou hast more cause to bless providence for thy happy unhappiness, because it hath made thee the better Christian. Thou mayest say, 'Lord, it was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word,' Ps. cxix. 67.

But, on the other hand, it will be ill if, after thy afflictions, and the pains God hath taken with thee, thou art not more holy. It is sad to be put to pain to no profit, to be cut and lanced, and not to have thy bad blood let out. God complaineth of this: 'In vain have I smitten your children, and they have not received correction,' Jer. ii. 30. I gave them physic, but to no purpose; but it is doleful for a man to come out of affliction, as a sheep out of a ditch, dirty and defiled; or as a piece of iron out of the smith's hand, after it hath been first in the fire and then in the water, more hardened than it was before. It is bad not to be the better for affliction; for a person to come out of his chamber, where he was at the gate of death, amended in body but not in soul. Ephraim remembers his incorrigibleness upon the day of his repentance: 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,' Jer. xxxi. 18—rather kicking at, than sub-

¹ Post afflictiones vita bonis tranquillior.—*Nazian. in Orat. ad Cyp.*

mitting to, my deserved sufferings. To such a man Augustine sadly expresseth himself, *Perdidisti utilitatem calamitatis*; Thou hast lost the profit of thy physic.¹ The cost which God was at with thee was thrown away. But oh how intolerable is it for the child to be the more froward when he is corrected for his faults! The next thing he may expect is to be turned out of doors. Not to be reformed by afflictions, speaks a child of rebellion and disobedience; but to wax worse by affliction, speaks a son of reprobation and perdition. The tree which, after dunging and pruning, is unfruitful, is for the fire. If the ten plagues do not reform Pharaoh, the Red Sea shall ruin him.

CHAPTER X.

The means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in adversity. As also a good wish about that condition.

Having laid down the motives, and also discovered wherein the nature of exercising thyself to godliness in adversity consisteth, I proceed to the third thing promised, and that is to acquaint thee with the means which may be helpful to thee herein.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in affliction, labour to see God's hand in all thy afflictions. Do not, like the dog, snarl at the stone, but look up to the hand that throweth it. Consider, whosoever be the messenger that bringeth it, God is the master that sendeth it, and then the present, whatsoever it be, will have the more acceptance for the author's sake. 'Can a bird fall into a snare, where no gin is for him? Shall there be any evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Amos iii. 6, 7. The bird seems to be taken by chance, but he is taken by providence. The bird did not see the snare, but the fowler set the snare purposely for him. Afflictions seem to come accidentally on men, but we are caught in them intentionally by God. Though we do not foresee them, yet God fore-appoints them, and to him we must look if we would improve such providences.

We are at least silent when we suffer from them who are much our superiors. Though, when our equals or inferiors strike us, we presently run for a writ; yet if our sovereign, whose laws we have

¹ *Perdidistis utilitatem calamitatis; et miserrimi facti estis, et pessimi permanistis.*—*Aug. de Civitate Dei*, lib. i. cap. 33.

broken, scourge us, or brand us by his officers, we submit. Boys will reverence the rod in the hand of their master, though they laugh at it in the hands of their fellows. 'Who art thou that repliest against God?' is sufficient to make a Christian both patient and pious under the heaviest cross. This consideration moved Job, instead of blaspheming, to bless God, when he received such smart blows from God: 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' Had he said and thought, The Lord hath given, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans have taken away, his rage might probably have conquered his reason, and Satan might have been gratified in what he so impatiently desired; but because Job knew that his potion was sent him from heaven, he cheerfully takes it, and pays, according to his estate, his thanks to his physician: 'The Lord hath taken, blessed be the name of the Lord.' We value and esteem our gifts according to the quality and sincerity of the giver. Jerome would persuade his friend Julian to say, upon the loss of children, Lord, thou hast taken away the children which thou gavest me; I do not murmur at thee for taking them, but I thank thee for giving them. His dominion over us commandeth submission.¹ He giveth out of his mercy, and he takes away out of justice: may not he do what he will with his own? Mat. xx. 15.

A sight of God, like the word of Christ in the ship, did allay and calm those high winds and boisterous waves which threatened to overturn the soul of the psalmist: 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou, Lord, didst it,' Ps. xxxix. 9.² If you consider the third verse of the psalm, you will find that his heart was very hot, and the fire of his inward passion was so great, by reason of his afflictions from Saul and his courtiers, that it was like to break out into a flame to his own ruin. But this was the water that quenched it: 'Thou, Lord, didst it.' As when our lungs are exceeding hot with their motion, and ready to burn up themselves with their own heat, even then they are cooled by the air which they suck in; so the heart of the prophet, heated with anger and impatience, was cooled with this gale, that it was God's pleasure. When he once saw God's hand and seal to the warrant for his correction, he durst not open his mouth against it. The hand of an infinite, unquestionable, only wise God, is such a muzzle on a saint's

¹ Tulisti liberos quos ipse dederas: non contristor quod recepisti, sed gratias ago quod dedisti.—*Jerome*.

² Quia tu fecisti, i.e., non casu aut fortuna, aut temere ista mihi accidunt, sed sapientissimo tuo consilio, et justo judicio res hominum reguntur.—*Moller, in loc.*

mouth that he cannot murmur, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou, Lord, didst it.'¹

As men generally look not up to the author of their mercies, and thence are so unthankful, so they look not up to the author of their afflictions, and hence are so impatient and fretful. It is observable that patience did wonderfully triumph in David's breast under Shimei's bitter railings. Though that traitor struck fire again and again, he was wet tinder, he did not take. Yet at another time, when Nabal offered him a little unkindness, that small wind raised a grievous storm of passion in his spirit: 'So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall,' 1 Sam. xxv. 22. But if we read the story, we may quickly see the reason. David heard God's voice in Shimei's language, but did not see God's hand in Nabal's carriage. 'Let him alone, and let him curse,' saith he of Shimei; 'for the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David,' 2 Sam. xvi. 9, 10. The Lord hath bidden him with a word of sufferance, though not of allowance, with the word of his providence, though not of his precept;² therefore I must bear it with submission and patience; he who hears God speaking will, if he know himself, be silent.

The foolish heathen, whose understandings were darkened, could see no farther than second causes, hence acted like distracted persons under the cross.³ Xerxes, the Persian monarch, having received a loss by the rage of Hellespontus, caused three hundred stripes to be given it, and cast fetters into the water, as if he could make it his prisoner, and bind it at his pleasure. Darius, because the river Gynde had drowned his white horse, threatened to divide it into many channels, and so weaken its strength, that one should go over it on foot.⁴ Those that look only at means thus murmur, and bewray their madness.

When men drink of waters far from the spring, and nigh the sea, they are brackish, and of an ill taste; but if they drink them in the fountain (*Dulcius ex ipso fonte, &c.*), they are sweet. As Solinus reports of Hypanis, a Scythian river, that the water thereof is bitter, as it passeth through Exampius, but very sweet in the spring.⁵ When men drink the waters of affliction, in the musty vessels of instruments, no wonder that they are the waters of

¹ Nihil ad compescendos doloris impetus aptius est, quam ubi nobis in mentem venit, non cum homine mortali, sed cum Deo negotium esse.—*Calvin, in loc.*

² Verbo providentiæ, non præcepti.—*Jun., in loc.*

³ Herodot., lib. vii.

⁴ Sence., De Ira.

⁵ Cap. 20.

Marah, bitter waters, and set men, as those waters did the Israelites, a-murmuring; but when they drink them in the fountain, consider them in the blessed God, the principal efficient, they are tolerable, if not pleasant. Christians can take anything kindly from the hands of their God. It was a holy speech of that honourable Lord Duplessis, at the death of his only son, I could not have borne this from a man, but I can from my God. Beasts will take blows from their master, surely then we may from our Maker.

2. Consider, God's affection is the spring, as to him, of all thy afflictions. Thy temporal cross comes from the same love that thy eternal crown comes from. Infinite and eternal love is the root from which every rod springeth, with which God scourgeth thee.¹ 'As many as I love, I rebuke; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,' Rev. iii. 17; Heb. xii. 5. Men will not take the pains to correct stubborn servants, but turn them out of doors; but love forceth them to chastise their sons. God out of hatred lets many a sinner go unpunished in this world. He prunes not the tree which he intends for the eternal fire. When the rope is designed, the rod is spared. The malefactor, according to our law, escapes the whipping-post that is condemned to the gallows. 'The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth at the day of wrath,' Job. xxi. 30. But out of love, he afflicteth saints.² 'In very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me,' saith David, Ps. cxix. 75; as if David had said, Lord, thou art not only righteous in giving me to drink the fruit of my disobedience to thy law, but thou art also gracious in causing me therein to taste the effects of thy love. Thy correcting severity proceeds from thine electing mercy;³ thou couldst not be faithful to my soul and thy covenant of salvation, if thou shouldst suffer me to wander from thy commands, and not bring me home, though by Weeping-cross. It is worthy our observation, that God binds himself as well to give his children a rod in their minority when they offend, as the inheritance when they come to age. 'If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their iniquity with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness I will not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David.' How then should

¹ Magna est misericordia hic virga corrigi, ne alibi duro malleo conterantur.—*Nic. de Clemang. Epist.* 58.

² Quod Deus amat, indurat et exerceat non in deliciis sed in castris.—*Sen. Epist.* 67.

³ Magna ira est, quando peccantibus non irascitur Deus.—*Jerome Epist.* 33.

he be faithful to his word, if they who transgress so often should never feel his rod, much less if he should let them run on to their ruin ! He visits their iniquities with stripes, that he might not take from them his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. The punishments of sinners are vindictive, the fruits of pure wrath ; but the afflictions of saints are corrective, the genuine product of true love. ' All his ways are mercy and truth ; ' not only his comforting, but his correcting ways. If he smile, it is in mercy ; and if he smite, it is in mercy. God may change his dispensation towards his children, but never his disposition, Ps. xxv. 10.

Some write of the Russians, that their women think those husbands do not love them who do not beat them, and those husbands to love them most who beat them most. Sure I am, those that have felt most of the weight of God's hand have had the greatest room in his heart. As it was said of Asher, his shoes are iron and brass, but his feet are dipped in oil, in love ; so I may say of God. When his shoes are iron and brass, when he treads hard and treads heavy, yet his feet are dipped in oil, in love, Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25. Those bands of affliction with which he binds his saints, are bonds of kindness, and those cords with which he scourgeth his chosen, are cords of love ; every lash speaks love, and is laid on by love.

Now, what a sweet syrup is this for thee, O Christian, to take the bitter pill of affliction in ; I cannot but think it must needs go down the glibber, and also work the better. Doth love send it, and wilt thou slight it ? Shall love present it to thee, and wilt thou be pettish and peevish at it ? God's anger is more grievous than any pressure whatsoever, but his love will make amends for the want of any outward favour. Thy loving-kindness is better than life ; therefore, as long as thou hast this sauce in thy dish, it may make anything go down. ' A dinner of herbs with love, is better than a stalled ox with strife.' The eye is a tender part ; yet, when dim or dusky, we apply sharp powders or waters to eat out the web, or dry up the rheum, and yet love it nevertheless. Friend, God may love thee as the apple of his eye, even then when he afflicteth thee sharply ; therefore, take his love-token kindly.

Gentlemen prize their hawks, and delight to feed them, yet they put wervils upon their legs, and a hood upon their heads. But why, saith Bernard, is she blinded and fettered ? because they esteem her, and would have her always within call. If they have a hawk that they regard not, they will not take such pains with them, but let them fly away. Some sinners escape scourging, and are suffered to take their swing, because God doth not love nor

esteem them; but his saints, whom he valueth, he will be sure to correct, that he may have them always within his call and command.¹

Children will take that potion willingly which a mother gives them, when, if a stranger should pour such a draught down their throats, they would cry out, We are poisoned. And what is the reason? why, they are persuaded of their parent's love, that is the lump of sugar which sweetens it. He in Terence could say, when he was in his own thoughts hardly used, *Pater est; si pater non esset*, &c. : It is my father; if it were not my father I should not take it so well. Anything is pleasing which love doth present; even blows in love are lovely, and the wounds of a friend are healing. David had much rather lose his life by the hands of courteous Jonathan, who loved him, than of cruel Saul, who hated him, 1 Sam. xx. 8. Elijah could beg death from a gracious God,—‘It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life’—even then when he feared it, and fled from it, by the hands of a spiteful, malicious woman, 1 Kings xix. 3, 4. Our blessed Redeemer drank off freely that cup of venom and poison, of gall and wormwood, which would have turned the stomachs of all men and angels in the world to have tasted it, when it was put into his hands by a loving Father. When sinless nature had a reluctancy, the thought of a father carried it: ‘The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?’ Had the Lord Jesus considered only the fury of hell, and the wrath of his foes on earth, his potion would have been much less pleasing; but when he thought of the love of his Father—how love provided it for him, and love presented it to him; how there was not the least bitter ingredient in it, but love prescribed it, and love prepared it, he drank off his cup, thus spiced with his Father's love, cheerfully.

The truth is, our eyes are bad, and in our journey towards heaven, mountains and hills interposing, we lose the sight of the true Sun, and the sense of our Father's love; but when we come to our Father's house, we shall see grace and love displayed in all its colours.² Though our Jesus now, like Joseph, acts the part of a seeming enemy, yet then we shall see that he loved us, all the while that he used us so hardly; then he will speak plainly: I am your

¹ *Disce gratiam esse, ubi Deus cito peccata punit; per hoc enim cumulus peccatorum decrescit: cum enim poenas diffèrat, tunc cum his culpa augetur ac consequenter pœna.*—*Cornel. à Lap. in Gen. xv.*

² *Exaudit iratus, non exaudit propitius; non parcit propitius, parcit iratus.*—*Aug. Cont. Jul., lib. v. cap. 4.*

brother Joseph whom ye sold—I am your brother Jesus whom ye crucified.

Thirdly, Consider, God will proportion thy burden to thy back. He will not assess thee above thy estate. When any were scourged among the Jews, they fitted the whip to the person, and gave either all the stripes which God allowed, not exceeding forty, Deut. xxv. 3, at once, or at two several times, according to the strength of the offender; to this end, the work of one of their judges was to number the strokes, that they might be sure not to exceed. God numbereth as well the saints' sufferings as their sins, and will not permit one stroke beyond their strength. He limits their sufferings, both for their nature and their length; he hath some strong, able servants, old men and fathers, therefore he calleth them to the harder services, that their strength might not be lost. Those that have great estates, much spiritual riches, must live accordingly, or else their wealth would be given them in vain. He hath others who are weak babes in Christ, little children; now, though he drives these towards their heavenly country, when they would loiter and play with the toys of the world by the way, yet he doth not over-drive them, but, as Jacob's ewes great with young, drive them tenderly, 'as they are able to bear it,' Gen. xxxiii. 14.

God is not like an empiric, who hath but one remedy for all persons, and all maladies, but first considers his patients, what age they are, of how long standing in Christ's school, of what strength, what proficiency they have made since they were entered, and accordingly writes his bill. Because some bodies will bear it, he will give them physic two or three days together: 'Let us return unto the Lord: he hath torn, and he will heal us. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight,' Hosea vi. 1, 2. Nay, possibly ten days together he may give a diet drink: 'Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days,' Rev. ii. 10. But because others of his children are of weak constitutions, he will purge them only one day, Zech. iii. 9, or give them pills one night: 'Heaviness shall endure for a night,' Ps. xxx. 5. Nay, if they be very sickly, it shall work but an hour: the apostle mentioneth, 'an hour of temptation,' Rev. iii. 10. Nay, as the patient may be but a moment: 'These light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' 2 Cor. iv. 17. And if there be any of his weaklings, whose stomachs cannot bear it so long, they shall have it less time, (if it may be, that this point is divisible:) 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee,' Isa. liv. 7, 8. Well might the

apostle say, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.' With which verse Latimer comforted Ridley, when they were both going to the stake, adding, Be confident, brother, God will either assuage the violence of the flames, or give us strength to bear it.

After their physic, he gives cordials to keep them from fainting, he is so tender of his faithful ones. If he knock down Paul with one hand, and strike him blind, he will lift him up with the other hand, and that to the third heavens, where he shall see such blessed sights as mortal ears cannot hear of. He sendeth snow in Salmon, light in darkness. When it showers, it shines on a saint. I thank my God for this prison, said one of the martyrs, more than for any palace; for in it I find my God most sweet to me. When Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, was prisoner a long time together under Charles the Fifth, he was asked what upheld him; he answered, I feel the divine comforts of the martyrs. The cross of Christ is sweet wood; it bears cordial spices. These lions, as Samson's, prove a hive of sweetness, and produce a swarm of comforts to the saints. When the waterpots are full of water, then the best wine is coming. It may be said of the Christian, what Plutarch speaketh of Egypt, He hath many poisons, but as many antidotes.¹

I have read of one that, digging under a cross, found a great treasure; saints have never found greater riches of grace and comfort than under the cross. The wine of their joy is usually most brisk and lively when they drink it in those low, damp cellars, at the head of the pipe. When Jacob halts through a blow on his thigh, the place is turned into a Peniel, that is, the face of God. It was a happy sight that was accompanied with a sight of God's face.

There are three great differences between the punishments God inflicts on sinners, and the afflictions he brings on saints in this world; 'Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?' Isa. xxvii. 7. No; for,

1. They differ in the manner. God punisheth his enemies with joy: 'Ah, I will ease me of mine enemies,' Isa. i. 24. As if he were in pain till they are punished, and could have no ease but in their pain; whereas, when he afflicts his children, it is with much compassion: 'His soul is grieved for the miseries of Israel,' Judges x. 15. He takes the rod into his hand with tears, as I may say, in his eyes. And when he hath it in his hand, hath many conflicts with himself, whether he should strike or no: 'How shall I deliver

¹ Multa venena, et multa salubria.—*Plut.*

thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I give thee up, O Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? (Admah and Zeboim were part of the Pentapolis which God destroyed; the other three were Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar;) my bowels are rolled within me, my repentings are kindled together,' Hosea xi. 8, 9. Mark how he striveth with himself before he can strike his people. As if he had said, O Ephraim, O Israel, thou art a wicked, stubborn child, and art worthy to be whipped till thou bleedest; nay, to be whipped to death, and to be a monument of my fury, like to those cities which I consumed with fire; but though thine iniquities deserve it, and thine adversaries desire it, yet my tender mercies debate it, and implead it. How can I do it?

When God is destroying his enemies, he laughs at every lash, though it fetch blood from their backs: 'I will laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh,' Prov. i. Their destruction is the object of his derision. He strikes them with hatred and detestation of them, as a man strikes a toad. But when he is chastising his friends, his sons, after he hath overcome himself to do it, from the necessity of it, truly even then he doth it with sorrow, and every stroke, as it were, goeth to his very heart: 'In all their afflictions he is afflicted,' Isa. lxiii.

2. They differ in the measure. When God punisheth his enemies, he hath no regard at all what they can endure, and what they cannot, but strikes according as they have deserved: 'I will reward you according to all the evil of your doings, and till they be utterly destroyed,' Jer. xxv. But when he afflicteth his people, he doth consider what they are able to suffer: 'As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth their frame; he remembereth they are but dust,' Ps. ciii. 12, 13. He observeth what weak vessels they are, and therefore will not use them to hard knocks, nor suffer them to be too near, or too long by the fire, lest they fly in pieces.

He correcteth his people, not according to the greatness of his power: 'Will he plead against me with his great power?' No; but 'he will put strength into me,' Job xxiii. 6. Nor according to the fierceness of his anger: 'Many a time turned he away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath,' Ps. lxxviii. 38. Nor according to the grievousness of their errors: 'Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve,' Ezra ix. 13. But he correcteth them in measure: 'Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee wholly un-

punished,' Jer. xxx. 11. He meteth out their sufferings in a due proportion, like those that do things exactly by weight and measure, (not a drachm too much,) with respect both to the quality of the disease, and the ability of the patient's body.

As a judge, when he correcteth his child, hath respect not only to the child's wantonness, but also to the child's weakness, and accordingly whips him; but when he sits on the bench, and is sentencing a malefactor at the bar, only considers his offence, and what the law inflicts; never whether the poor prisoner be able to endure burning on the hand, or hanging; so God deals with his children in the relation of a Father—mildly, moderately, according to their strength; but with others, in the relation of a judge—severely, yet justly, according to their demerits.

3. They differ in the end. God afflicteth his children to sanctify their polluted hearts; he punisheth his enemies to satisfy his offended justice. God cometh to his people, as a chirurgeon to his patient, pricking and cutting him to let out his bad blood, it may be, bleeding him till he is ready to faint, that there may be a spring of better; but he comes to his enemies as a creditor to his debtor, taking him by the throat, and bidding him pay what thou owest, which because he cannot, to prison he must go.

When God striketh his children, he doth, as a fencer to his scholars, now and then give them a blow with a blunt weapon, for instruction, to teach them the better how to defend themselves; but when he striketh sinners, he strikes as one of the Roman gladiators, to kill and slay; he first whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold of judgment, and then he renders vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him, Deut. xxxi. 41. His judgments on the sinners are for their punishment, as an earnest-penny of their endless misery; but his corrections on the saints are for their profit, for the preventing or purging away of their iniquities. But more of this in the next particular.

Fourthly, Consider that all thy afflictions are needful, and shall work for thy good. Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. The waters are not more needful to waft the ship, than afflictions are to carry the vessels of our souls to their port of bliss. Affliction, saith the martyr to his friend, will scour and rub you bright, that you may be fit to be set on the high shelf in heaven: 'Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations,' 1 Pet. i. 6. 'If need be;' whilst we have diseased bodies, physic is as needful as food; whilst we have diseased souls, misery is as needful as outward mercies. The winter is as necessary to bring on

harvest as the spring; affliction is as helpful to bring forward the harvest of glory as any condition. Winds and thunder trouble the air, but withal they purge it. Corrections are grievous, but withal they purify and make us gracious. There is a necessity that the patient be made sick, for otherwise he cannot be well. We hold but our arm to a chirurgeon, to lance us for our good, when if another should cut us, we would be ready to take the law of him.¹ Christian, thou mayest well with patience undergo divine corrections, because they are for thy profit.

God and the world differ much in their ends about the saints' affliction.² The world persecuteth them out of hatred; God afflicteth them out of love, the world intendeth evil in it. As Joseph said to the patriarchs, 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, as it is this day, to save much people alive,' Gen. xv. 20. So the saints may bespeak the world in regard of those slanders and fetters, and other calamities which they bring on them: As for you, ye thought evil against us, but God meant it to good, as it appeareth this day, to save our souls alive. The physician and the leech have several ends in drawing the patient's blood: the end of the leech is to satisfy herself; the end of the physician is to better the state of his patient's body. The end which the world aimeth at in the crosses which they bring on Christians is to satisfy their own pride, and malice, and revenge: 'My lust shall be satisfied upon them,' saith Pharaoh, when he was pursuing Israel, Exod. xv. 9; but God's end is to sanctify his people's souls.

One of the sharpest calamities that ever befell Israel was the Babylonish captivity, yet even this was in mercy: Jer. xxiv. 5, 6, 'Thus saith the Lord; Like the good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.' How! of freemen be made prisoners, and that in a strange land amongst heathen, to be removed from their own houses, vineyards, friends, nay, and from the temple of God, and all this for their good!

Possibly, reader, thou wilt be apt to say, as the unbelieving lord, Though God should work a miracle, could this be? I tell thee, God doth with his rod of correction, as Moses with his rod in Egypt, work wonders, and it shall be.³ As the goat, through common providence, can digest hemlock, and draw good sustenance from it, which is counted a deadly weed to other creatures; so the Christian,

¹ Finis dat amabilitatem et facilitatem mediis.

² Venenum aliquando pro remedio fuit.—*Senec. De Benefic.*, lib. ii. cap. 18.

³ Medici pedes et alas Cantharidis, cum sit ipsa mortifera, prodesse dicunt.—*Plut.*

through special assistance, can feed on the evil of affliction, and get strength from it, as deadly as it is to profane persons.

Sometimes God prevents sin by affliction. A purge or bleeding in the spring may prevent diseases in autumn. Suffering hath many a time killed sin in the embryo, and prevented its birth. When Cato urged in the senate ¹ that Carthage might be destroyed, Scipio opposed it, saying, that the fear of Carthage made the Romans watchful, whereas, if it should be destroyed, they would degenerate into luxury. Salt marshes preserve sheep from the rot, which otherwise they would be infected with, and die of. When the waters are abated, the dove herself is apt to wander and to be defiled, therefore the continuance of the waters is for her good; it prevents her wandering out of the ark.

External hardships have hindered souls from hell, from eternal heaviness. Manasseh's iron chains prevented the chains of everlasting darkness. 'We are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. xi. 31. God hath by adversity carted some to heaven, whom prosperity would have coached to hell. A corroding plaster, though it puts a man to pain, yet, by eating out the festered matter, prevents the cutting off his limb, and many times the loss of his life. Had the prodigal found his fill of husks, it is probable he had not thought of his father's house.² Now, reader, is not that needful, and for thy good, which prevents sin, nay, which preventeth hell?

Sometimes God purgeth away sin by affliction. He useth the file to take away that which is rugged. Affliction, saith Chrysostom, is the shepherd's dog, which takes the lamb into its mouth when it goeth astray; not to bite it, but to bring it home. God's design in thy sufferings is not to ruin, but to reform, thee. A gardener diggeth his ground, breaketh the clods, maketh the earth as small as he can; but an ordinary capacity knoweth his end is to mend it, not to mar it: Prov. xx. 30, 'The blueness of the wound cleanseth away evil; so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.' There was a time when the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their weapons. It may be God lets wicked men loose upon thee, to detract, backbite, and slander thee; but his end is that their evil words should make thee more watchful, and help to sharpen thy spiritual weapons.

¹ Flor., lib. ii.

² Nisi ego fuisset mordax (inquit Luth.) Papa fuisset vorax. Had not I been a perch, with sharp fins, the pope had swallowed me; so had Satan many a Christian, had it not been for affliction.—*Col. Mensal.*, cap. 37.

The Christian is like the Athenians, of whom some write, *Non nisi atrati*, they mend not till they are in mourning. Trees set in the winter thrive most; the oftener the hair is shaved, the thicker and the more it groweth. It is said of the Phrygians, they wax not wise except they are beaten to it; and one of our great statesmen observeth of us English, that we are best when we are in black. When we are merry, we are worst; when we are sorrowful, we are best.¹

Apollonius writes of a certain people that could see nothing in the day, but anything in the night. Saints, like those creatures that have fiery eyes, see best the sinfulness of sin, the worthlessness of the word, and the preciousness of their Saviour, in the dark night of affliction. In the day of light and outward comforts, the sunshine of prosperity doth many times so dazzle their eyes, that they are almost blind.² Oh, how much doth the Christian esteem the smiles of the Lord, when he is under the frowns of the world! There are no strains in music so delightful as those in which discords are artificially bound up with concords. Dark shadows set forth a beautiful picture, and represent it more lovely and lively. Tribulation, saith Luther, is the best expositor of Scripture, without which a man can never know the will, or the goodwill, or love of God.

Quails love to fly with the wind, because of their small strength and little bodies, yet not with the south wind, which is moist and heavy, but with the cold north wind. Holiness oftener accompanieth the cold north wind of adversity, than the warm south wind of prosperity. It was observed, in the days of Edward the Sixth, when the sweating sickness raged in England, and swept away many, then the churches were thronged, and servants sent to this and that minister, You must come to my lord; you must come to my lady; they beseech you to pray with them, to pray for them; here is a bag of money they desire you to give to the poor. Since that, when the plague raged in England, and the bills of mortality swelled to several thousands in one week, in one city, how piously were fasts observed, how zealously was heaven importuned, how devoutly were Sabbaths sanctified! But as soon as those judgments were removed, piety was abated, profaneness abounded, and the Author and Father of all our mercies provoked to his face.

¹ *Anglica gens est optima flens, et pessima gaudens.*

² *Cum tremore nobis considerandum est quod justus et omnipotens Deus, quum irascitur præcedentibus peccatis, permittit ut cœcata mens in alia dilabatur.*—*Greg. M. Ezek. iii.*

Men mistake often the end of God in their sufferings, hence are so unwilling to undergo them. When the taste is vitiated, as in diseased persons, they mistake their meats, and therefore nothing pleaseth them. If there be a suffusion in the eye, as in the jaundice, everything seemeth yellow; when those who have seen God's end have counted affliction a favour and an honour. Luther prayed for it, *Feri, Domine, feri*, Strike, Lord, strike, and it shall be a mercy. King Alfred prayed God to send him some sickness to keep under his flesh. Job, speaking to God of afflicting him, saith, Job vii. 18, 'What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?'

Reader, art thou in great troubles? ponder this—thy God brings them on thee for thy profit. Thou wilt take bitter physic for the good of thy body, and shouldst thou not be as ready for that which tendeth so much to the health of thy soul? ¹ Though the whetstone grate upon, and somewhat wear the knife, yet withal it sharpeneth it. Sufferings may somewhat pain and wear thee, but they will quicken thee God-ward, and sharpen thine appetite after spiritual things.

If thy God deny thee a confluence of outward comforts which he granteth to others, thou mayest be confident it is for thy good. Infinite wisdom seeth it best to keep thee short. Thy God knoweth how much the vessel of thy soul will carry, and therefore putteth no more goods aboard, lest thou shouldst sink in the bottomless gulf of perdition, as many poor barks have done out of covetousness, to take in a greater freight than they could safely sail to heaven with. Because the storms of temptation threaten danger to none so much as to those that are deepest laden, he lades thee lightly, that thou mayest sail to thy port of bliss safely.

Further, thou mayest be assured that thine afflictions shall work for thy good. God hath promised it, and he will perform it, Rom. viii. 28. There is a twofold kingdom of Christ; the one is his spiritual kingdom, whereby he ruleth by his Spirit and word in the hearts of his people. In this respect he is called King of saints, for they submit to him as their sovereign.

The other is his providential kingdom, whereby he ruleth in the world, disposing of all things therein; in this respect he is called King of nations. He sits at the stern of the world, and steereth it which way he pleaseth, for the government is upon his shoulders.

¹ Quicquid divinitus ante ultimum judicium vindicatur, non ad interitum hominum, sed ad medicinam valere credendum est.—*Aug. Cont. Epist. Mar.*, cap. 1.

Now he ordereth his providential kingdom for the advancement of his spiritual kingdom ; so that his kingdom, which ruleth over all, shall be disposed as may be most for the welfare of his people. Thou mayest say of thy affliction, if thou art a member of Christ, as Paul did of his, ' I know that this shall turn to my salvation,' Phil. i. 19. Though instruments intend thy destruction, yet thy God, who governeth all, will turn it to thy salvation.

Wouldst thou be angry if thy father should send workmen to pull down an old smoky cottage in which thou livest, and to build up a handsome, stately dwelling at his own charge ? ¹ And canst thou take it otherwise than kindly at the hands of thy God, when he sendeth afflictions to pull down sin and thy body of death, though he thereby put thee to a little trouble, when he intendeth to build up thy soul a more pure and glorious piece ? It is the observation of Salmeron,² If a man should throw a rich diamond at you, and hit you upon the hand, so you might have the diamond for it, would you count that an injury ? ' All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' All things, not only thy comforts, but also thy crosses ; not only the love of God, but also the hatred of the world, and the malice of hell.

Fifthly, Consider how the people of God have formerly endured great afflictions ; nay, how the Son of God himself drank deepest of this cup. The best of saints have borne the worst of sufferings. Heaven's chief favourites have been trampled on as the world's filth. Thou thinkest none hath suffered so much as thou hast, but, alas ! hast thou resisted unto blood ? Dost thou know the racks and tortures which many of the Lord's chosen have endured ? Socrates was wont to say, If all the calamities of mortal men were heaped into one storehouse, from whence every one should take an equal portion, each man would choose rather to go away with that part and pain which he hath already.

David was the song of the drunkards ; Elijah fled for his life ; Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon ; Daniel into a lion's den ; Micaiah fed in prison with bread and water ; Paul's whole life, after his conversion, was, as it were, one continued affliction, till he came at last to end all with his life under Nero. Consider the patience of Job ; saith the apostle, ' Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for examples of suffering affliction, and of patience,' James v. 10. How deep did the primitive worthies wade in these waters ! *Solamen miseris*, &c. It is some comfort that thou hast

¹ O servum illum beatum cujus emendationi Deus instat, cui dignatur irasci ?—*Ter. de Patient.*, cap. 11.

² Salmer. in Johan., iii.

company; thou dost not break this snowy, icy way. The road is already beaten by many who have gone before thee.

Antiochus being to fight with Judas, captain of the host of the Jews, to make his elephants fight the better, he shewed them the blood of grapes. The Romans, in the place of their Olympic games, pictured those who had been famous at that exercise, to encourage others to do worthily.

Reader, thou art compassed about with a great cloud, or pillar, of witnesses, do thou therefore run with patience the race set before thee, Heb. xii. 1. It is enough for thee to fare as the rest of thy father's children. If they drunk so much wormwood, and did eat such bread of affliction, who were so dutiful and obedient, thou hast little reason, who art so froward and stubborn, to expect better. Why shouldst thou desire God should make thee a new way to heaven, different from that wherein his people have always gone? How unreasonable is it to think that the world, which was their purgatory, should be thy paradise; that, above all thy brethren, thou must have two heavens! Remember Midas, who would turn everything he touched into gold, ruined himself by it.

Remember especially what thy Saviour suffered. Though he were without sin, yet he was a man of sorrows; all thy sufferings to his are but a feather to a mountain of lead. If God spared not his own Son, who was without sin, he hath little cause to spare thee, who art little else but sin; if he dealt so severely with the green tree, how severely may he deal with the dry.

When Alexander marched through Persia, his way was stopped with ice and snow, insomuch that his soldiers, being tired before with hard marches, were wholly discouraged, and would have gone no further, which he perceiving, dismounted, and went on foot through, the midst of them all, making his way with a pickaxe, whereat they being ashamed, first his friends and officers, and then all the rest, fell to work.¹ Thy Saviour hath gone before thee, and given thee an example, that thou mightest follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Art thou poor? so was Christ; he had not a house to put his head in, Mat. viii. 20. Art thou slandered? so was Christ; a friend of publicans and sinners, a Samaritan, one that had a devil, was the language the Jews gave him. Art thou hungry, and thirsty, and weary? so was Christ. Art thou tempted? so was Christ, Mat. iv. Is thy soul sorrowful? so was his, unto death. Do thy friends wrong thee and forsake thee? so did his. Doth God hide his face from thee? so he did from him. And canst

¹ Prior bibit medicus, ut libere non dubitaret aegrotus.

thou imitate a better than thy Saviour? should not his pattern be prevalent with thee? It is reported,¹ that though the amber-ring were of no esteem among the Romans for a long time together, yet when the emperor did once wear it, every one followed him. How contrary soever the cross is to thy nature, yet one would think thou shouldst be ambitious to resemble the king of saints. Hath he drunk to thee in a cup of affliction, and hast thou neither the manners nor grace to pledge him?

Sixthly, Consider, thy sin is the meritorious cause of all thy sufferings. Sin is the weight on the clock which makes the hammer to strike. God may say to thee under the saddest providence, as he said to the Roman emperor, formerly a cutler, This is the sword which thou madest, and by which thou now must die; this is the cross which thou madest, and by which you now must smart. Thou complainest of thy cross, but thou mayest thank thyself for it; therefore, turn thy complaint against thy corruptions.

If sin lie heavy upon thee, all afflictions will be light. Luther gives this reason why he slighted the rage of pope and emperor, and all his outward enemies; They are all little to me, saith he, because sin is so weighty on me.² The like we may observe of the blessed apostle Paul; he cried out much of his sins, and thence complained not at all of his sufferings. Though he was in great distresses, and in deaths often, yet he never bewailed them, saying, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the death of this body!' because he bemoaned sin so much. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!' Sense of sin swalloweth up sense of afflictions, as the ocean doth little rivers. He who hath carried a good part of a sheet of lead upon his back, will make nothing of a few bags of feathers. Truly, affliction to sin is but as a feather to a sheet of lead.

Reader, I assure thee this is an excellent receipt for the cure of thy murmuring and impatience under the hand of God. Consider, whom canst thou be angry with but thyself, when thou hast brought thy troubles on thyself?³ 'I will patiently bear the indignation of the Lord,' saith the church, 'because I have sinned against him,' Micah vii. 9. It is as natural for sin to beget suffering, as for a father to beget a son.

It will break the violence of the stream, thy passion, by turning

¹ Tacitus.

² The heathens could see this. *Sua quemque fraus, suos terror maxime vexat; suum quemque scelus agitat, &c.*—*Cic. Orat. pro Rosc.*

³ *Quid de acerbitate pœnarum querimur? unusquisque nostrum ipse se punit.*—*Salvi. de Gub. Dei*, lib. iii.

the water of thy sorrow into another channel—from thy affliction to thy sin. When men spit blood, or bleed too much at the nose, physicians ordinarily cure it by opening a vein, and turning the blood another way. Thy worldly sorrow is as dangerous to thy spirit as inward bleeding to thy flesh: to stop it, try but this remedy of diverting it into sorrow for sin, and I am confident thou wilt set thy *probatum est* to the receipt. Godly sorrow will eat up worldly, as Moses' rod did the rods of the magicians. The noise of a great cannon in the ear drowns the noise of pistols, that they are not heard at all.

Lastly, Look much up to heaven. To allay thy present sufferings, think of thy future solace. Though thou hast a hell here, where wicked men enjoy their heaven, yet thy hell shall end in heaven, and thy heaven shall never end. The meditation of heaven will much abate thy heaviness. Those birds that fly lowest mourn most. The dove hath a doleful note, but the eagle, which soareth higher, hath no such mournful voice. Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward, and therefore he 'chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,' Heb. xi.

When Saul was anointed to a kingdom, though many sons of Belial despised him, yet he held his peace. And shall not the thought of thine eternal, glorious kingdom, to which the Spirit of God hath anointed thee, move thee to patience under all the world's calumnies and cruelties!¹ What the sponge is to the cannon, cooling it when it is so heated with much shooting that it is ready to fly in pieces, that is a sight of heaven by faith to a suffering Christian; it cools his heats, and quiets his heart, when it is ready to break in pieces through impatience. It is no wonder that Paul was so valiant to suffer; that whatsoever cross God laid down for him, he took it up as cheerfully as if it had been a crown—triumphing in tribulations, defying death itself, and scorning the world's most direful threatenings as bugbears to fright children with, when he had before been rapt up into the third heavens, and heard there things unutterable. That celestial music had so ravished and enchanted his ears, that they were deaf ever after to the roarings of the world's lions. Ah! what hardship will not that soul endure, that walks within the view of heaven!

The worldling, who, like the silk-worm, is wholly for the earth, may well, as they, be terrified unto death at the noise of thunder,

¹ *Vitus duas habemus, unam in qua sumus, alteram quam speramus. Toleramus in qua es, et habebis quam nondum habes, in qua non tolerabis.—Aug. in Ps.*

but the Christian that can mount up to heaven may sing in such weather.¹

Indeed, reader, if thou refusest to suffer with Christ, thou refusest to reign with him.² He who putteth off his gospel-shoe, as a suffering spirit is called, Eph. vi. 17, doth as he who put off his shoe among the Jews, Deut. xxv. 9, 10; Ruth iv. 7, 8, disclaim any right to inheritance. But those who attend Christ on mount Calvary to his crucifixion, shall attend him on mount Tabor to his glorification. When David went to Hebron to the crown, he carried all those with him who had followed him up and down in the caves of the earth. Christ will own and honour all them in his glory who owned him in his ignominy. Solomon spared the life of Abiathar, though he had been guilty of high treason, upon this account, 'Because,' saith he, 'thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted,' 1 Kings ii. 26. And will not the true Solomon prefer and advance them that have fellowship with him in his sufferings?

The sufferings which thou now endurest are not worthy to be named with the joys which God hath provided for thee. If we rightly consider, saith Luther, how great the glory of the life to come will be, we should not be so unwilling to suffer all manner of tribulations, which by the wicked world are put upon us. When the Son of man, our Lord Jesus Christ, shall appear to sentence the good and the bad, then we shall be ashamed, if any possibility of shame, that we so unwillingly suffered a small cross and a slight tribulation, as a wrongful imprisonment, a casting into a dungeon, &c. Then we shall say, Oh fie upon me, in that I threw not myself down under the feet of all the ungodly, to be trod and trampled upon, for thy glory's sake, which now I see revealed. Therefore, St Paul well and truly saith, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

The apostle doth, as it were, put the cross, with all its encumbrances, into one scale, and the saint's crown, which will be the end of his sufferings, into the other scale, and tells us that our present burdens are so infinitely outweighed by our future bliss, that they are not worthy to be mentioned with it, or compared to it. I reckon,³ saith he, it is an allusion either to an accountant that reckons up disbursements and receipts, and at the foot of them sums up all what they amount to—*i.e.*, I have examined strictly

¹ Ulys. Aldrovand. Hist. de Insect., lib. ii. ² Look my Sermon on Rom. viii. 18.

³ λογίζομαι, Numero, concludo.

your layings out for Christ in this world, and have also cast up what he hath laid up for you, and ye shall receive from him in the other world, and find that your receipts do infinitely surpass your disbursements; nay, they amount to such millions that all imaginable expenses here deserve not to be named the same day with the glory hereafter. Or it is an allusion to a disputant, who seriously weigheth arguments *pro* and *con*, and afterwards delivers his judgment—i.e., I have soberly pondered all your sufferings that are possible, how much it may cost you to reign with Jesus Christ, and after all my consideration, this is my collection, my conclusion; that the sufferings of this present life are no more comparable to the glory to be revealed, than this small drop or moment, in which narrow compass all our sufferings are contracted, is to the vast ocean of eternity.

Reader, chew that text a little with the mouth of faith, and thou wilt find it sweet.

1. Thy sufferings are little, some few drops may light on thee in thy journey, but thy glory is great. Thou shalt bathe thy soul in rivers of pleasures when thou comest home. For thy light afflictions thou shalt have a far more exceeding weight of glory. Thy cross is little, is light, but thy crown is massy, is weighty indeed. Oh what a small pain is this, said a Dutch martyr in the flames, to the pleasure hereafter.

2. Thy sufferings are outward only, in thy name, or estate, or body: neither men nor devils can hurt thy soul, or make a flaw in that diamond; but thy glory shall be both outward and inward. Thy body shall shine like the sun in its noonday dress; but ten thousand suns will be darkness to thy soul's attire. Thy soul is the chiefest seat of grace, and thy soul will be the choicest subject of glory.

3. Thy sufferings are mixed with solace; there is some sugar in the bitterest cup. *Non dantur puræ tenebræ*. But thy glory shall be pure, there shall be not the least mixture of shame or sorrow, or any evil to allay its virtue, or abate its value. If thy condition here be like the lower heavens, foul and fair in the same day, thy condition hereafter will be like the upper heavens, always shining, never showering.

4. Thy sufferings here are generally common to mankind. Man is born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward; but thy glory hereafter is special, as Joseph's field, 'a portion above thy brethren.' Though thou sharest with the world in their sufferings, they shall not share with thee in thy solace.

5. Thy sufferings are due to thee; the snares in which thou art taken are of thine own laying; the cords in which thou art bound are of thy own twisting; but thy glory is free, a gift of grace. In regard of God's promise, it is called a crown of righteousness; in regard of the price paid for it by Christ, it is called the purchased possession; but in regard of the persons to whom it is promised, and for whom it was purchased, it is called mercy: 'The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,' 2 Tim. iv. 8; Eph. i. 14; Jude 23.

6. Thy sufferings are short, only for this present time. Heaviness may endure for a night, mourning lasteth but till morning; it is but a *day* of adversity at most. *Hæc non durant ætatem*, These things will not last an age, said Jewel in the Marian days, Eccles. vii. 16; but thy glory is eternal, an eternal weight of glory. That sun will never be clouded, will never set. Who would not suffer a while for eternal glory!

A good wish of a Christian in adversity, wherein the former heads are applied.

The mighty possessor of heaven and earth, who, out of his manifold wisdom, hath appointed from all eternity his providences to be chequer-work, a night and a day, a summer and a winter, an ebb and a tide, a mixture of sour and sweet in this world, as knowing that to be best for his creatures—if they felt nothing but fear, they would despair; if nothing but mercy, they would be secure,—reserving pure wrath and pure rest, pure mercy and pure misery, for the other world; and who foreordaineth his own chosen to drink deepest of the cup of affliction, and to take up their cross and follow Christ; having out of his love and grace called me to a suffering condition, which he knoweth to be most needful for my spirit, though it be painful to my flesh, I wish that my feet may be so shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that I may cheerfully endure hardship, as a good soldier of Christ, and be so faithful unto death, that at last I may obtain a crown of life. Lord, since thou vouchsafest me this favour and honour, as to take the pains, and stoop so low to chastise me, when thou mightest permit me to run on in sin till I come to hell, let instruction accompany my correction, that I may imitate my Saviour, and learn obedience by the things that I suffer. Oh enable me so to hear the voice of thy rod,

that I may, like a torch, burn the brighter, and, as some trees, bear the better for beating. As the earth by a winter becomes the more fruitful at harvest, so let me by thy afflicting hand be the more abundant in holiness, that I may at last, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I wish that, now my God is searching and examining me, as the chief captain did Paul, by scourging, I may be found sincere. The rod of his hand will discover the rottenness of many hearts; unsound fruit falls off apace in stormy weather; sharp air trieth my body, whether sickly or no; and so will sufferings try my soul, and great batteries will prove the strength of the bulwark. The eagle proveth her young by holding them up to the sun; if they can behold it in its full glory and beauty, she acknowledgeth the birds to be her own brood. My God is examining me by the sun of persecution, whether I am a bastard or one of his children. He hath brought me to the fire to discover what metal I am, whether true or counterfeit; he knoweth me thoroughly, but would have me known to myself. 'Though I go on the left hand, where he doth work, I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him; but he knoweth the way that I take. Oh that, when he hath tried me, I might come forth like gold,' Job xxiii. 9, 10. Lord, though others, like cranes, never fly against, but always with, the wind of the times, and if they see any alteration of weather, sit still on the ground, let me never follow a multitude to do evil, but follow the Lamb wherever he goeth; be so ready for all resistance which the world or hell can make against me, that over all I may be more than a conqueror, through him that loveth me. My God led Israel in the wilderness forty years, to humble them and to prove them—to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or no. Oh that, when he trieth me, he may find truth in mine inward parts! Lord, though many, like earthen, empty vessels, break in pieces when they come to the fire, let the trial of my faith, which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, be found to my praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

I wish that, considering how wicked hearts naturally grow worse by afflictions, as Jeroboam by his withered hand, I may be the more watchful. Stinking weeds, the more they are bruised, are the more unsavoury. Water after heating groweth colder than before. The thief on the cross rails even on Jesus Christ. How many are more filthy under their misery! Corruption stopped in its course

by affliction, as a river by a bridge, doth roar and swell the more. These waters have not seldom polluted those persons whom they should have cleansed. Not a few have been more sinful after their sufferings. Children do not shoot up more in bodily stature after an ague, than they in ungodliness after affliction. Though I am one of Christ's sheep, yet I am in danger of losing my fleece amongst these thorns and briers, if I have not the more care. Oh that I might be so watchful, that that scouring and rubbing which frets others, may make me shine the brighter, and that weight which crusheth others, cause me, like the palm-tree, to grow the better ! Lord, thou knowest more ballast of grace is requisited in the vessel of my soul in this tempestuous season than in a quiet sea, to prevent my sinking. Let thy Spirit so poise this small bark, that I may be steady in all storms, and all these high winds which threaten to overturn me, may further me in my voyage towards my eternal and blessed haven.

I wish, since my God afflicteth me, not as fathers of the flesh, merely for his pleasure, but for my profit, to make me partaker of his holiness, that I may, as a rose in the still, smell the sweeter, and as a vessel of gold, by this fire be the more purified for my master's use. Fish thrive best in cold and salt waters. The pomander becomes the more fragrant for chafing. The viper, when lashed, casts up his poison. The traitor, when on the rack, will tell the whole truth. Even a Joab, in distress, will lay hold on the horns of the altar. My God leads me through this great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, to do me good at my latter end, Deut. viii. 16. Oh that his fires might burn up my dross, and his flails beat off my husks, and that this might be the fruit of affliction, even the taking away of sin ! Lord, when thou layest me on my back, let me look up to thee for thy blessing ; teach me, as a nightingale, to warble out thy praises the more pleasantly for these thorns at my breast. Since my affliction is a messenger sent by thee to purge out my present wickedness, and prevent my future wanderings, let it not return unto thee void, but accomplish that which pleaseth thee, and prosper in the thing whereto thou hast sent it.

I wish that I may be so patient and pious in my sufferings, that my God may not disdain to give me a visit in my sickness. Surely my God and adversity will be good company. If I go to prison, and there enjoy his gracious presence, it will be more comfortable than the most glorious court ; if I be disgraced, he will be a crown of glory ; if I be impoverished, he will be better than rubies, than all

riches. Do I sit in darkness? the Lord will be a light unto me. Am I called to die? in his favour is life; yea, his loving-kindness is better than life. Whatsoever my distress be, I am safe whilst he is my defence. My God will supply all my needs out of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus. Though mine iniquities provoke him to put me into the fire, lest I should be condemned, yet his mercy will prevail with him, to pluck me as a brand out of the fire, lest I should be consumed. If he afford his help, nothing can hurt. The most heavy burden will be but light, if he please to strengthen my back; I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Oh that these thoughts might prevail with me, to be so Christian in my carriage under the hardest cross, that whatsoever I want, I may not want the company of my God! Lord, thou hast spoken by the prophet, Zech. i. 8, 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood amongst the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom.' Thy saints are the myrtle-trees, low and weak plants, but lovely and of great price; their lot in this world is to be in the bottom; thy myrtle-trees delight in valleys, and sea-shores, and river-sides; thy saints here below are in mean and low estates, many of those waves go over their souls, and indeed they thrive best by those waters. But, Lord, who is that man on the red horse, that is so kind and full of compassion, as to own thy saints in their abject condition? It is much below thy majesty to take notice of such unworthy ones in their misery; yet surely it is thy Son, the Son of man, and the Son of God, for thou callest him (ver. 20) the Lord. And is my Saviour so pitiful as to be present amongst his afflicted people? Will he not only be with them in his sanctuary, but also in their sufferings? How contrary is this carriage to the course of the world amongst men! Though the rich find many friends, yet the poor is forsaken of his neighbour. And yet thy Son owns his poor afflicted, despised, persecuted saints. No wonder that thy chosen are so cheerful in their misery; and, like leviathan, can laugh at the spears which the world and hell shake at them, when they have such good company. Oh grant me this favour, in my greatest danger to have the presence of my Lord Jesus, and then, though thou castest me with the three children into a fiery furnace, it will be more pleasant than the stateliest palace. Lord, bring me into what distress, what danger, what dungeon thou pleasest, so I may but enjoy my Saviour's powerful comforting presence; for I know that hell itself with Christ, would be changed into heaven. 'To be with Christ is best of all.'

I have heard of some that afflict themselves with wilful famine,

walking barefoot in pilgrimage, whipping themselves till they bleed. I wish that I may take up my cross which my God layeth down for me, and follow Christ, but never make my cross, and go before him. He is a bold servant that runneth before his master. My God saves me this labour, for he whips me daily with the scourge of a sickly body, the suffering of my fellow-members, and many times with the eclipses of his own gracious countenance, which is much the sorer, because it concerns the tenderest part, my soul. Oh teach me to make a right use of thy corrections, and then I shall not need to correct myself !

I wish that I may never faint when I am afflicted, yet that I may always feel my afflictions. Corrections are my God's love-tokens, and how ill would he take it if I should despise them ! When physic makes not the patient sick, it is the more unlikely to make him well ; he who doth not feel the smart of the rod, will never hear the voice of the rod. Besides, if a touch of God's finger will not fetch tears, I must expect the weight of his whole hand to fetch blood.

Should I, like a salamander, live in the fire here, and not feel it, I must expect a hotter fire hereafter in hell. Let me never, as some men, who, when they have been in a shower, dry themselves, and mind it no more ; but feel my sufferings, so as to fear the more, whilst I live, the meritorious cause thereof, my own sin. Lord, what an undutiful child am I, if when thou troublest thyself to correct me for my frowardness, I neither see thy hand, nor hear thy voice, but add to my guilt, and to thine anger, by my senselessness ! Mayest thou not justly cast me off for a castaway, and say, Why should he be smitten any more ? He revolteth more and more. How dreadful then should my condition be ! Correction is the lot of thy children ; but rejection is the portion of rebels, of reprobates. Oh rather, since my heart is so hard, let thy hand be so heavy, as to make it soft and sensible. Thou art a wise physician ; if weak lenitives will not stir me, give me a stronger potion, rather than permit me to perish. Scourge me, strike me, lance me, to recover me out of my lethargy. Do what thou wilt with me here, so thou love me now, and spare me hereafter.

I wish that, when I feel the smart of the rod, my pain may never make me out of patience. If I quarrel with instruments, I bewray my distraction. What man in his wits ever was angry with a knife for cutting, or a thorn for piercing ? The worst malefactor on the gallows will pardon the executioner. If I quarrel with the efficient, I discover the height of rebellion. Shall the clay strive with the

potter, or the creature contend with his Creator ! Who am I, that I should reply against God ? I have a little derived propriety in my children and cattle. My son offends me, I scourge him, probably out of passion, and without reason ; yet how ill do I take it, if he offer in the least to resist or repine ! If he do me reverence, who am but the father of his flesh, when I chastise him for my pleasure, shall not I much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live ? My beast under me flags, I switch him forward ; he still slacks, I spur him till he bleeds again and again ; he bears all quietly. Shall beasts take blows from their master, and not I from my Maker ? If any demand the cause why I use my child, my cattle, with so much cruelty, I answer, What doth it concern them ? Are they not my own children, my own cattle ? May not I do what I will with mine own ? And shall not my God do what he will with his own ? Hath not he a greater propriety in me, than I have in any of my children or cattle ? His propriety is essential, mine derivative ; his is absolute, mine conditional ; his is illimited and eternal, and mine is in trust for his use, and but for a short time. Shall I scourge, nay, possibly abuse, another's servants, (for they are far more God's than mine,) and take it ill if I be questioned, and when my God (whose I am, by all manner of titles and right imaginable) correcteth me with infinite reason and righteousness, shall I quarrel with him ? Oh that I might never be so mad as to rage at instruments, much less so desperately and impudently traitorous as to wrangle with the principal efficient, but let my heart speak under the severest execution, what Eli did under a dreadful threatening : ' It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' Further, the murmurer is his own martyr. I double my misery by despising or disputing it. He that strives with his burden, makes it the heavier. The partridge that flutters in the net, doth not break it, but her own wings. If I struggle, I do but as a fish on the hook, both fasten and torture myself the more. Lord, though others are so much their own foes, as when they are afflicted for their good to fret against thee, let me be so satisfied in thy dominion over me, and so sensible of thine affection to me, that as by faith I possess my Saviour, and by love I possess thy saints, so by patience I may possess my own soul.

I wish that I may not only submit humbly to my punishments, but also acquit my God honourably under the sharpest providences. Heathen moralists have with courage undergone heavy crosses, and without murmuring drunk down their portion of misery. And if I do no more than those, what singular things do I ? Nay, a Pharaoh

under torment, can utter this truth, 'The Lord is righteous, I have sinned.' And shall I, a Christian, come behind that hardened Egyptian? Oh that I might from my heart, what he did only from the teeth outward, even justify my God when he condemneth me. Men *may* do justly, my God *cannot but* do justly; righteousness is an accident in them, which may be parted from them. Sometimes they are ignorant, and so through weakness, like David in the case of Mephibosheth, pass a wrong judgment. When the eyes are blinded, the hands strike at a venture, friends or foes. Sometimes they are wrathful, and so through wickedness, as Saul frequently, they pass an unrighteous sentence; dogs in a rage bite them of their own families, or the next that come by. But justice is the essence of my God, and inseparable from him. He knoweth vain man thoroughly, and therefore cannot err through ignorance. All things are naked and open to his eyes; he is light, and in him there is no darkness at all; he will not suffer an unrighteous person to enter heaven, much less will he suffer an unrighteous act to be done by his own hand. Alas! the least of his mercies is infinitely above my merits, and the greatest of my suffering are infinitely beneath my sins; and shall I not justify him, who is both righteous and gracious? Lord, help me so to behold thy justice sparkling in the darkest night of my sufferings—yea, and thy goodness also, in giving me to be chastened of the Lord, that I might not be condemned with the world—that I may lift thee up when thou castest me down, and see and say, 'The Lord is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works.' When my body is sick, I send to a physician for something proper for my distemper. He sends me a bitter pill; though my stomach loathes it, I force it down, and withal I thank and reward him. My soul is sick, I am not sensible, (the more dangerous is my disease) my heavenly Father seeth it, pitieth me, and, unsent to, (the more am I beholden to him,) sends me something that is wholesome, though not toothsome, for my cure; and shall my heart rise against the bitter physic, and repine at my physician? Oh let thy love so sweeten all my wormwood, and let the health of my soul be so precious to me, that I may receive it thankfully, drink it up cheerfully, and bless thee as well for crosses as for comforts; 'For righteous art thou, O Lord, and in very faithfulness hast afflicted me.'

I wish that, since my God is wise, and knoweth which is the best time, I may quietly wait for his salvation. Though it be a burden to attend the pleasure of a fool, who lets his opportunity slip, yet it is easy to stay for the resolutions of the wise, who do not delay

out of rashness, but reason, and defer only till an opportunity is come. It is likely, now I am in trouble, I shall be tempted to rid myself out of it by any means, whether right or wrong. When a man that hath lands is arrested for debt, the usurer offereth him money if he will mortgage his lands to his loss, thereby preventing his prison at present, but making way for his future poverty. When saints are distressed, Satan offereth his help for their deliverance. If Cranmer be in fetters, he will find a way for his freedom, if he will but deny his Saviour, and mortgage his soul to him, thereby easing him of present frights and fears in his flesh, but bringing him to far worse terror and horror in his conscience. How many hath he, by his cursed counsel, helped out of a fire on earth, to help them into the fire of hell! Oh that, how greatly soever I may be distressed, though Philistines be upon me, and the Lord seem to depart from me, yet I may never, like Saul, run to a witch, or take any unlawful course for ease;—thereby I shall but, as that wicked prince, increase my pain,—but ‘wait on the Lord, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and look to him,’ Isa. viii. 17. To lengthen my patience, is the best way to shorten my troubles; and to lessen my patience, is the speediest way to lengthen my pain. Women that are in labour, being impatient of their pangs, send sometimes in haste for a man-midwife, and thereby have suffered much more torture, and, it may be, have destroyed both their babes and themselves; whereas, if they had waited with patience some hours longer, they might have been delivered with more ease and safety. I am my own foe if I offer to limit God. He is sure, though, to my depraved flesh, he be slow. ‘I shall reap in time, if I faint not.’ My God never fails of coming at his own time, the best time, though he seldom comes at our time. ‘The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie.’ Though it tarry, it will surely come; it will not tarry one moment beyond God’s time. Servants wait on their masters, because of their dependence; subjects wait on their sovereign, because of their distance, and are willing, when they prefer a petition, to stay their leisure for an answer. O my soul, hast thou not a greater dependence on thy God, when thy life and all thy comforts, thy being and all thy blessings, hang every moment on his mercy? And is there not an infinitely greater distance betwixt thee, a poor worm, and heaven’s glorious majesty, when the whole creation in comparison of him is less than nothing? Didst thou never see a poor beggar, that had nothing of her own to subsist on, but lived wholly on others’ charity, how quietly and resolvedly she sits herself down at the rich man’s

door ? how she begs and waits—she works and waits ? Though an alms be not presently given her, she doth not limit, but wait her good dame's leisure. Nay, though she be not only deferred, but denied, yet she will wait a long time in hope. Hast thou not infinitely more reason to wait on thy God in all respects ? Thy wants are more, thy dependence is greater ; he is engaged to thee by promise, and will be sure to perform them in season. Those indeed that receive but small sums, as some few pounds, have ready money ; but they who are to receive hundreds and thousands, are contented to take bond, and to give time, and do it cheerfully, when their estate lieth in safe hands. The men of the world, whose portion is in this life, are greedy for ready money ; and their wealth being but some small matter, a little empty honour, and brutish pleasure, and earthly treasure, thy God giveth them present pay. But thy estate, thy freedom from all evil, and the fruition of all good, in the eternal, full, and immediate enjoyment of the blessed God, is of unspeakable value, worth thousands and millions ; therefore thou mayest well be satisfied with the bond of the promises, and give him his own day for their accomplishment, especially considering thy wealth lieth in sure hands, and the public faith of heaven is engaged for thy security. Besides, O my soul, by thy patient continuance in well-doing, under the evil things which thou sufferest, thy joy groweth sweeter, thy glory higher, and thy reward greater. If thou patiently waitest and sufferest the fruit, which is of incomparable worth, to hang on the tree of the promise till it is ripe, it will be both the bigger and the pleasanter. They who reap their corn whilst it is green, find it to grow, and to be of smaller price than that which is ripe. Winter corn, though it be longer between sowing and reaping, is more worth than other corn. Oh, sow liberally, both in doing and suffering the will of thy God, and be patient till the harvest ! and the longer thou stayest, the more liberally thou shalt reap. Lord, though others,—like Tamar, because Shelah was not presently given her to be her husband, defiled herself with Judah ;—because the good things engaged to them are not presently bestowed, commit spiritual fornication with earthly vanities, and take them into their bosom and embraces ; let me never forego heaven in hope, for earth in hand ; nor, as that wicked king, draw a hellish use from a heavenly doctrine, and say, ' This evil is from the Lord, why should I wait on the Lord any longer ? ' but ' as the eyes of servants are to the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden are to the hand of her mistress ; so let mine eyes wait upon the Lord my God till he have mercy on me, '

Ps. exxiii. 2. Though others are all for ready money, and therefore, like Demas, forsake Christ to embrace the present world, make me a follower of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

I wish that, whilst I have little in possession, I may rejoice in the hope of my reversion; and whilst I am pinched with present poverty, comfort my heart with that plenty in my father's house, which is preserved for me when I come to age. He that hath store of good bills and bonds is rich, though he hath not a penny in his purse. If others have the stars, I have the sun; if they have some cities, I have the kingdom; if they have some gifts, I am the child of the promise, and have all. 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all is mine.' The inventory of my estate includes all that earth and heaven are worth; and am not I a discontented, covetous wretch indeed, if the covenant of grace, the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the boundless God, will not satisfy me? Though it be a paradox, yet it is orthodox. When I have nothing, I possess all things; and will not all this afford matter of mirth? Oh that though others can only swim in a warm bath, and never sing but in a sunshiny day, I might, as Paul and Silas, sing in a prison at midnight. Belshazzar can rejoice in his stately palace, but the three children can sing in a fiery furnace. He that was hunted like a partridge in Israel, was the sweetest singer in Israel. It is both the duty and privilege of saints in all things to give thanks. A heathen can say,¹ Be it supposed a man hath a princely court, with gallant orchards, pleasant gardens, fruitful trees, were it not an unreasonable thing for this man to repine and complain that a few leaves are blown off by the wind, when the house, the trees, and the fruit remain? And shall not I, a Christian, be contented and cheerful, though the gale of providence hath blown off some small outward mercies, when my soul is safe, and my eternal salvation secure? Lord, let me, when I receive earthly comforts, live upon thee above them, and now I want them, live upon thee without them. Enable me so to see thy goodness in calling me to suffer here, that I might not suffer hereafter; in causing me to be scourged with whips, to prevent my scourging with scorpions; that I may not only kiss thy rod, but also thank thee for this infinite favour; and under my greatest cross, stab Satan, who longs to hear me blaspheme thee, to the heart with this dagger: 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

¹ Senec. ad Polyb.

I wish that, though I am perishing in my outward condition, I may never envy those that are prospering in their profaneness. Alas! their seeming prosperity is their real misery, and calls more for heart pity than envy. The higher they are at this day, the lower they shall be another day. Their greatness is but like the swelling of a dropsy, which hasteneth their death and destruction. Their riches are but like fuel to make the unquenchable fire the hotter, in which they must fry for ever. Their pleasures are but shallow, skin-deep. They may sometimes counterfeit a smile; but if thou press these glowworms that in the night of this world make such a lightsome, fiery show of joy, thou findest nothing save a cold and crude moisture. But their pain is real; their sins gripe them many a time, and even cause their hearts to ache with the forethoughts of their future torments. What is a little giggling of the countenance, to the grumbling and racking of their consciences? or a few smiles of the brow, to that inward wolf which lieth gnawing at their breast? Their pleasures are short; their race is soon at an end; their sun soon sets; they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb; but their pain is eternal. Their day of light is a winter day—short, and little heat of true comfort; but their night of darkness is long, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Would I eat of their dishes to pay their reckoning? How unreasonable is it for one that is worth thousands, to envy him that acts the part of a lord, upon the stage of this world, for one short day of life, and afterwards is a beggar for ever in hell! What is all their wealth to spiritual wisdom? What is all their greatness to the eternal weight of glory? and what are their pleasantest gardens to the true paradise? The prosperous sinner hath some cause to envy the perishing saint; but the most afflicted saint hath cause to pity the most prosperous sinner. Besides, how dishonourable is it to my God that I should thus question his wisdom, and quarrel with the works of his providence. May not he dispose of his gifts according to his own will? Must he ask my leave in what measure, and to what persons, to distribute his favours? Is mine eye evil because his is good? Must I needs be sick because others are well, and make their plenty the foundation of my pain? Lord, though, when I am in adversity, mine enemies are joyful, yet now they are in prosperity, let not me be fretful. Though thou hast put them into fresh pastures, yet thou art but fattening them for the slaughter. When thou hast whipped out the folly that is in the hearts of thy children, thou wilt throw thy rod into the fire. Preserve me from fretting myself because of

evil-doers, or being envious at the wicked ; for there shall be no reward to the evil man—the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

I wish that, as Joshua, when Israel was discomfited before the men of Ai, went and fell down before the Lord, with his clothes rent, and dust on his head, to know the cause ; and when he had found out that Achan was the person, he stoned him to death ; so now my God hath distressed my soul, I may with a humble, broken heart inquire into the source of my sufferings, what accursed thing hath caused my sorrows, and never be quiet till I have discovered and executed that troubler of my peace. There is some root of bitterness in me, which occasions my God to write bitter things against me. How happy should I be, if I might both find and answer the end for which my God afflicteth me. Afflictions are servants which he hath under him. ‘ He saith to one, Go, and he goeth ; to another, Come, and he cometh : ’ he is infinitely wise, and never sends his servants abroad but upon weighty errands. I am sure, in general, the account upon which this messenger is come, is to persuade me to abandon and deliver up those traitors to execution, which I have lately entertained, and return to my obedience to his master. I may say to him, as the woman to the prophet, Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance ? But, oh that I knew what rebel it is that hath hid himself in my house undiscerned ! Sure enough there is some Sheba in it, which hath lift up his hand against the Son of David, for whose sake he hath sent his servant to besiege me ; and till the head of this traitor be thrown over the wall, he will not depart but in my destruction. Lord, help me, as the wise woman of Abel, to find out the cause why thou dost beleaguer me so closely and strictly. If my heart doth not deceive me, I would live peaceably and faithfully in Israel. I know assuredly thou seekest not to destroy any soul, much less to swallow up any part of thine own inheritance ; but some son of Bichri, some enemy to the crown and sceptre of thy Christ, hath, without my knowledge, sheltered himself in my heart. Oh that it might please thee to discover him to me, and to help me to destroy him, that thou mayest enlarge me. Do not condemn me ; shew me why thou contendest with me. I can never expect this swelling should decrease, or its throbbing and aching abate, unless the thorn in my flesh which causeth it, be taken out. In vain doth the sick man tumble and toss from one side of his bed to the other for ease, whilst his disease, the original of his pain, continueth. Oh that, though others are most industrious how their afflictions may

be removed, I might be most industrious how mine may be improved; that mine eyes, like the windows of Solomon's temple, might be broad inwards, to find out my own provocation, and that I might not be asleep, and so lose the season and benefit of God's visitation. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,' Ps. cxxxix.

I wish that I may not only feel, but also see, the hand of my God in all the afflictions that befall me. Affliction doth not spring out of the earth, nor trouble come out of the ground. The evil of sin hath only a deficient cause, but the evil of suffering hath an efficient cause. My God challengeth it, as one of the prerogatives of his crown, to make war or peace. Is there any evil in the city, and I have not done it? Could I but see my God at the end of all my troubles, how silent should I be under it! how submissive to it! and how sedulous to improve it! He is my Father, correcting me out of love for my fault, and therefore I must reform. He is my sovereign, punishing me according to law, and therefore I must not resist. He is my God, who doth whatsoever he pleaseth, and therefore I may not so much as repine. He is too great to be despised, too good to be suspected, and too wise to be questioned. The whole earth cannot lessen, and hell itself cannot add, one scruple to the weight which he hath allotted me. My proportion was debated and concluded at heaven's council table from eternity, and is surely beyond all exception. To this very suffering, both for the nature and measure, was I fore-appointed. His arm is almighty, and so above all opposition. Who ever contended with him, and prevailed? He that strikes me, loves me; though his hand be against me, his heart is towards me; nay, it is love that strikes every stroke, and shall I be so unthankful as to despise it, or so unbelieving as to despair under it? It were extreme folly to doubt of his wisdom, the greatest madness to oppose his power, and monstrous ingratitude to slight his love. Lord, thy servant David could say, 'Let the righteous (man) smite me, though only with his tongue; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil,' Ps. cxli. 5. And shall not I, when thou, the righteous God, art pleased to favour me so much as to strike me with thy hand, take it kindly at thy hands? Oh, whatsoever hatred others may return for such friendly reproofs, let me love thee the more, especially considering that by such stripes I am healed; that such wounding is an excellent oil to cure my spiritual wickedness.

I wish that I may divert the point of that anger against instruments or efficient, which I am prone to under the cross, by turning it upon myself, and the procuring cause of all my sin. The worms which pain me are bred in my own bowels; the vipers which sting me are hatched in my own bosom; the rod which whips me is of my own making; and the dart which wounds me of my own shooting; and have I the least cause of complaining? Men and devils could not afflict me; the great God would not, if I did not afflict myself. I may well accept the punishment of mine own iniquity. Some that have more grace have fewer mercies, and that have less sin, have more afflictions than I. Besides, in vain do I, like the silly deer, mourn and bleed inwardly for the pain which I endure whilst the dart sticks in my side.

I may long enough work at the labour in vain, in seeking to dam up the stream whilst the spring is unstopped, and in working at the pump whilst the leak continueth. Oh that all my sorrow and anger might be spent upon my sins, the original of all my sufferings. That all this water, which I am apt daily to draw and spill, might be employed in helping the mill of my heart to grind and consume my corruptions. Oh what pity is it that such pearls should be cast away upon swine, that such sweet water should be cast away upon nasty sinks, which would serve for most excellent uses!

Lord, let all my anger be against myself for provoking thee to anger, and let all my sorrow and grief be for my sins, whereby I have grieved thy good Spirit, and made the soul of thy dear Son sorrowful unto death. Let mine eyes and heart be ever more towards that which dishonoureth thy name, than that which disturbeth my peace. Though the sting of sin to others be affliction, let the sting of affliction to me be sin: and when the desire of their soul is, Take away this plague, entreat the Lord to take away this death only, the prayer of my soul may be, Lord, make me to know the plague of my own heart. Take away this body of death, take away all iniquity, receive me graciously, so will I render the calves of my lips.

I wish that I may consider my God loveth me when he lasheth me; and that he therefore lasheth me because he loveth me. Though Absalom were banished for his fault, and not admitted to see David's face, yet the king's heart was towards Absalom. Now, my God denieth me his favourable presence, and makes me feel the effects of his fury, yet his heart is towards me. He is pained in my pain, in all my afflictions he is afflicted.

Whilst he is a God correcting, he is a God in covenant: 'I will

bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God,' Zech. xiii. 9. Though the son of Joseph speak so roughly to me, and seem to deal so ruggedly with me, to bring my sins to remembrance, and to try my love to my brother Benjamin, yet all the while he keeps his affection and relation, and will ere long speak plainly to me, I am thy brother Joseph. Because he affecteth me, he afflicteth me; but because he hateth others, he will not take the pains to scourge them. He useth not the rod where he intends to use the sword. The whipping-post is for them that shall escape execution. It is the same love which chose me from eternity which chasteneth me in time. There is not a twig in my rod, but love fetched it, nor a drachm in my potion, but love infused it. Love was the root upon which they grew, love was the hand with which they were gathered; shall not I accept it? Pure love denieth those outward mercies to me, which pure wrath granteth to others. The father will allow his servants that luscious, unwholesome fruit which they are so greedy for, when he denieth it to his children. Oh, what an unbelieving heart have I, to think I have less love, because I have less allowance, than others! The power of my God is as great in making a little fly as in making a great ox; and his love may be as great, often greater, in giving a penny, as in giving many pounds. If I am his child, though my portion be but a penny, it hath the image and superscription of my Father's love, which is better than life.

Lord, strengthen my inward sight, that I may behold thy love in the darkest night of affliction; be pleased to enable me, by the eye of faith, to spell and read thy love in the hardest characters—nay, when thou writest it in red letters, in letters of blood: for I know that thy thoughts are not as my thoughts, nor thy ways as my ways. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy thoughts higher than my thoughts.' Thou knowest the thoughts which thou hast towards me, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give me an expected end.

I wish that I could set before me those worthy patterns of constancy and courage, under the greatest crosses, which are chronicled in Scripture, to encourage me to undergo my sufferings with patience; it is some comfort in my journey, though the road be deep and dirty, to travel with much and good company. All the saints in the several parts of the world, at this day, go to heaven in the same way of sufferings; the same afflictions are accomplished

in my brethren, which are in the world ; they that are gone before, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the rest, did all enter into glory through this strait gate ; there is no temptation hath befallen me, but such as is common to men, to Christians. Some indeed found the path so full of serpents, that their blood was sucked out as they journeyed ; they lost their lives on earth, to find them in heaven ; but all found it full of thorns and briers. Some had trial of cruel mockings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment ; others were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword ; they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. The wilderness to them all was the way to Canaan : they went by the cross to their crown. I have a threefold advantage by their examples ; I see that the way to bliss (though it be deep) is passable. I do not undertake an impossible task, when I set out for the Father's house ; the noble army of martyrs waded through it, even there where it was much out of their depths. It is doleful to travel in a very bad way, that is wholly untrodden ; but I may with the more delight pass on, when I see the steps of thousands that have passed before me. They had the same flesh and blood with me, they were as sensible of pain as I, they loved their relations as well as I ; life was as dear to them as to me ; yet they trampled upon their relations, scorned their scorers, triumphed in their tribulations, jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field, endured the shot of earth and hell, fought every inch of their way through men and devils, and at last went off the ground (though killed) conquerors, carrying with them the spoils and trophies they had gained from their enemies, as tokens of their valour and victory. Why may not my soul fight the Lord's battles with the same success ? Indeed, had that power by which they prevailed been their own, I should never expect the same event ; but they were of themselves as weak as I ; my God can be as strong in me as in them. Oh that I might have their grace, and then what end my God pleaseth.

Again, the heroic acts of the Lord's worthies encourage me to such noble enterprises. How famous are they for their bloody combats in the cause of Christ ! How brightly do their names sparkle (as stars in the firmament) in the Holy Scripture ! The Roman generals were never so illustrious and honourable for their triumphs, as Christ's private soldiers for their trials ; the poorest saint that is a sufferer, is more illustrious than Cæsar the conqueror. The greatest battles that ever Alexander fought and won, was but children's play with pop-guns, in comparison of the noble exploits

of the soldiers of the Lord of hosts in their conflicts with, and conquests over, the world and hell. Who would not be ambitious to follow such file-leaders! Once more, I have the less reason to expect freedom from the cross, when the people of God in all ages have been afflicted. My betters have suffered worse things than I suffer. Those that were more holy than I, have suffered more hardships than I. Christ himself, who was free from transgression, was yet fullest of afflictions. He was a man of sorrows, made up of sorrow. His whole life, from the womb to the tomb, was a circle of sorrows. When Christ himself hath drunk to me in a cup of affliction, shall I not pledge him? Should there not be a symmetry betwixt the head and the members? God had one Son without sin, but no son without suffering. There is no son whom the father chasteneth not. And would not I be used like a son? Cannot I be contented to fare as my brethren?

Lord, let me never join in that presumptuous petition of the sons of Zebedee, to desire to fare better than my fellows; but seeing I am compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, help me to 'lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset me, and to run with patience the race set before me, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

I wish that, now I am afflicted, I may be the more pious, because my God aimeth therein at my spiritual profit. How much do worldlings suffer to increase their heaps of earth, though death, like a passenger's foot, will trample it all down! How do they run, and ride, waste their time, wear out their strength, lose their sleep, venture their health and life, nay, and inestimable souls! Like spaniels, they follow their master, the world, through hedge and ditch, through thick and thin, and all for a few bones. How busy are they, like bees, flying to this and that field; fighting by the way with wasps and drones, to carry a little more honey to their hives, though after all their pains and toil, within a few days they must be consumed with flames and leave it! And have not I more cause to suffer any hardship, and to take any pains for those riches which are durable, which will be current in the other world? How much do wicked men suffer for the gratifying their lusts! They lavish their estates, undo their children, dishonour their names, wreck their own bodies, and ruin their families, by gaming or uncleanness, or intemperance. How do they lackey after the devil, like pack-horses, doing his drudgery, and bearing his burdens all

the days of their life, though, after all their hard service, he will turn them at the night of death, with their galled backs, into the stable of hell ! And shall not I, for the sanctifying my soul, be willing to endure what my God calls me to suffer in the way to heaven ? If need be, I am in heaviness. The rod of God is as needful for me as the word of God. The plough and harrow are as necessary for the earth, in order to the harvest, as the seed is. By it he openeth mine ears, and sealeth my instruction. Many blows are needful to fell a stout oak, and many strokes are necessary to subdue my stubborn heart. Resty horses will not move till they bleed with the spur. How little is corn worth, or to what use doth it serve, till it be cut down with the sickle, beaten out with the flail, ground small in the mill, and baked in the oven ? And of how little use I should be to my soul, and my Saviour, without affliction, my God knoweth. Oh that self-love might make me as willing to suffer, as my God is to have me suffer !

Lord, thou comparest me to a vine ; I know the best vine, if not pruned, will run out into superfluous stems, and become less fruitful ; so will my soul, if thou shouldst deny me the favour of pruning, run out into luxuriant branches, and become less serviceable to thy majesty. If it be painful to bleed, it is far worse to burn. Thou art a wise husbandman, and knowest what is needful for all the plants in thy vineyard ; rather prune me with the knife, that I may bring forth more fruit, than suffer me to decay and wither, and to be cut up at last with thy bill for the unquenchable fire.

I wish that the consideration of my God's wisdom and tenderness may make me more cheerful and contented in all my trials. Though his anger at sin provoke him to scourge me for it, yet his love to my soul will move him to proportion his strokes to my strength. He hath a perfect estimate by him of all my spiritual riches, and therefore I need not fear to be taxed above my estate. He never yet called any of his children to a martyr's fire, till he had indued them with a martyr's faith. If my body were distempered, and my skilful physician thought fit to purge me several days together ; though I were fearful of my own strength to bear it, yet I should believe him in his calling, and being confident of his knowledge of me, and love to me, undergo it with courage. My God is fully acquainted what the diseases of my soul require, and what the strength of my soul can endure. He is the only wise God, whether he purge me much or little, once or often. Oh that I might rely on his love, and submit to his wisdom ! I read indeed that the saints of God ' have been pressed out of measure, above

strength, insomuch that they despaired even of life,' 2 Cor. i. 8. But yet I believe that, at the same time, they were corrected in measure, for they were delivered, and did escape. They were pressed above their own human strength, but not above their divine strength. How often hath the voice of their flesh been, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,' when it hath quickly been corrected with the voice of faith, 'I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!' Lord, how many a time hath this weak vessel been loaded so deep in the vast seas of troubles, that the waters have come up to the brim, and I have been ready to cry out, with thy disciples of old, 'Save me, master, I perish?' Is not this frail flesh a ship of thine own building? and is not the burden it carrieth of thine own lading? Thou knowest how deep it is already, and I know thou wilt not overcharge it. It is impossible for me to sink whilst I sail in thy love. Though a deluge overflow the whole earth, yet I need not fear drowning, whilst I am housed in that ark, if thou pleasest to shut me in. I confess he is a presumptuous child that would choose his own rod; yet, oh that I might prevail not to be scourged with the withdrawings of thy comfortable presence! Blessed Father, by the strength and the sense of thy love, I can bear the greatest load; but if that be withdrawn, I am ready to fall, nay, to die, under the lightest. I find a wounded estate, I feel a wounded body, and if thou put a wounded spirit upon me too, who can bear it? Oh what a night of heaviness and sorrow will ensue, if thou, O Sun of righteousness, shouldst depart? Nevertheless, I yield to thy judgment, and rest on thine affection: for thou art infinitely wise, infinitely loving, infinitely faithful, and wilt not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able, but wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that I may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 3.

I wish that the thought of my future happiness may make me joyful under my present hardships. My hope of the rivers of God's own pleasures, and of the glory to be revealed, may well bear up my heart, and counterbalance all my pain and disgrace. What though I am under the rod, whilst I am a child, and am denied those toys and rattles which others have to play with! yet I am a great heir, and shall shortly be of age and enjoy the inheritance, when I shall be above both that rod and those rattles. As I now have more sufferings than others, so then I shall have more solace than others; as I exceed them in affliction, so I shall excel them in consolation. The deeper I am ploughed, the greater will my harvest be. In all the furrows of my misery are sown the seeds of saving mercy. And the more liberally I sow, the more

liberally I shall reap. It is true I sow in tears, but I shall reap in joy ; I may well be contented with a wet seed-time, when I am sure of a sunshiny and joyful harvest. Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I could fly up to heaven, by faith and meditation, and see that vast and boundless recompense of reward ! surely I should then leave my mournful tone, and sing another tune. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work in me, or work me for, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For my afflictions I shall have glory. Who would not, with Joseph, go through a prison into a palace, and with Jésus suffer many things, and so enter into his glory ! My afflictions are light, but my glory is a weight, a far more exceeding weight ; I may well carry a little bag of thorns, when I shall be rewarded for it with a heavy bag of pearls. Who would not endure a few affronts for a large kingdom ? My afflictions are but for a moment, but my weight of glory is eternal. I do but pass through a short shower to an endless banquet ; and sail through the narrow seas, which are quickly passed, in a moment, to an everlasting, blessed haven. Besides, these light afflictions work and fit me for this weight of glory ; as by the fire the plate is wrought into a vessel of gold for a prince's table. The boiling waters are not more necessary for clothes, that are to be cast into a pure scarlet dye, than afflictions are to prepare my soul for my God's presence. Lord, it is thy pleasure that every man shall have both a heaven and a hell ; the wicked man hath his heaven on earth, his hell is to come. His hell is miserable, because eternal ; his heaven is uncomfortable, because, at best, but short and uncertain. My hell is in this world, in manifold temptations ; my heaven in the other world, in endless bliss. If it be ill with me in this world, it is well with me, because my hell is so little, and so short. Let me never be so covetous as to desire two heavens ; only let my hell here fit me for my heaven hereafter, and let my heaven hereafter support me under my hell here ; 'for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.'

Finally, I wish that I may gather grapes from these thorns, and figs from these thistles. I mean, that I may so demean myself, like a Christian, under the greatest cross, that I may turn these stones into bread, and these blows on my outward man, into blessings to my inward man ; yea, that my joy and obedience may be at the highest, when my worldly comforts are at the lowest. Although I want the streams, what do or can I lose whilst I enjoy

the fountain? What conditions is there wherein I may not draw water with joy out of that well of salvation? Am I in fetters? the Son hath made me free, and therefore I am free indeed. Though my prison be some low, dark dungeon, yet there I may find more light than in a court, and may pity the darkness of others' liberty. They have but the natural sun to enlighten their world, which every cloud dimmeth and hideth from their eyes; but the Father of lights (in comparison of whom all the bright stars of heaven are but as the snuff of some dim candle) shines into my pit, and makes it a heaven of comfort, which the world intended to be a hell of sorrow. What darkness can be where the Father of lights shineth? Am I banished my country? If I were banished my God, I might weep and wail; but when neither earth nor ocean can separate betwixt him and me, I may well be satisfied. If heaven be my home, my God is my heaven; and so, wherever I am with him, I am at home. He cannot be said to fly that never stirs from his house, from his home. When I have all my relations by me, and all my possessions with me, I cannot be called an exile; I have all these, and infinitely more, in one God. Am I hated of the world? It is a good sign that I am not a man of the world, for the world loveth its own. It cannot hate me so much as God hates it, nor more than it hates God. What need I care to be hated of them who hate, and are hated of, God himself? Surely he is a wicked servant who would fare better than his master; and he is unworthy of God's love who cannot think it happiness enough without the world's favour. Well, let the world condemn me, I will be revenged, by requiting it with like for like. I will have as base and contemptible thoughts of it, through the strength of Christ, as it can have of me. Am I poor? It is impossible; I cannot be less than vastly rich, whilst I possess him who is the mighty possessor of heaven and earth. What though I have no money! I have the pearl of price, worth millions; and a treasure in heaven, above all apprehensions. I have no lands on earth, but I have the inheritance of the saints in light. That is improperly called riches, which may be lost, which must be left. My estate is riches in the most proper sense, for it is durable; it is the good part which can never be taken from me. If I forego all to my skin, yet I have not lost the least part of my portion; for if he be rich that hath something, how rich is he that hath the maker and owner of all things! Am I diseased in my body? my physician is both omniscient and almighty, and therefore I cannot miscarry. My soul is sound, and I must not

say I am sick when my sins are forgiven me. Although my house doth not grow, nor my cattle, nor my corn, nor my children are sure to me, yet my God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, stable in all things and sure, which is all my salvation, and all my desire. Oh, what can I want who have all-sufficiency for my supply? My God is liberty in prison, home in banishment, light in darkness, glory in disgrace, life in death, and all things in nothing. Oh make me fearful of nothing but thine anger, and careful of nothing but thy favour, which, whilst I enjoy, I shall be happy in spite of earth and hell.

Lord, help me, whilst I am here in these lower regions, amidst such boisterous winds and waters, to endure all with patience, to be a gainer by every providence, and in all things so to obey thy precepts, that when my body shall be parted from my soul, my soul may be parted from all these sufferings, and translated to thine upper region of heaven, whither those vapours which cause these storms and tempests can never ascend; where all tears shall be wiped from my eyes; where thou wilt give me beauty for ashes, the garment of gladness for the spirit of heaviness, (and, after all my grievous conflicts with the flesh, the world, and the wicked one,) a crown of glory on my head, a song of triumph in my mouth, a palm of victory in my hand, and to reign with Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART III.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

SUCH is the beauty of holiness, the excellency of divine nature, and the reasonableness and righteousness of the service of God, as also the necessity of man's devoting himself wholly to it, that were not his understanding, which is the sun in the lesser world, strangely muffled with clouds, his will, which, as the moon, borroweth its light from it, full of spots and changes, and desperately bent upon evil, his affections as stars of malevolent influence, brutishly enslaved to his sensual appetite, and his whole nature deplorably vitiated, it were impossible for him to turn his back upon the authority, commands, and threatenings of his Maker; to trample on the bowels, and blood, and entreaties of his Redeemer; to despise the motions, and persuasions, and assistance of the Holy Spirit, in order to his recovery out of that bottomless gulf of misery into which he hath plunged himself, and his restoration to a state of purity and eternal happiness; and there would be no such need of calling so frequently and fervently, and of crying so urgently and earnestly to him, to exercise himself unto godliness.

As he that is an atheist in his principles, and denieth the being of such a thing as religion, must deny his very senses, since his eyes, and ears, and taste, and feeling, do all loudly preach deity to him; so he that is an atheist in his practices, and denieth the making religion his business, must deny his reason, and debase himself into a beast. For common understanding, notwithstanding its great loss by the fall, will inform him that he is made for higher things than the service of a brutish flesh, and the pursuit of earthly, fading enjoyments, and that the worship of his God (the fountain of his being, and wellspring of his happiness) as most suitable to his spiritual nature, as most conducing to his own advancement, interest, and perfection, is most worthy of all his heart, and soul, and strength, and of all his time, and care, and labour.

But, alas ! the sad fruit of man's apostasy, in the depravation of his nature, abundantly manifesteth itself to every eye that is not stark blind. As an old disease doth not only afflict the part of its proper residence, and by its habitual abode there make a continual diminution of the strength, but also makes a path and channel for the humours to run thither, which, by continual defluxion, dig an open passage, and prevail above all the natural power of resistance ; so hath original sin debauched the mind, and made it think crooked things straight, and straight things crooked ; loathsome things lovely, and lovely things loathsome ; perverted the will, and made it, as a diseased stomach, to call for and eat unwholesome meat against his own reason ; enthralled his affections to sensuality and brutishness ; chained the whole man, and delivered it up to the law of sin, and laid those strengths of reason and conscience in fetters, by which it might be hindered in its vicious inclinations and course of profaneness. Hence it comes to pass that neither the beauty of grace, nor equity of living to God, nor the absolute necessity of man's exercising himself to godliness, will prevail with him.

So great is the glory and amiableness of the new creation, that not only the saints, who are indued with wisdom from above, and can judge aright, esteem it above their honours, and riches, and relations, and lives, and rejoice in it as their peculiar privilege and highest dignity, but even angels behold it with admiration, and look on their own purity, and conformity to the divine nature and pleasure, as their greatest perfection. Nay, God himself, whose being is the pattern, and whose will is the rule of holiness, is ravished and enamoured with it, as that which is the travail of the soul of his dear Son, the immediate work of his own Spirit, and the end, and glory, and masterpiece of all the works of his hands. Yet this heavenly offspring, this divine image, this supernatural beam of light, this resemblance and picture of God's own perfection, this royal attire of the celestial courtiers, which rendereth the poorest and meanest Christian more noble and excellent than his highest and richest ungodly neighbour, and makes him more glorious than a clear sky, bespangled with the shining stars, or an imperial diadem, sparkling with the richest diamonds, is the scorn and derision of the blind, unworthy world. That as Salvian¹ complained in his days, *Si honoratio quispiam religioni se applicuerit, illico honoratus esse desistit ; si fuerit sublimis, fit despicabilis ; si splendidissimus, fit vilissimus ; si totus honoris, fit totus injuriæ, &c.* If a noble person betake himself to religion, he is presently degraded,

¹ Salv., lib. iv. De Gub. Dei ; Tert., Apol.

and all his former fame, and honour, and renown, turned into disgrace, contempt, and contumely, and men are forced to be vicious, lest they should be counted vile.

Foolish worms, pretended Christians, are like persecuting pagans, who could think and speak well of some of the saints, only their religion, they judged, like copperas, turned all their wine into ink, gave a dash to all their virtues and excellencies. *Bonus vir Cuius Sejus ; sed malus, tanquam quod Christianus*, was the heathens' voice in Tertullian's time. Blind beetles, men admire fancies, shadows, nothings, and trample on true worth and real excellency. As the Egyptians, if they met with a cat or crocodile, bowed down to it, and worshipped it, when they passed by the great luminaries of heaven without admiration ; so these, beholding the poor mean treasures and fleeting honours of this world, bow down the knees of their souls to them, and worship them, but pass by the beautiful image of the blessed God, the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the glory to be revealed, without any respect or regard.

So reasonable and righteous is man's devoting himself to the worship of the blessed and most high God, that he cannot without manifest injustice, as well as ingratitude and folly, deny the exercising himself to godliness. Unless man were his own maker, he cannot have any title to become his own master, Ps. cxix. 73. The Redeemer's title to us is certain, and clear, and unquestionable, whether we own it or no, and all the while we keep anything from him, or deny subjection to him, we rob him of his right : ' Ye are not your own, but bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's,' 1 Cor. vi. 20. The slave is not his own man, but his who redeemed him, though his proud and stubborn spirit may refuse to acknowledge it. Man is not in the condition of those persons who are servants by compact and agreement, for a year, or so long as they think fit, and upon their own terms ; but like those whom the Romans took in war, over whose persons and estates they had an absolute dominion, as well as a right to their works and service. Though the commands of Christ are all holy, just, and good, as profitable for man, as honourable for himself, yet he hath absolute authority over man, and all that he hath, and may command him what he pleaseth. As Laban said to Jacob, ' These daughters are my daughters, these sons are my sons, these cattle are my cattle, and all thou seest is mine ;' so the Redeemer, by virtue of the price he laid down, his most precious blood, may say to every man, This soul is my soul, this body

is my body, this estate is my estate, these children and friends are my children and friends, this name, and credit, and interest is mine, and all thou hast is mine. Yet, alas ! men who will give their relations their due, strangers their due, enemies their due, nay, according to their proverb, the very devil his due, and far more than his due, will not give Jesus Christ his due, but, against all justice and righteousness, rob and wrong him of that which is his own, and dearly bought too : Rom. xiv. 7, 8, ‘ For whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.’

So absolute is the necessity of man’s making religion his business, that upon his diligence or negligence herein, his eternal salvation or damnation doth depend. If any man will be Christ’s disciple, he must deny himself, disclaim all title, and disown all right to himself ; have nothing more to do with himself, as upon his own account, and make an unfeigned, unreserved dedication of himself, and all that he hath, to the honour and interest of his Redeemer. Sanctification is a separation from all common to sacred uses, and this must be done with all the heart, and soul, and strength, in the whole course of the life, by all that will escape the wrath to come. God commandeth men to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to work out their salvations with fear and trembling, to be holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation ; and his word is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered. He hath enjoined nothing but what his infinite wisdom saw fit, and he is resolved not to vary the least tittle, not to abate the least farthing of the price he hath set. Foolish men are so besotted by their deceitful hearts, and befooled by the devil, that they compliment with religion, and only give it an outside formal salute, instead of cordial embraces, and real entertainment. They deal with religion, as Anacharsis saith the Athenians dealt with money, using it for no other end but to number and cast up accounts with, whereas it might have served them for excellent purposes. So they use religion only for a show, for fashion, for custom, and are satisfied with a hypocritical way of worshipping God, and think to put God off therewith, whereas it would serve them for high and honourable ends ; it would, if entertained in the power and life of it, elevate the Christian above this beggarly world, enable him to combat with, and conquer, his sturdy, stubborn lusts, and the power and policy of hell, help him to a conversation in

heaven, to converse and communion with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, and dress his soul for a blessed eternity.

Reader, if thou art unacquainted with this high and honourable, this worthy and noble, calling of Christianity, I shall appeal to thy reason and conscience, in the tender of some questions, possibly one or other of them may prevail with thee to bind thyself apprentice to it. As a fowler, according to the different nature of his game, contrives and appropriates his stratagems, that some he catcheth with light, as larks with a glass and day nets; some with baits, as pigeons with peas; some with frights, as blackbirds with a low-bell; some with company, as ducks with decoy fowl; so I shall endeavour to suit my questions to thy temper, whatever it be, that if either the light of reason, or the bait of unconceivable and infinite profit, or the frights of dreadful threatenings and comminations, or the company of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, and all his followers and soldiers, who marched to heaven in this way, will win upon thee, I may persuade thee to make religion thy business. Oh that, being crafty, I might catch thee with holy guile! To this end I beseech thee to weigh the questions again and again as thou readest them, and to dart up thy prayers to heaven for a blessing on them, that thou mayest not reject the counsel of God against thy own soul, but hearken to counsel, receive instruction, and be wise for thy latter end.

1. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, upon which the true comfort and joy of thy life, during thy whole pilgrimage, doth depend? Comfort is the cream, the top of life; joy is the flower, the honey, the life of life. Life without comfort, without delight, is a living death. If the body be disquieted with diseases, and aches, and pains, the soul, as a tender husband sympathising with his bride, though the patient be heir of a kingdom, and commander of large dominions, yet all creatures to him are unsavoury morsels, and, as an aguish palate, he can taste, can relish nothing. Job in distress speaks in such a man's dialect: 'Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?' Job iii. 20. Light is one of the most excellent things that God hath made, and is therefore used by the Holy Ghost to set out, not only the word of God and the work of godliness, Ps. exix. 105; 1 John i. 7, but also Christ, and heaven, and God himself, 1 John ix.; 1 Col. xii.; 1 John i. 5. Life is the apex, the highest stair, the top stone, the choicest of all temporal mercies. There is no flower in nature's garden for beauty or excellency comparable to it; therefore men, if brought to the pinch, will part with all to redeem this—skin for

skin ; all that a man hath will he give for his life. The loss of life is the chiefest outward loss, and esteemed the greatest satisfaction to justice or nature. The desire of life is indeed the greatest earthly blessing the most loyal people can desire for their loving prince ; ‘ Let the king live.’ But light and life, as precious pearls as they are, become burdens most toilsome and tedious to men without comfort. Joy to life is as the form to the matter, which animates and actuates it, and makes it spiteful and lively. ‘ Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul ?’

Now, reader, it is religion that is the comfort of thy life, by bringing thee to him who is the life of all thy comforts. Other things can never suit, and so can never satisfy, and therefore can never truly refresh or rejoice the soul of man. The body may sooner be fed and preserved with air and wind, as the soul filled with the whole world. They who swim down with a full stream of outward good things, who have waters of a full cup wrung out to them, and have more than heart can wish ; though they be masters of hidden and bottomless mines, as the Spanish ambassador boasted of his sovereign’s treasures in the Indies ; though they have thousands and millions of heads bare, and knees bowing to them, and are mounted to the loftiest pinnacle of honour, and fame, and renown ; though their garments are of finest silk, scented with the sweetest perfumes, embroidered by the most skilful artist, and enamelled with the richest jewels ; though their food be the most choice and luscious delicacies, the most mellifluous nectar, that earth, air, and water can afford, and though their bodies be in the most perfect state of health, and thereby enabled to extract the quintessence of all this, and so relish it in the highest degree ; yet all this is not able to give them the least drachm of true delight, the smallest crumb of true comfort. In the midst of their sufficiency, such monarchs are in straits. They may possess much, but enjoy nothing. Their faces sometimes are featured with laughter, when at the same time their souls are in little ease. In the midst of mirth their hearts are sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. As some plums that are sweet and luscious in the outward part, but have bitter kernels ; so the most rich and honourable sinners, in the midst of their mirth, and giggling, and sports, have inward gripes, which, like leaven, soureth the whole lump of their enjoyments. Haman, though exalted to the highest seat next the throne in the Persian court, and had the command of him who commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, yet had an aching heart, and a worm gnawing his inwards, that he crieth out,

‘ All this avails me nothing,’ &c. The world’s greatest darlings, whom she dandleth most upon her knees, and to whom she granteth her sweetest kisses, are but at best like a curious marble chimney-piece, glorious and shining without, but full of soot and blackness within. God did at first, for man’s fall, judge the earth to bring forth briers and thorns, and all the fruit it beareth will be piercing and paining, whatever men fancy to themselves.

But, reader, though the curse of the earth be thistles and thorns, yet the blessing of heaven is light and joy. Though the world be empty, and vain, and vexatious, yet religion is full, and filling the soul with content and comfort. Observe the very formal nature of it: ‘ The kingdom of God (*i.e.*, religion) consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,’ Rom. xiv. 17. Peace and joy is the heart-cheering wine which groweth upon this vine; a good conscience is a continual feast. Natural things must be brought to their centre before they can enjoy rest; and how can it be expected that spiritual beings can enjoy true repose but in their centre, the Father of spirits? That peace which passeth all understanding, that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, are the true and legitimate children of the power of godliness. Outward things and forms, like glow-worms, may be glistening, but they are not warming. It is the power of religion, like the sun, that brings refreshing light, and enlivening heat along with it. The wicked is snared in his wickedness, but the righteous sing and rejoice.

2. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, in which thou hast to do with an infinite, glorious, and jealous Majesty? If men are serious about the concernments of a father, or master, or nobleman, or king, how serious should they be about the concernments of a God! I must tell thee, reader, that thou hast every moment of thy life to do with the great God. Whether thou art eating, or drinking, or walking, or buying, or selling, or ploughing, or sowing, or reaping, as well as when thou art praying, or hearing, or reading, or meditating, thou hast still to do with God. In all companies, in all thy relations, in all natural actions, in all civil transactions, at all seasons, thou hast more to do with God than with any creature, than with all the creatures; and is his work to be slighted or dallied with, or slubbered over? Is it good playing or toying with his interests and concerns, in whose hand is thy breath, and life, and all that thou hast? Dost thou not know that his eyes are ever upon thee; that his arm is able to reach and revenge him on thee when he pleaseth; that he looks on himself as worthy to be observed

and pleased, in all thy thoughts, and words, and deeds? And wilt thou dare him to his face, and provoke him before his eyes, and cast him behind thy back, as not deserving to be minded or regarded? Is his fury so light a burden, or his favour so little a blessing, that thou art so indifferent unto either? Ah, didst thou but know what a God thou hast to deal with, in every part, and passage, and moment of thy life! how sweet his love is, far better than life; how bitter his wrath is, more dreadful than death. Didst thou know how great a good, how blessed a friend, how high an honour, how choice a happiness, how rich a cordial, how vast a treasure he is to them that make his service their business! Didst thou know how powerful an enemy, how intolerable his anger is, what a lion greedy of his prey, what a consuming fire he is to them that do his work by halves and negligently! Didst thou know him as the saved in heaven know him, to be a hive of sweetness, a river of pleasure; or as the damned in hell know him, to be a sea of wormwood, meeting thee as a bear robbed of her whelps! Oh, what wouldst thou then think of making religion thy business! Speak, friend, in thy conscience; wouldst thou then live without him in the world, and leave him out as one unconcerned in the several passages of thy conversation? Wouldst thou then put him off with the skin, and shell, and carcase of religion, as if he were an idol, and had eyes, and saw not, and ears, and heard not, instead of a hearty dedication of thyself, and all thou hast, to his service? Wouldst thou then eat, or drink, or buy, or sell, or do anything without asking his leave, and begging his blessing, and observing the rules and commands which he hath prescribed thee? Or wouldst thou not rather do all things as in his presence, according to his precepts, and as may be most for his praise, believing that he is not a God to be dallied with?

3. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the end of thy being and preservation, and of all the mercies that thou enjoyest, and of all the cost and charge which the great God is night and day at with thee? For what end dost thou think the great and glorious God formed thy body so curiously in the womb, and animated it with a heaven-born soul, but that thou mightst be made capable of admiring his excellencies, adoring his perfections, and obeying his precepts. Canst thou be so foolish as to think that he created thee to despise his dominion, and break his laws, and dishonour his name, and walk contrary to him in thy conversation? Wherefore dost thou imagine God doth preserve thee in thy being, afford thee health, and strength, and sleep, and food, and raiment,

and friends, and respect, and protect thee in thy outgoings and incomings, and defend thee from invisible enemies, who are continually waiting to destroy thee, and have power enough to drag thee into hell every moment, but are only restrained by his almighty arm; but that thou mightst, by these streams, be led upward to the fountain, employ these talents as a faithful steward for the honour of thy master, and by these gifts, tokens of his love, be persuaded to own and acknowledge the giver? Canst thou be so sottish as to think that he bestoweth these favours upon thee, that thou shouldst walk after the flesh, and embrace the present world, or to strengthen thee in thy treasons and rebellions against him? To what purpose dost thou imagine he bestoweth on thee his gospel, his ministers, his Sabbaths, his ordinances, many golden seasons of grace, but to help and enable thee to draw nigh to him, to seek out after him, to desire him, and delight in him, as thy only happiness and heaven? Surely thou canst not be so brutish as to conceive that he giveth thee all this, as women give babies to children, to play and toy with; or, as the Dutch are reported to have sent powder and shot for money to the Spaniards, to fight against him with? Doth not the husbandman, who takes care by dunging, and ploughing, and sowing, and harrowing, to manure his ground, expect that it will bring forth the greater crop, and so recompense his cost, that the profit which he shall receive by it at harvest will answer all his pains? When a father is at a great charge in the nurture and education of his child, providing him tutors, or sending him first to some considerable schools for a good while, next to the university, then to the Inns of Court, is it not his end that his son may be an honour to him, continue his name with credit, and be a prop and support to his family? And canst thou think that the only wise God, to whom all men are absolute, and angels comparative fools, is at such infinite cost and charge with thee upon any other account, than that thou mayest be serviceable to his interest, advance his kingdom, and make his praise glorious, by a pious, gracious, and exemplary conversation, and by making his service thy business?

4. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the elevation, and advancement, and perfection of thine heaven-born, immortal soul? The advancement and restoration of a prince, and one nobly born, to his kingdom and birthright, is much more deserving our care, and pains, and treasure, and blood, than the exaltation of a beggar from the dunghill. The soul of man is royally descended, begotten of God; holiness is its restoration to its

original glory, and primitive perfection, which is lost by the fall, and therefore is worthy of all our cost, and care, and study, and labour.

Thy soul, reader, is of unconceivable value and excellency :—

(1.) As it is immediately created by God, without any pre-existing matter.

(2.) As it is of an immaterial and spiritual nature.

(3.) As it is capable of the image, and life, and love, and fruition of God himself.

(4.) As it is immortal, and of eternal duration ; though years, and ages, and generations, and time have an end, the soul hath no end.

(5.) As it is the bottom in which the body and its everlasting good is embarked.

(6.) As it is the standard and measure of all our outward excellencies ; as friends, and health, and food, and life, and riches, and honour, and ministers, and ordinances, are more or less worth, as they are more or less serviceable to the soul. Now, grace and godliness is the honour, and elevation, and excellency of the soul ; it is soul beauty, Cant. iv. 1 ; it is soul wisdom, Prov. iv. 7 ; it is soul riches, Luke xii. 21 ; it is soul glory, soul comfort, soul food, soul raiment, soul rest. Oh how worthy is that form which animates and elevates the soul of man, as its subject and matter ! He that addeth honour to a puissant king must be high and honourable indeed. That which is the form of our form, and the soul of our soul, that exalteth and honoureth so noble a piece, must needs deserve to be our only business.

5. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which was the great design and end of the blessed Redeemer's birth, life, death, burial, ascension, and intercession ? No man, unless worse than distracted, can possibly conceive that the glorious God, whose wisdom is unsearchable, and love to his Son unquestionable, would send his only-begotten Son out of his bosom ; or that Christ, in whom were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, would give himself to be born so meanly, to live so poorly, to die so painfully, to be disgraced, reviled, buffeted, scourged, crucified, for anything that was not superlatively eminent, and deserved to be the main work and business of every man in this world. The greatness of the price, the blood of God, doth to every rational understanding fully speak the preciousness of the pearl. Now, how clear and plain is it in the word of truth, that the Redeemer 'gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people,

zealous of good work,' Titus ii. 14, that 'being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days.'

Surely, reader, that which the Son of God, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, thought worthy the taking on himself the form of a servant, and the suffering, the spite, and malice of men, the wrath and rage of devils, and the frowns and fury of his Father, to purchase for thee, doth deserve to be minded and regarded by thee, as the only thing thou followest after, and settest thyself about during thy pilgrimage.

Alas! all the pains, and labour, and watching, and working, and time, and strength, and lives of all the men in the world, are not equivalent to one drop of the blood of Christ, or the least degree of his humiliation; and wilt thou deny to make that thy business, for which he shed so much blood, and laid down his life?

6. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, and for which the Spirit is infused into the hearts of men? The worth of the Father doth speak the deserts of the child. Though men, who pretend to honour the Father for his work of creation, and to admire the Son for his work of redemption, blasphemously deride and wretchedly slight sanctification, which is the work of the Spirit, yet undoubtedly the work of the Spirit is no whit inferior to either; nay, is the beauty and glory both of creation and redemption, as being the end and perfection of both. The Father created the world in order to the new creation by the Spirit, as that choice workmanship which he resolved should bring him in the largest revenue of praise and honour. It is the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness, that doth most declare the glory of God, and the firmament (of sparkling graces) that sheweth forth his most choice and curious handiwork. Sanctification is the travail of the Son's soul, a spiritual, sacred life, the great end of his death. The Son redeemed man from slavery to sin and Satan, and unto the service of righteousness, by laying down the price thereof, his own most precious blood. One of the Son's main works was to purchase the re-impression of God's image on man, the actual performance of which is the peculiar office of the Spirit; hence he tells us, John xiv., 'I go away that the Comforter may come;' and again, John vi., 'The Spirit was not yet given,' (*i.e.*, so plentifully and universally,) 'because Jesus was not yet glorified.' And therefore we read, that in few days after his ascension, to acquaint us what was one main end and fruit of his death and suffering, he poureth down the Holy Ghost in an extra-

ordinary manner and measure. So that creation, the work of the Father, doth, as it were, provide the matter, the wax; redemption, the work of the Son, buyeth the image of God, the seal; and sanctification, the work of the Spirit, stampeth it on the soul.

Now, reader, doth not the sanctification of thy soul deserve to be thy main business, when it is the curious work of the Holy Spirit, as that which the Father's eye was chiefly on in thy creation, and the Son's in thy redemption?

7. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which addeth a real worth to everything, and without which nothing is of worth or value? Every one will grant that what is so richly excellent, as to enoble and add an intrinsic value to whatsoever it is affixed, and the lack of which maketh everything, be they in other respects never so precious, low and mean, must needs deserve to be our business. Truly, friend, such is holiness: it makes the word of God a precious word, 'more to be embraced than gold, yea, than much fine gold;' the ordinances of God, precious ordinances; the people of God, a precious people, the excellent of the earth. What is the reason that some, in the account of him who is best able to judge, though they be never so rich or beautiful, or high and honourable in the world, are called dross, chaff, stubble, dust, filth, vessels of dishonour, and counted dogs, swine, vermin, serpents, cockatrices, but want of holiness? What is the reason that some, though poor, and despised, and mean, and houseless, and friendless, are esteemed, by him who can best discern true worth, the glory of the world, the glory of Christ, a royal diadem, a royal priesthood, higher than the kings of the earth, more excellent than their neighbours, princes in all lands, such of whom the world is not worthy, but because they are godly persons, a holy people? Why are some angels advanced to the highest heavens, waiting always in the presence of the King of kings, honoured to be his ministers and deputies in the government of this lower world, when other angels are thrown down into the lowest hell, for ever banished the celestial court, and bound in chains of darkness, as prisoners to the day of execution, but holiness in the former, and want of it in the latter?

8. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which will and can refresh and revive thee in an hour of death, and enable thee to sing and triumph at the approach of the king of terrors? The master of moral philosophy tells us, that it is worth the while for a man to be all the time he lives learning how to die well. The unerring Spirit of God acquaints us, that it ought to be our great

work to be wise for our latter end. Doubtless, it must be a rich, costly cordial indeed, and deserves not a little time and pains and charge to prepare, which can keep a man from fainting in such a day of extremity, wherein our honours and treasures, friends, wives, children, nay, our flesh and hearts, will fail and forsake us. That cannot be of mean worth, which can make a man encounter his last enemy with courage and conquest, at the sight of which kings, and captains, and nobles, and the greatest warriors, have trembled, as leaves with the wind, and their hearts melted as grease before the fire.

Now, reader, godliness is that wine which will cause thee to sing at the approach of this Goliath, and enable thee, as leviathan, to laugh at the shaking of his spear; when whole hosts of others, without godliness, fly like cowards before it, and would give all they are worth to avoid fighting with it. Hark, what a challenge the godly sends to his adversary, daring it to meet him in the field! 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. xv. 55-57. The naturalists tell us of a precious stone called Ceraunias, that glisters most when the sky is cloudy, and overcast with darkness. Godliness, friend, will cast the greatest lustre on thee, and put the greatest comfort in thee, when thy time of trouble and day of death is come. This, this is the friend that is born for the day of adversity. Therefore, the sweet singer of Israel having this with him, promiseth, 'Though he walk in the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear none ill,' Ps. xxiii.

9. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which will help thee to comfort and confidence at a dreadful day of judgment, and cause thee to lift up thy head with joy, when thousands and millions shall weep and wail? The day of judgment will be a terrible day indeed. The judge will come in flaming fire—a fire devouring before him, and behind him a flame burning. His tribunal will be a tribunal of fire. Out of his mouth did proceed a fiery law, and by that law of fire he will try men for their eternal lives and deaths. The earth at that day will be consumed with fire, and the elements melt with fervent heat. If the cry of fire, fire, in the night now be so dreadful, and doth so affright and amaze us, though it be but in one house, and possibly not very near us, how dreadful will that day be, when we shall see the whole world in a flame, and the judge coming in flaming fire to pronounce our eternal dooms! 'Who can abide the day of his coming? or who can stand when

he appeareth? Then 'the kings, and captains, and nobles, and mighty men will call to the rocks to fall on them, and to the hills to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,' Rev. vi. 15, 16.

O reader, of what worth is that which will help thee, as the three children, to sing in the midst of so many flaming fiery furnaces, and preserve thee from being hurt, or so much as touched therewith! Truly, godliness will do this for thee. It will turn this day of the perdition of ungodly men into a day of redemption to thee. As true gold is not consumed by the hottest fire, and the salamander can live in the greatest flames, so the godly man, in the midst of all those fires and flames, will live and flourish, though millions of ungodly ones are scorched and tortured. As he is a king now, reigning over his stubborn lusts and unruly passions, that will be his coronation-day, wherein he will appear before the whole world in all his glory and royalty. As he is a husbandman now, sowing to the Spirit, that will be his harvest-day, wherein he shall reap the fruit of all his prayers, and tears, and watchings, and fastings, and labour, and sufferings. As he is compared to a virgin, betrothed to Christ, now, keeping his garments white and clean, and devoting himself to the service and honour and commands of his Lord, that will be his marriage-day, wherein he shall be arrayed in fine linen, the righteousness of the saints, adorned with the jewels of perfect graces, and solemnly espoused to the king of saints, the heir of all things, and the fairest of ten thousands, the Lord Jesus Christ. As he is a servant now, doing not his own, but the will of his master in heaven, and finishing his work, that will be the day wherein his indentures will expire, and he shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. As he is a son now, yielding reverence and obedience to the Father of spirits, that will be the day wherein he shall be declared to be of full age, and enjoy his portion and inheritance. As he is a soldier now, fighting the good fight of faith, warring a good warfare, enduring much hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, that will be the day wherein he shall be called off the guard, discharged of those tiresome, toilsome duties, incumbent on him in this life, and receive his garland, a crown of everlasting life.

Little dost thou conceive, reader, the worth of godliness at that day. Godliness will then be honoured and admired, not only by them that have it, and rejoice in it, but also by the most profane and carnal wretches, and those who now despise and deride it. Then the blind world, who now shut their eyes and will not see,

and the atheistical world, who harden their hearts, and will not believe, shall return, and discern, and see, and believe a difference between the godly and ungodly; between them that fear the Lord, and them that fear him not. O friend, what wouldst thou give at that day, that godliness had been thy business at this day! Godliness will make the judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, thy friend; the Father, by whose authority he sits the king of all nations, thy friend; the justices who will be upon the bench,—for he shall come with thousands of his saints,—thy friends. Godliness would make the law, by which thou art to be tried, thy friend; godliness would make thy conscience, which is to be brought in as the evidence, thy friend. Godliness would strike dumb all thy accusers, Satan, thy corruptions, and suffer none of them to hurt thee as thy foes. And is not godliness worthy to be made thy business, which will do all this for thee?

10. Is not that worthy to be made thy business which will do thee good to eternity? The fool is for goods for many years, but a wise man is for goods that will last to eternity. In worldly matters, we value those houses and goods highest which will last longest. We will give much more for the fee-simple or inheritance for ever of a dwelling or lands, than for a term of few years, or for a lease for life, though we can enjoy them but during life. Oh, why should it not be thus in spirituals? Why should we not set the greatest price, and take the most pains, for that which is not for years, or ages, but for ever? for that which we may enjoy, and have full, solid comfort in, to eternity? No good that is eternal, can be little. If it be but a human friend whom thou lovest, to enjoy him for ever, or a bodily health, to enjoy it for ever, or near relations, to enjoy them for ever, will infinitely advance the price and raise the value of them; but to enjoy a God for ever, the blessed Saviour for ever, the comforting Spirit for ever, fulness of joy for ever, rivers of pleasure for ever, an exceeding weight of glory for ever, a crown, a kingdom, an inheritance for ever, which is the fruit of godliness, what tongue can declare, what mind can apprehend the worth of these? Alas! frailty is such a flaw in all earthly tenures, that it doth exceedingly abate their value, and should our affections to them. Who would esteem much of that flower, which flourisheth and looks lovely in the morning, but perisheth and is withered at night? How little are those things worth which are to-day mine, and to-morrow another's; which make themselves wings, and, as birds, fly away; are no sooner in sight, but almost as soon out of sight! Though all the works and

creatures of God are excellent, and admirable in their degrees and places, yet some are of far more worth than others, because of their nearer relation to our spiritual souls, and their eternal duration. When I look upon honours, and applause, and respect in the world, methinks its worth is little ; for I can see through that air. It is but a breath, a blast that quickly passeth away. When I look upon houses and lands, and silver and gold, I may well judge their price low ; for there is a worm that will eat out and consume the strongest-timbered dwelling ; and gold and silver are corruptible things. Riches are not for ever. When I look upon my wife and children, in whom I have, through mercy, much comfort and contentment, yet their value, as natural relations, is small ; for so they shall not be mine for ever ; and therefore ‘they that have wives’ are commanded to be ‘as though they had none.’ But when I look upon grace, upon godliness, upon religion, upon the image of God, oh, of what infinite worth, and price, and value are they, because they are lasting, they are everlasting, they are mine for ever ! When honours, and crowns, and robes, and sceptres are but for a few days ; when stately palaces, and costly manors, and treasures, gold, and pearl are but for a short time ; when the most lovely and loving wives, and husbands, and sons, and daughters, and friends are frail and fading ; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. Godliness is the good part that, when thy relations, and possessions, and all the good things of this life shall be taken from thee, shall never be taken from thee.

Reader, what an argument is here to provoke thee to spend and be spent, to employ all thy time, and strength, and talents, to sell all for this pearl, when it is of so great price ; that when all other privileges, excellencies, royal or noble births, high breedings, preferments, favours with great men, riches, pleasures, will only, as brass or leathern money, be current in some countries, in this beggarly earth, it will enrich thee and enliven thee, refresh and rejoice thee, for ever.

11. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which all men, even the greatest enemies to it, will, sooner or later, heartily and earnestly wish had been their business ? We have a usual saying, that what one speaketh may be false and light ; and what two speak may be false and vain ; and what three speak may be so ; but what all speak and agree in, must have something of truth and weight in it. And again, we say, *Vox populi est vox dei*, The voice of all the people is an oracle. Though as Christ said of himself, so I may say of godliness, God himself beareth witness of it, and his witness is true, and it needeth not testimony from man. Yet as he

made use of the testimony of John to convince the Jews of their desperate wickedness and inexcusableness, in not submitting to his precepts, and accepting him as a Saviour ; so may I improve the witness of the whole world on the behalf of godliness, to convince thee, reader, of thy folly and sinfulness in neglecting it ; and to shew thee how inexcusable thou wilt be found at the day of Christ, if thou dost not presently set upon it, and make it thy business.

It is evident that many men, whose hearts are full of opposition to the ways of God, and whose lives are a flat contradiction to his word and will, do yet in their extremity seek him early, and cry to him earnestly, and fly to godliness as the only shelter in a storm, and fastest anchor in a tempest. The most profane and atheistical wretches, who have in their works defied God himself, and in their words blasphemously derided godly men and godliness, when they have been brought low by sickness, and entered within the borders of the king of terrors, and have some apprehension upon their spirits that they must go the way of all the earth, then, as naturalists observe of the dying cuckoo, they change their note ; send for godly ministers, godly Christians, desire them to pray with them, to pray for them, hearken diligently to their serious instructions ; wish with all their hearts, and would give their highest honours, and richest treasures, and imperial diadems, and kingdoms, if they have any, and all they are worth, that they had made godliness their business ; and promise, if God will spare them, and lengthen their lives but a few days upon earth, that they will have no work, no calling, no employment, no design, but how to please God, and obey his counsel, and submit to his Spirit, and follow after holiness, and prepare their souls for heaven. Oh, then godliness is godliness indeed, and grace is grace indeed ! Then they call and cry, as the foolish virgins to the wise, ‘ Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.’ Oh, give us grace ; give us godliness in the power of it ; for all our formal, outside, lazy, serving of God is come to nothing. The serpent that is crooked all her lifetime, when dying, stretcheth herself straight.

As Dionysius on his death, when he heard Thales discoursing excellently about the nature and worth of moral philosophy, cursed his pastimes, and sports, and foolish pleasures, that had taken him off, and diverted him from the study of so worthy a subject ; so these lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, whose lives are little else than brutish delights in a circle, or a diversion from one pleasure to another, whose business now is to mock at piety, and persecute the pious ; when they come to be thrown by a disease on

their beds, and their consciences begin to accuse them for their neglect of godliness, and to convince them of its absolute necessity, and they have some fears to be overthrown by death; then they curse their hawks, and hounds, and games, and cups, and companions, and sensual delights, that hindered them from making religion their business. Experience testifieth this frequently in many parts of the nation, where the consciences of dying sinners are not seared with a red hot iron.

Some wish this whilst they live, either under some great affliction, or on a dying bed; nay, I am persuaded that most wicked men that live under the gospel, in their prosperity even, when they have the world at will, in the midst of their sensual delights, have inward conviction that the course they take will prove cursed in the end, and have some velleities or weak desires, (though overruled by carnal, headstrong affections,) that they could leave those vanities, and make religion their business. But all wicked men after death, when they come into the other world, will wish in earnest, with all their hearts and souls, that they had minded nothing but the service of God, and exercising themselves unto godliness. There, there it is, that the whole world that now lieth in wickedness, and will not believe the word and wisdom of their Maker, will all set their hands and seals to the truth of that which I am now endeavouring to evince.

When God sends his officer, death, to arrest sinners for the vast sums which they owe to his justice for their breach of his laws, and this serjeant, according to command from the King of kings, executes his writ, and delivers his prisoner to the devils, God's jailors; and they seize, as so many roaring lions, on the poor trembling prey, and hale them to their own den, hell; that dungeon of eternal darkness, where sinners see and are assured that all their meat must be flakes of fire and brimstone, and all their drink a cup of pure wrath without mixture, and all their music howling, and weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and all their rest torments day and night for ever and ever; and all their companions frightful devils, and a cursed crew of damned wretches, and all this to come upon them for not making religion their business whilst they were on earth; then, oh then, they will wish with all their souls and strengths, again and again, that they had minded the Christian man's calling, and made religion their business whilst they were in this world, though they had been slaves, or beggars, or vagabonds, and had lived in poverty and disgrace, and prisons, and fetters during their whole pilgrimage.

Now, reader, if the witness of one enemy be a double testimony, what is the witness of all the enemies of God and godliness, on the

behalf of the Lord, and his ways, against themselves ! Shall it not prevail with thee to set speedily and diligently about the work of Christianity ? Ah how dumb wilt thou be struck another day, if thou wilt not believe either God, or good men, or thy conscience, or thy companions, or all the world !

12. And lastly, Is not that worthy to be made thy business, upon which thine eternal life or death, salvation or damnation, doth depend ? Consider it, friend, here is salvation and damnation before thee, eternal salvation and eternal damnation, and they depend upon thy making religion thy business or neglect of it. Oh what weight is there in these few words ! Make religion thy business, and thou art eternally blessed ; be formal and careless about it, and thou art cursed for ever ; upon the one and the other turneth thine eternal estate. The almighty God hath, under his own hand, set down this making religion thy business to be the only terms upon which heaven shall be had, and it is impossible to alter or abate his price, John vi. 27 ; Mat. vi. 33 ; Phil. ii. 12. Canst thou be so foolish as to think that Christ, and happiness, and eternal life can be obtained upon easier conditions, when he must make God a liar, and the gospel a lie, (which the devil himself is not so wicked as to think possible,) who arriveth at the port of bliss without exercising himself to godliness ? The promises, ever since the world was, had the same conditions, and ever will whilst the world shall endure. The gospel is therefore called the everlasting gospel, because it will continue, without the least change or alteration, the same for ever. Thou mayest be confident that God doth not, as some indiscreet citizens, ask much more for his eternal glory and life of men than he intendeth to take.

I say again, ponder it, for this argument hath more in it than thine understanding can possibly conceive or imagine. Is not that worthy to become thy business, and main work in this world, upon which thine everlasting weal or woe, thine endless estate in the other world, doth depend ?

Reader, if that doth not deserve all thy time, and pains, and soul, and heart, and infinitely more, upon which unchangeable joy or eternal torments hang, then, I am sure, nothing doth. Alas ! all the things of this world, whether about food, or raiment, or houses, or lands, or wives, or children, nay, and life itself, are but toys, and trifles, and shadows, and nothings, to an everlasting condition in the other world. Oh that thou wert but able to conceive what it is to be eternally in fulness of pleasure, or eternally in extremity of pain—to be frying in flames for ever, or bathing in rivers of delight for ever ! To enjoy God in his ordinances, though it be but imper-

fectly, and in a low degree, one hour, one day, how sweet is it ! His tabernacles are highly amiable upon that account : ‘ One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.’ But to enjoy God fully, immediately, and for ever too, oh how superlatively, how infinitely pleasant and delightful will it be ! To be in God’s lower house, though but a little time, under some pious, powerful minister, how reviving and refreshing is it ! But to dwell in his upper house for ever : ‘ O blessed are they that dwell in that house, they always praise thee !’ The eternal presence of God will cause an eternal absence of all evil, and an eternal confluence of all good.

O reader, who will not work hard, labour much, exercise himself to godliness night and day — do anything that God commandeth, suffer anything that God inflicteth, forbear anything that God forbiddeth, to be saved eternally, to be infinitely blessed in the fruition of God for ever ? Surely it is worth the while to obey the counsel of God in order to eternal salvation. On the other side, eternal damnation, how dreadful is it ! if it be but the scratch of a pin for ever, or a little ache of the head for ever, it would be very doleful ; but a violent headache or toothache, or fits of the colic, or stone, for ever, oh how intolerable would they be ! But ah, how terrible is the wrath of God for ever, darkness of darkness for ever, the fire of hell for ever, to which all the racks and torments in this life are next to nothing ! Ah, who can dwell in everlasting burnings !

I suppose thou wouldst avoid thy wicked companions, and forbear thy sinful courses, do anything thou couldst, rather than to boil in a furnace of scalding water for a thousand years, nay, one year ; and wilt thou not make religion thy business, when otherwise God himself hath told thee, thou shalt boil in a furnace of scalding wrath, infinitely worse than scalding lead, for ever, ever, ever ? Consider what thou hast read, and the Lord give thee understanding, that thou mayest be wise to eternal salvation !

Reader, these twelve questions being proposed, I desire thee to answer them to him, before whom thou shalt answer ere long for all the motions of thy heart, and passages of thy whole life ; and I shall not detain thee longer in the passage, though it be much larger than I intended when I first put pen to paper about it. If thy soul receive any profit by it, I shall not repent of my pains, only beg thy prayers ; that thou mayest, is the desire of

Thine and the church’s servant in the blessed Saviour,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART III.

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself unto godliness.—1 TIM. IV. 7.

PREFACE.

And exercise thyself unto godliness.

THE life of man is not seldom in the word of God compared to a walk,¹ Ps. xxxix. The womb is the place whence he first, in the morning of his age, sets out, and his actions are the several steps by which he is always hastening to his journey's end, the grave, that common inn of resort. The life of a Christian is called a walking in the light, 1 John i. 6, a walking in the law, Ps. cxix. 1, because his motion is regular, and his whole race by rule. He must have a divine word for all his works, and a precept from God for all his practices. Scripture is the compass by which he steereth, and the square by which he buildeth. Hence he is said to walk with God, because he walketh according to his commands and his example; he doth not walk *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*, as man, 1 Cor. iii. 3, but *κατὰ Θεόν*, according to his measure, as God willeth, and as God walketh. Further, the holy life of a saint is compared to an orderly walking in these two respects.

First, In regard of his gradual proficiency.² He doth not stand still, but gets ground by his steps: 'They go from strength to strength,' Ps. lxxxiv. 4; 'From faith to faith,' Rom. i. 17. He is ever going forward in heaven's way, and never thinks of sitting down till he comes to his Father's house. Sometimes indeed he is

¹ Ambulare Hebraica phrasi significat cursum vitæ instituere.

² Est motus progressivus.

so straitened that he can only creep, at other times he is enlarged that he can run; but at all times he is going on towards perfection.¹ The light of his holiness, though at first but glimmering, is always growing, and shines brighter and brighter till perfect day, Prov. iv. 18.

Secondly, In regard of his uniform perseverance.² It is not taking a step or two in a way which denominateth a man a walker, but a continued motion; it is not one or two good actions, but a good conversation which will speak a man to be a right Christian. A true believer, like the heavenly orbs, is constant and unwearied in his motion and actings. An expositor observeth of Enoch, that it is twice said of him, 'He walked with God,' Gen. v. 22 and 24, to shew that, as he first began to walk and profit in God's path, so he always continued profiting to the end.³ No man is judged healthy by a flushing colour in his face, but by a good complexion. God esteemeth none holy for a particular carriage, but for a general course. A sinner in some few acts may be very good. Judas repenteth; Cain sacrificeth; the scribes pray and fast; and yet all were very false. In the most deadly diseases there may be some intermissions, and some good prognostics. A saint in some few acts may be very bad. Noah is drunk; David defileth his neighbour's wife; and Peter denieth his best friend; yet these persons were heaven's favourites. The best gold must have some grains of allowance. Sheep may fall into the mire, but swine love night and day to wallow in it. A Christian may stumble, nay, he may fall, but he gets up and walks on in the way of God's commandments: the bent of his heart is right, and the scope of his life is straight, and thence he is deemed sincere.

It is the character of the Christian to be constant in his gracious course. If you would speak with the tradesman you may meet him in his shop. The farmer's usual walk is in the fields. He that hath business with the merchant, expecteth him in his counting-house, or amongst his goods; and he that looketh for the Christian shall not fail to find him with his God.⁴ Whether he be alone or in company, abroad or in his family, buying or selling, feeding himself, or visiting others, he doth all as in his God's presence, and

¹ Ambulare in Christo duo denotat. Progredi et perseverare in doctrina et fide Christi.—*Dav. in Col. ii. 6.*

² Est motus perpetuus.

³ Bis de Enoch dicitur, Ambulavit eum deo, ad explicandum quod ab ineunte ætate profecit in via Dei, et perseveravit proficiendo in eadem semper.—*Cajet.*

⁴ Ambulare est vivere. Hac loquendi formula admonemur, Christianum esse in perpetuo itinere versus cœlestem patriam, neque unquam esse illi subsistendum in via, sed perpetuo ambulandum et progrediendum. — *Dav. in Col.*

in all aimeth at his praise. As the sap of a tree riseth up from the root, not only to the body, but also to the branches of the smallest twigs; so grace in a saint springeth up from his heart, and floweth out, not only in his spiritual and higher, but also in his civil and lower actions.

How the saint may make godliness his business in religious actions, (as in praying, hearing, receiving the Lord's supper, and sanctification of the Lord's day,) in natural actions, in his recreations, in his particular calling, and in the government of his family, I have largely discovered in the first part of the Christian Man's Calling.

The second part will help believers in the relations, (of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants,) and in the conditions of prosperity and adversity.

Reader, the design of this treatise is to direct thee further in this continual exercise of piety. It divideth itself into these particulars. I shall herein,

First, Endeavour to discover wherein the nature of godliness consisteth—

1. In thy dealings with all men.
2. In all companies, whether good or bad; and therein I shall speak both to thy choice of companions and carriage in company.
3. In solitariness.
4. On a week-day, from morning to night.
5. In visiting the sick.
6. On a dying bed.

Secondly, I shall offer thee some means which will be helpful to thee in this business.

Thirdly, I shall annex some motives to stir thee up to this high and gainful calling. I begin with the first.

CHAPTER I.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in his dealings with all men. As also a good wish about that particular.

First, Thy duty is to make religion thy business in thy dealings with all men. True godliness payeth its dues to men, as well as its duty to God; nay, it cannot do the latter without the former. Upon these two poles all religion turns, and upon these two feet it

walketh. That man's holiness is lame which always keeps home, and doth not walk abroad and visit his neighbours. It is a sign of a sickly temper for a man to sit always brooding in a chimney-corner, and not to dare to stir out of doors. Sure I am, thy religion is of a sad, distempered constitution, whatsoever hopes it may give of healthiness in family duties, if it goeth no farther, and doth not appear in the open air of thy converses with strangers. Religion bindeth the Christian to his good behaviour towards all men. True holiness will provide things honest, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men, 2 Cor. viii. 21. The king's coin hath his superscription without the ring, as well as his image within it. The saint's civil as well as his spiritual actions have divine impression stamped on them, and he is walking with God in his trading with men. As thy heart must be pure, so thy hands must be clean, or thou canst never reach heaven: Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.' To be void of conscience in thy civil actions speaks thee to have no right to the beatifical vision; he that comes short of heathens must needs come short of heaven. And truly to be careless in making godliness thy business in them will very much hinder thy progress in holiness. If all the passages of the body be not open, there is no thriving in health.

The ostrich is very swift, and said to outrun the horse: 'He mocketh the horse and the rider,' Job xxxix. 18; but what is the reason? Truly this, he hath two helps of speed, his wings and his feet, whereas other creatures have but one. The hawk hath wings, the hare and horse have feet; but he hath and useth both wings and feet, and hence is so nimble in his flight. The right Christian maketh haste, and runneth the way of God's commandments, because he doth use not only the wings of religious performances for that end, but also the feet of his ordinary actions. When some are only for holy duties, and others only for honest dealings, he outstrips them all, marrying them both together, and making them like husband and wife, serviceable each to other. It is true, his piety is the husband, which hath the command and dominion; but his dealings with men, as a dutiful wife, further his weal by their obedience and subjection. No Christian ever made more haste in heaven's way than Paul: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all,' saith he; but how came it about? Why, through divine assistance, he exercised himself to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards all men, Acts xxiv.

16. The stream must needs be the swifter for the meeting and uniting of the waters of grace out of both those channels. The bark which covereth the tree seemeth to be of little worth compared with the body of the tree, yet if that be peeled off the tree dieth. Though righteous dealings seem to be but the bark and outside of religion, yet if once thou castest them off, thy religion, as thriving as thou thoughtest it to be, will quickly wither and come to nothing. The heart-blood of thy godliness may be let out by a wound in thy hand.

I shall lay down a motive or two to quicken thee to conscientiousness in thy dealings with all men, and then acquaint thee wherein it consisteth.

SECTION I.

First, Consider, it is a sure sign of hypocrisy to be unrighteous and careless in civil dealings, how conscientious soever thou mayest seem to be in sacred duties. He that seems righteous towards men, and is irreligious towards God, is but an honest heathen; and he that seems religious towards God, and unrighteous towards men, is but a dissembling Christian. To make conscience of one duty and not of another, is to make true conscience of neither. The soul that ever had communion with God above, comes down, like Moses out of the mount, with both tables in his hands, the second as well as the first, and the first as well as the second. One stone in a mill, one oar in a boat, will do little good; there must be two, or no work can be done. A perfect man consisteth of two essential parts, a soul and a body. Though the soul be the principal, and doth specificate the compound, yet the body is so necessary, that without it none can be a complete man. A Christian that is (evangelically) perfect, is also made up of these two parts, holiness and righteousness. Though holiness be the chief, as that which doth difference the saint, yet righteousness is so requisite that there can be no true Christian without it. The holy apostle argueth the purity of his conscience from the honesty of his conversation: 'We trust that we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly,' Heb. xiii. 18. The goodness of the fruit will commend the tree.

1. Their honesty was visible, 'to live honestly'; not only to mean well, and think honestly, or to talk, but to live honestly.

2. Their honesty was universal. 'In all things' (not in one or two particulars) 'willing to live honestly.' Visibility and universality are popish marks of a true church, and Protestant marks of a true

Christian. A hypocritical Jehu may do some things; a murderous Herod may do many things; but an upright Paul is in all things willing to live honestly.¹ A ship that is not of the right make cannot sail trim; and a clock whose spring is faulty will not always go true; so a person of unsound principles cannot be constant and even in his practices. The religion of those that are inwardly rotten, is like a fire in some cold climates, which doth almost fry a man before, when at the same time he is freezing behind. They are zealous in some things, as holy duties, which are cheap, and cold in other things, especially when they cross their profit or credit; as the Mount Helga² is covered with snow on one side, when it burneth and casteth out cinders on the other side; but the holiness of them that are sound at heart, is like the natural heat, which, though it resort most to the vitals of sacred performances, yet, as need is, it warmeth, and hath an influence upon all the outward parts of civil transactions. It may be said of true sanctity as of the sun, 'There is nothing hid from the heat thereof,' Ps. xix. 5. When all the parts of the body have their due nourishment distributed to them, it is a sign of a healthy temper.

As the saint is described sometimes by a clean heart, Ps. lxxiii. 1; Mat. v. 8, so also sometimes by clean hands, Job xvii. 9, because he hath both; the holiness of his heart is seen at his fingers' ends. He is as the ark, pitched within and without with the same; as he is sometimes characterised by sacred duties, Ps. xxiv. 6, and cxix., Rev. i. 3, so at other times by righteous dealings, Ps. xv.; Isa. lviii., because he mindeth both. If either be separated from the man, you kill the Christian; for though he may be a man without either, he cannot be a Christian without both. The Greek word for sincerity, *εὐλικρίνεια*, is very elegant, and signifieth (*quasi ἐν εὐλῇ κρίνειν*) such a trial as is made of things by the sunlight. As the eagle, according to Aristotle, bringeth her young to the sun to try whether they are spurious or legitimate, so the actions of a sincere Christian will endure the open air, the light of the sun. He is as the street of the New Jerusalem, transparent glass—all one without and within, you may see through him. He dares appeal both to God and men for the holiness and righteousness of his conversation: 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly we have had our conversation in the world,' 1 Thes. ii. 10.

Reader, never please thyself in the name of a Christian, if thou hast not the nature of Christianity, which giveth God and man

¹ Non est vera religio quæ cum templo relinquitur.—*Lactant.*

² Thus is "Hecla."—ED.

their due. It is not the great sound of a professor, nor the loud noise of holy performances, that will speak thee sincere, if thou makest not conscience of thy carriage towards thy neighbours. The Sadducees derive their name from Zeduchim, or Zadduceus, a just man; but the worst men, saith the historian, got the best names. The Alcoran of the Turks hath its name from brightness, (Al¹ in the Arabic being as much as Karan in the Hebrew, to shine or cast forth a brightness,) when it is full of darkness, and fraught with falsehoods. It will be little comfort to thee, though the world commend thee for a holy man, if God condemn thee for a hypocrite. Doth not the word of truth tell thee, that they who are partial in the law have no part in the gospel, and that none are justified by Christ but those that are just towards Christians? Do not think thy spiritual constitution to be sound, if plague-sores break out on thy body. The gods, saith Aristotle, do not so much respect the costliness of the sacrifice as the conversation of the sacrificer. Sure I am, the true God rejects those prayers, seem they never so glorious, where the petitioner is unrighteous. All thy oblations will be vain if thy conversation be vicious; the sweetest incense is unsavoury if the hands that offer it be filthy. 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your solemn feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear.' But what is the reason that all these ordinances, which were of God's own appointment, are thus rejected? 'Your hands are full of blood,' Isa. i. 13-15. An unclean hand tainteth whatsoever it toucheth.

Secondly, Consider the credit of religion is engaged in thy public dealings. More eyes are upon us when we walk abroad than when we are at home, and therefore it concerns us to be handsome in our habits, and very circumspect in our carriage. A professor may be rotten-hearted in holy duties, and the world never the wiser; they are ignorant of it, and so do not disgrace religion for it; but if he be once unrighteous in his dealings, the whole country will quickly ring of it, and cry him up for a cheat, and his religion for a cozenage. God indeed looks most to our hearts, whether they be sound, and accordingly esteemeth of our per-

¹ This is a mistake. *Al* in Arabic signifies *the*; *Coran* is generally considered to be derived from the verb which signifies to *read*; and so *Alcoran* is simply *the book*, or *the bible*.—Ed.

formances ; but men look only to our hands, whether they be clean, and accordingly judge of our profession. If the servants of religion behave themselves unseemly, their mistress shall be sure to bear the blame. When David had defiled Bathsheba, the name of God was blasphemed. A saint cannot do evil before men, but he occasions sinners to speak evil of God. If there be any spots on a Christian's coat, the world will soon spy them, and be ready in scorn to ask Christ himself, as the patriarchs did Jacob, 'See whether this be thy son's coat or no.' To look high by thy profession, and live low and basely in thy practices, will betray both thyself and the gospel to scorn and derision. Augustine confesseth there were many such in his time, who, professing the Christian religion, did by their licentious lives give great scandal, and with them the Manichees were wont to reproach the whole church of Christ, though the church did disown them ; and though she could not reclaim them, she did disclaim them.—Aug., *De moribus Ecclesie*, cap. 34.

The wicked first watch for a godly man's fall, and then are big with blasphemy against godliness. Like miners, they work hard, though unseen, to blow up a saint's name. The psalmist tells us, 'They compassed us in our steps, they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth,' Ps. xvii. 11. It is an allusion to hunters, who go poring on the ground to find the print of the hare's claws, when their dogs are at a loss in their scent ; so Satan's agents go with their eyes bowing down, marking the saints' footsteps, to find out if it be possible where they have slipped or stepped awry, that their bloodhounds may follow both their persons and their profession with loud cries and fresh noise. The baggage world is both desirous and industrious to sear that face, and to spy the least blemish in it, that is fairer than herself.

If the Christian be once defiled, Christianity itself will quickly be defamed. Though sins in secret duties have their aggravations, yet sins in our public dealings do in a threefold respect exceed them.

1. These are scandalous to the good, which those are not. The children of God weep bitterly when they hear that others walk disorderly. Their hearts bewail their brethren's wickedness ; now wouldest thou sadden the spirit of a saint ? Alas ! they have grief enough from their enemies, and shall they be wounded in the house of their friends ?

2. They are infectious to the bad, which secret sins are not.¹ Thy sins are like St Paul's in London, on high for the gaze of the

¹ Scandalum est dictum, aut factum, quo alius redditur deterior.—*Paræus in 1 Cor. viii. 9.*

world ; but thy virtues, as St Faith, under ground, they do not note them. How soon will the world plead a Christian's sinful act, to excuse and justify their own sinful habits ! They are like ravenous birds, that fly over sweet and pleasant flowers, and pitch only upon unsavoury carcases ; they take little notice of thy graces, but will be sure to mind thy vices. The philosopher saith that the fleeces of such sheep as are killed by the wolf are most apt to breed lice ; one of Christ's sheep, foiled by Satan in the eyes of men, doth much mischief. Now, will it not trouble thee that these unclean fowls should pick that from thee which will feed and nourish their filthy nature ? Alas ! they move fast enough towards hell with the tide of their own evil hearts, and shall the wind of thy example make them sail more swiftly ?

3. Thy open sins occasion the wicked to speak ill of God, which secret sins do not. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, saith the apostle to the Romans, Rom. ii. 24. Christians ought to be shields, to ward off those blows of reproach which would fall on the name of God. How unchristian are they, then, that are swords in the hands of the wicked, wherewith the name of God is wounded. Truly, an unrighteous professor is such a one. If thou studiest to do thy God disservice, and to bring on his blessed name dishonour, thou canst not do it sooner than by unjust actions under the livery of a high profession. The devil himself cannot dress a man in a more ridiculous habit, to make both him and his Master the scorn of the company, than by putting on him a coat patched up of divers pieces and contrary colours—a glorious name of a saint, and the unrighteous works of a reprobate. Friend, beware how thou behavest thyself in the world. The snow makes a fair show to the eye, but, being melted, it makes a dangerous flood. They who make a fair show in the flesh, by walking offensively, may cause such a deluge as may drown the souls of others, and give many a dash at the name of God himself. The Indians would not hear of heaven, when they were told that the Spaniards (whom they had found to be barbarous and bloody) went thither. The Jews are hardened in their enmity against Christ by the evil lives of pretended Christians. Epiphanius saith, that in his days many avoided the Christian's company because of the looseness of some men's conversation. When some beasts have blown on grass, others will not eat of it for a good while after. It is no wonder that religion finds so few greedy of her service, when her work is so much disparaged by those that already seem to be her servants. Men will easily be discouraged from travelling in that

road which is haunted with thieves and robbers. Either walk up to thy calling, or lay thy calling down. Why shouldst thou give conscience cause to say to thee truly, (what Michal did to David falsely,) Thou hast made thyself like one of the vile and base fellows of the earth.

SECTION II.

As to the exercising thyself to godliness in thy dealings with all men, it consisteth partly in the manner of thy dealings, partly in the principle of thy dealing, and partly in the end thou propoundest in thy dealings.

First, Be careful in thy carriage towards others as to the manner of it, that it be righteous, meek, and courteous.

1. Be righteous in thy dealings with all men. Righteousness strictly taken is a virtue, which guideth and ordereth the whole man for the good of his neighbour, as the understanding to conceive, the will to choose, the affections to love and desire, and the whole man to act and do what may tend to the welfare of others. This righteousness is of so great concernment to godliness, that it is sometimes put by a synecdoche for the whole of religion: 1 John iii. 7, 'He that doeth righteousness, is righteous;' so Rom. vi. 17. And the Christian is denominated from this part of Christianity: Gen. vii. 1, 'And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me;' so Ps. v. 12, 'For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous.' The moral philosophers tell us that justice is the sum and epitome of all virtues; the divines will inform us that righteousness, largely taken, is the string upon which all the graces hang; if that be broken or snapped asunder, they all fall off and are lost. I must tell thee, Christian, that civil righteousness is as really necessary as sacred. He that seemeth righteous towards God, and is unrighteous towards men, is unrighteous both to God and man. I say, be righteous in thy dealing with all men,—viz., let thy righteousness be real and universal, commutative and distributive. Be righteous in thy actions, expressions, and towards all persons.

(1) Be righteous in thy works or actions. Deal with men as one that in all hath to do with God. If thou art a Christian, thou art a law to thyself; thou hast not only a law without thee, (the word of God,) but a law within thee, and so dardest not transgress. Thy double hedge may well prevent thy wandering. Alas! what do those unruly beasts get, whom no fence can keep in, but a more

speedy slaughter! It is said of an unrighteous man, 'his own counsel shall cast him out,' Job xviii. 7. Unjust men think by their craft to cast others down, but their own counsel will cast themselves out. Out! out of what? Out of their houses; for such dwellings are built upon powder, and a spark of wrath sooner or later will blow them up, Ps. xxxvii. 9, 10. Out of their lands and possessions, for some providence or other (as Flavius Vespasianus served his prowling officers) will press such sponges hard, and squeeze out all their impure water which they have so greedily sucked in.¹ Out of their shops and all earthly comforts; for such wealth is but like the flesh which the eagle fetcheth from the altar with a coal in it, which fires and consumes the whole nest, Hab. ii. 9. And, which is worst of all, their counsel will at last cast them out of heaven; God himself hath locked the gate of bliss against them, and with all their craft and counsel they shall not be able to pick it open: 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' It was a true saying of Bishop Latimer, when one told him the cutler had cozened him, in making him pay as much more for his knife as it was worth. No, saith he, he hath not cozened me, but his own conscience. That knife cut deep into the poor cutler's soul, and made wider gaps than he was aware of. Oh, how foolish is man to conceive that by fraud he shall keep himself up, when God himself saith that his own counsel shall cast him down!

Reader, if thou art one that, like Balaam, lovest the wages of unrighteousness, bethink thyself speedily; for thy wealth, unjustly gotten, will, like Achan's wedge of gold, cleave thy soul in sunder. Righteousness in thy works must appear both in buying and in selling.

Be righteous in buying. Take heed lest thou layest out thy money to purchase endless misery. Some have bought places to bury their bodies in, but more have bought those commodities which have swallowed up their souls. Injustice in buying is a canker which will eat up and waste the most durable wares. An unjust chapman, like Phocion, payeth for that poison which kills him, and buyeth his own bane. A true Christian will, in buying as well as selling, use a conscience. Augustine relates a story of an histrionical mountebank, who, to gain spectators, promised, if they would come the next day, he would tell them what every one's heart desired. When they all flocked about him at the time appointed,

¹ Quod quasi et siccos madefaceret, et exprimeret humentes; because he did advance and wet them well when dry, and press them hard when wet.—*Tacit.*

expecting the performance of his word, he told them, This is the desire of every of your hearts, to sell dear and buy cheap; but it is a sign he was an empiric by the falseness of his bill, for a good man would buy as dear as he selleth. His buying and selling are like two scales, that hang in an equal poise.

In buying do not work either upon the ignorance or the poverty of the seller. Do not take advantage by the seller's ignorance. This would be as bad as to lead the blind out of the way: 1 Thes. iv. 6, 'Let no man go beyond, or overreach another in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.' Mark, reader, those that overreach men are within the reach of a sin-revenging God. Some persons will boast of their going beyond others in bargains, but they have more cause to bewail it, unless they could go beyond the line of God's power and anger. It is an ordinary saying, but sinful, a man may buy as cheap as he can. Augustine tells us,¹ a certain man (himself I suppose he meaneth) was offered a book by an unskilful stationer, at a price not half the worth of it; he took the book, but gave him the just price, according to its full value. Sure I am, those wares which are half bought, through a cunning chapman's outwitting the silly tradesman, are half stolen: 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth,' Prov. xx. 14, but hath more reason to weep, for his subtle words, how cheap soever he buyeth, will make it a hard pennyworth in the end. He makes the best market that, like holy David, payeth the full just price: 'Nay, (saith he of Ornan's threshing-floor,) but I will buy it for the full price,' 1 Chron. xxi. 22, 24. Ahab never bought a dearer purchase than Naboth's vineyard, for which he paid not one penny.

Do not work upon the seller's poverty. This is to grind the faces of the poor, and great oppression. It is no mean sin in many rich citizens, who take advantage on the necessity of poor tradesmen. The poor man must sell, or his family starve; the rich man knoweth it, and will buy but at such a rate that the other, with all his labour, shall not earn his own bread. God made the rich to relieve, but these (I must be bold to say) rob the poor. It is an ill way for any to raise themselves higher in the world, by trampling poor men under their feet. God hath sometimes made their houses, as high and as firm as they were, to fall down upon their heads, who have thus sucked out the blood of poor men's hearts. Some will tell us, they do no wrong herein; for if poor men will not take their money,

¹ *Justum pretium, quod multo amplius erat, necopinanti dedit.*—*Aug. De Trin.*, lib. xii. cap. 3.

they may let it alone ; they do not force them. Reader, if thy soul be dyed with this crimson sin, I shall only ask thee this question, Is this to love thy neighbour as thyself ? If thou hadst a wife and several small children, and the providence of God had called thee to this poor man's condition, wouldst thou be contented to work hard a whole week, and when thou wast compelled to sell thy wares to buy food for thy family, to receive (the money for materials deducted) but sixpence or twelvepence for all thy pains ? Let thy own conscience be judge in this case. Is not this for men to live like fish, the greater devouring the lesser ? I have heard a country mercer say (who is now in heaven) that several times, when poor men have brought lace, or ribands, or other ware to him, he hath tried how low he could beat the price, and because of their necessities, he hath brought them to allow their commodities for less than the very materials cost them ; but after he had so done, he durst not but give them a just, equitable price ; his conscience would not suffer him to make them suffer, because their poverty necessitated them to sell. And truly, where men act otherwise, though their consciences may be quiet, because asleep, yet they have no true rest, and the time will come that conscience will awake to their woe. When some of the Jews had bought lands and vineyards of their brethren at an under rate, they being forced to mortgage them to get bread, Nehemiah rebukes them severely for working upon others' extremity, and desires God to shake every man out of his possession who did not make restitution, Neh. v. 2-4, 12, 13. Such wealth to a man, is like Jonah to the whale ; though he swallow it down, yet he will find it too hard a morsel to digest, and have no ease till he hath it restored, and vomited it up again.

Be righteous in thy payments. Pay what thou agreest, and pay it in good money.

Pay what thou contractest for. If thou buyest wares with an intention not to pay, thou stealest them ; and truly such wealth will melt away like wax before the sun. Such ill-gotten goods will, as commodities in a damp cellar, moulder and come to nothing. He that hath any such riches, saith Chrysostom, must speedily away with it, or else he locketh up a thief in his counting-house, which will carry all away, and, if he look not the better to it, his precious soul also. He is notoriously unrighteous, that, like the harpy, (which hath its name in Hebrew from injustice,) seizeth upon all he can meet with as prey. Mark, reader, how pious honest Jacob was in this particular ; when the patriarchs had bought corn in Egypt, and given their money to them that sold it, yet when

upon their return he found the money in their sacks : 'Take (saith he) the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hands: peradventure it was an oversight,' Gen. xliii. 12. How many would have concealed the money, stopped the mouth of their consciences with the first payment, and have kept it now as lawful prize ; but Jacob's conscience was more tender-mouthed.

Let thy payments be in good money. It is treason against the king to make bad money, and it is treason against the King of kings knowingly to pay brass money. If thou dischargest thy debt in adulterate coin, thou contractest a greater debt on thy soul, and defilest thy conscience. He that putteth God off with false service, is a spiritual hypocrite ; he that puts men off with false silver, is a civil hypocrite. Such a man's conscience is farther from being current than his coin. 'And Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant,' Gen. xxiii. 16. He that makes light payments may well expect heavy judgments.

SECTION III.

Be righteous in selling. Be careful, whilst thou sellest thy wares to men, that thou dost not therewith sell thy soul to Satan. Believe it, thou wilt follow thy calling to sad purpose, if thou foregoest thine inward peace for a little outward profit.

Be righteous in the substance of what thou sellest, and that in regard of its quality and quantity.

In regard of its quality: put not bad ware for good into any man's hand. God can see the rottenness of thy stuffs, and heart too, under thy false glosses, and for all thy false lights. Thou sayest, *caveat emptor*, let the buyer beware ; but God saith, *caveat venditor*, let the seller be careful that he keep a good conscience. To sell men what is full of flaws and defective, for what is sound and sufficient, will make a greater flaw in thy conscience than thou art aware of. If thou partest with thy goods and thy honesty together, though for a great sum, thou wilt be but a poor gainer. Thou wilt ask, possibly, whether every man be bound to reveal the faults of what he selleth, supposing that he knoweth them. I answer, That every man is bound, either to discover them, or else to take no more for his wares or beasts than they are worth, at a market-price, with those defects. It is clear that it is sinful to use

tricks and arts to hide those faults from the eyes of the chapman ; for such deeds are done purposely to deceive. I would also know reader, whether thou dealest herein as thou wouldst willingly be dealt with. Wouldst thou be glad to pay double, or half as much more, as a commodity is worth ?

Be righteous in the substance of what thou sellest, in regard of its quantity. We have a common saying, Weight and measure, are heaven's treasure. It is certain, 'A false balance is abomination to the Lord ; a just weight is his delight,' Prov. xi. 1. 'The righteous Lord hateth unrighteousness, but his countenance beholdeth the just.' They wrong themselves most who rob others of their right ; he hatcheth a cockatrice egg, who sits brooding on ill-gotten goods, and, like Agrippina to Nero, bringeth forth and gives life to that which will be his death. The jealous God is very punctual in this particular : "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have ; I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt,' Lev. xix. 35, 36. God is pleased to count up all in his command, that they might not have the least colour of excuse for cozening in anything. Nay, he loatheth so much false weights and measures in their hands, that he will not allow them to be in their houses : 'Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thy house diverse measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have,' Deut. xxv. 13-15. Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights ; in the Hebrew it is a stone and a stone, because the Jews did not make their weights of iron or lead, or any metal that would canker and wax too light, but they made them of the clear stony rock, or of glass.¹ They might not have an unjust weight or measure in their houses, because some, not knowing them to be defective, might use them, and deceive others.

The face of Ephraim's sin was visible, under all the masks which he used to hide it : 'He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand : he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance ; in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin,' Hosea xii. 7, 8. Here is,

1. His calling, that was honourable : 'He is a merchant.' When some accused a young gentleman for staining his family by his

¹ Maimon. Treatise of Theft, cap. 7.

employment, and dishonouring the noble house of which he descended, Apollonius stood forth in his defence: Ye talk, saith he, of a dangerous trade, and truly, such is the life of merchants; they travel into foreign parts, run great hazards, make many ill bargains, and sometimes are bought and sold themselves, and all this they venture to serve their country, and ought they not to be highly esteemed? Ephraim was a merchant; but how unsuitable were his practices to his high and honourable profession; for observe,

2. His cozenage, that was abominable: 'The balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress.' When a buyer comes for a commodity, he weigheth it out fairly in the balance, but he hath a deceitful bag of weights, or a deceitful beam. He dares not cozen openly for shame, but he doth covertly, with the sleights and mysteries of his calling; but to rob by fraud, in a shop or warehouse, is as bad as to rob by force upon the road. Both are thieves, and the former, in some respects, the greater, as more dissembling in their dealings, and more frequent in their thefts. These cheats that do it cunningly, as rabbits, making holes under ground, and so think themselves secure, will at last be ferreted out and slain.

3. His case and cover of his sin: 'I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labour they shall find none iniquity,'—as if his riches did prove him to be righteous, and his prosperity had argued him free from all impiety. Whereas God suffereth many, like ravenous birds, to build their nests on high with stolen materials, intending at last, by some fierce blast of providence, to bring them down, and destroy the whole brood. Thieves seldom find joy in their new purchases, but never stability. Geese, say some, if they chance to take hold of a root with their bill, they will bite and pull so long to have it, that many times they break their necks before they leave their hold. So unjust men, by their greediness to enrich, usually ruin themselves; such goods are like the fox which Plutarch mentions the Lacedæmonian boy to have stolen, and rather than he would be discovered, put it into his breeches, but it quickly did tear out his bowels.

Be righteous in the manner of thy selling. The seller may not exact upon the buyer's necessity, but sell by the rule of equity. I am not bound to sell cheap, because I buy cheap; neither may I sell dear, because I buy dear. Not my buying or selling, so much as the price of the market, should be my standard. Though I conceive a market rate to be most righteous, yet it is wicked, by keeping in commodities, to raise the market: 'He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him,' Prov. xi. 26. Such a man, like a

corrupt, imposthumated member, would draw all the nourishment to himself, and cares not though the other parts of the body perish ; but the people shall curse him. This oak, which will suffer no small trees to thrive near it, will in time fall with the breath of so many curses. Probably you would know whether a tradesman, that knoweth such and such commodities will fall very much, by letters which mention several ships coming home laden with them, or some other way, may not sell off his own wares at the present price, and hide his news from his country customers. Reader, I shall answer it with a question not much unlike it in a heathen author,¹ expecting that Christians should not be excelled by heathen. A man brings a ship of corn from Alexandria to Rhodes, saith Cicero, in a time of great famine ; he may have for it what price he pleaseth. He knoweth of many more ships which will be there the next day ; may he conceal this from the Rhodians ? No, saith the orator ; and what sayest thou, reader ?

In all thy contracts, purchases, and sales, cast an eye upon that golden rule, mentioned by our Saviour, Mat. vii. 12, 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.' This is the royal law, the golden rule, the king's highway, and the standard of all righteousness. Whatsoever, in a well-ordered judgment, thou wouldst have others do to thee and thine, do the same to them and theirs, supposing conditions alike ; for this is the sum and epitome of all that is delivered in the law and the prophets concerning thy carriage towards others. Jerome commended this saying to a holy woman, to be written on her heart, as an abridgment of all righteousness. Lactantius saith, It is the root and foundation of all equity. Severus the emperor had often this saying in his mouth, and caused it to be proclaimed by the crier as often as he punished a soldier for injuring any other.² It is very profitable for a Christian, in his dealings with others, to make frequent appeals to his own conscience. Would I be dealt thus with, were I as this man is, or as this woman ? Would I be willing to have this measure measured to me or mine ? Would I be glad to be served so as I serve others ? Is this to love my neighbour as myself ? Reader, such serious soliloquies may prevent much unrighteousness. Though charity begins at home in regard of order, yet not in regard of time ; for a man no sooner loves himself aright, but he loves his neighbour as himself. That proverb came from the devil, Every man for himself, and God for us all. For God saith, ' Let no man

¹ Tull., De Offic.

² Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris.—Sever.

seek his own, but every man another's wealth,' 1 Cor. x. 24. And again, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' Gal. v. 24. He is but a beast that preyeth for himself alone. Inanimate creatures are beneficial to others. Fire, air, earth, water, are all serviceable to others besides, and more than to themselves. How soon would the frame of nature be dissolved, if everything should be confined within the narrow compass of self. Water moveth downward, fire upward naturally; yet both will cross their own nature to prevent a vacuum, and preserve the universe.

Besides, I must tell thee that the subject's house, as well as the king's throne, is preserved by righteousness. That speech of Nevesan the lawyer is contrary to Scripture: He that will not venture his body, shall never be valiant; and he that will not venture his soul, shall never be rich. Righteousness, not robbery, is the way to riches. He goeth the farthest way about that endeavours to increase his strength by sucking others' blood, or to get an estate by injustice. Nay, he takes a contrary course; for he pulls down on his head the divine curse, which, like a hectic fever, will cause an irrecoverable consumption of all his comforts, both temporal and spiritual. Such treasures and owners are like the Canaanites to the land; the land will groan till it spue them out: 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,' Prov. x. 2. Observe, reader,

1. The excellency of these comforts in themselves. They are treasures—that is, heaps of outward good things. The word includeth a multitude, for one or two will not make a treasure; and a multitude of precious things, for a heap of sand, or coals, or dust, is not a treasure; but of silver or gold, or some excellent earthly things. It is here in the plural, treasures, noting the greatest confluence of worldly comforts. Note,

2. The impiety of the owners: they are treasures of wickedness. The purchasers got them by sinful practices. They were brought into his house slyly at some back-door. He was both the receiver and the thief. Treasures of wickedness, because gotten by wicked ways, and employed to wicked ends. There is an English proverb, which too many Englishmen have made good, That which is got over the devil's back, is usually spent under the devil's belly. When sin is the parent that begets riches, it many times hath this recompense, that they are wholly at its service and command.

3. The vanity of those treasures: they profit nothing. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing. They are unable to cheer the mind, to cure the diseases of the body, much less to heal the wounds of the soul, or to bribe the flames of hell. Alas! they are so far

from profiting, that they are infinitely prejudicial. Such powder-masters are blown up with their own ware. These loads sink the bearers into the unquenchable lake. The philosopher¹ tells us of the sea-mew, or sea-eagle, (called in Greek *ἀλκίετος*, because she seeketh for her prey in the waters,) that she will often seize on her prey, though it be more than she can bear, and falleth down headlong with it into the deep, and so perisheth. This fowl is a fit emblem of the unrighteous person; for he graspeth those heavy possessions which press him down into the pit of perdition: 'They that will be rich (that resolve on it, whether God will or no, and by any means, whether right or wrong) fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. 'They that will be rich.' Men that scrape an estate together unjustly are frequently said in the word of God to get it in haste—'To make haste to be rich'—because such will not stay God's time, nor wait in his way till he send them in wealth, but must have it presently, and care not though it be unrighteously. But, as we say, matches made in haste are repented at leisure; so, truly, riches got in haste are often lamented for ever. It is most true here, The more haste, the less speed. Food hastily eaten is seldom so well digested as what is eaten leisurely. 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He that maketh haste to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him,' Prov. xxviii. 20, 22. Sometimes God suffereth a cruel hand to pluck the stolen feathers of this unclean bird, and then he is left bare whilst he liveth. Sometimes he is hurried away in the prime and pride of his age to hell, from his goods which he got in haste: as the lizard's eggs are hatched in six months, and yet the old one never liveth to see them, saith the naturalist.

Fair and softly goes far. None thrive so well as those that stay God's leisure, and expect wealth in his way.² Titus Vespasian stamped in his coin a dolphin and an anchor, with this impress, *Sat cito, si sat bene*, Soon enough, if well enough. A dolphin outstrips the ship, that is soon enough; and an anchor stayeth the ship, that is well enough. So both together make soon enough, if well enough. And of this prince it is reported, *Abstulit alieno si quis unquam*; if ever any was free from injuring others, he was the man. None are more guilty of unrighteousness than those

¹ Arist. Hist. Animal, ix. cap. 24.

² *Festina lente. Illud adagium arridebat duobus imperatoribus facile laudatissimis.—Aug. and Eras. Adag.*

that huddle up riches in haste. They are most harmless who are contented to live in hope, and to wait patiently on God. That wealth which is gotten well enough, is gotten soon enough. All other is worse than an abortive birth, that comes before the time. That fruit which is soon ripe will be soon rotten. 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed,' Prov. xx. 21. As honey, over-liberally eaten, though it be sweet and pleasant at first, yet afterwards, causeth strange vomitings and sad gripings in the stomach and belly; so an estate over-hastily gotten, though it may cause a smile in thy countenance, and rejoice thy carnal part at the beginning, yet will afterwards cause dreadful gripings in thy conscience, be a vulture gnawing at thy heart, and its latter end be cursed to thee and thine. I have read of a philosopher who bought a pair of shoes upon trust, the shoemaker dieth, the Pythagorean rejoiceth, and thinks his shoes clear gains; but a while after, his conscience twitches him, and will allow him no rest, because of his robbery. He repairs to the house of the dead, and casts in his money, saying, There, take thy due. Thou livest to me, though dead to all besides. He that carrieth such luggage on his back all day, must expect to find his conscience galled to purpose at night.

O friend, take heed of setting thine inestimable soul to sale for a little corruptible silver. If it will not profit thee to gain the whole world and lose thy own soul, surely it will not advantage thee to gain a small pittance of it, and lose thy soul. Thou rakest, and runnest, and it may be cozenest and cheatest, to leave thy child a considerable estate. I must tell thee, thy son is little beholden to thee for leaving him a gay knife to cut his throat with; a gaudy suit with the plague in it; a great, stately dwelling haunted with devils; a large portion with the curse of God. No man in his wits would give one hair of his head to be made thine heir, wert thou worth thousands. The devil himself, though he will thank thee for getting it so unjustly, yet he would not thank thee if thou shouldst bequeath him all thy ill-gotten goods. No; he doth not love the curse of God so well. Thou wouldst shew thyself a more loving father in leaving thy son a bottle and a basket, to beg with from door to door, than the greatest heap of such riches.

Besides, what comfort will it be to thee, for thy son to live in honour, and bathe himself in carnal pleasure, with that wealth which thou hast unjustly scraped together, when thou art frying in unquenchable flames for thy injustice. Thy children are rejoicing with thy silver, and the devils are revelling with thy soul at the

same season. Canst thou think that the contentment of thy posterity will in the least abate thy torments? It may be thou pleasest thyself with an intention of giving somewhat in thy will to the poor, and so to pay thy debts to God with the devil's goods, with that coin which hath the image and superscription of the prince of darkness on it; and art thou so mad as to think that it will be acceptable? I tell thee, God hates robbery for a sacrifice, and thy stolen goods for a burnt-offering, Isa. lxi. 8. The great sultan, as giddy as he was with the noisome fumes of Mahomet's Alchoran, was yet so well in his wits as to tell his bashaw, who persuaded him to build an hospital with the wealth he had unjustly taken from the Persian merchants, That to dispose his money to relieve the poor would not please God; but to restore it to the right owners would be acceptable. Will a king thank that man who robs his honest subjects of a hundred pound upon the road, and then thinks to make amends by paying half-a-crown out of it towards his service. Thou canst not groundedly hope that thy unrighteousness should be remitted, until thy mammon of unrighteousness be restored by the law of God, as well as of men. Debts must be paid first, and then legacies; justice must be first minded, and then charity. It may be thou cheerest thy heart with the thoughts of an honourable burial. It delights thee to think, how, when thy will is open, people will applaud thee for the large provision thou makest therein for thy children; with what a great company thou shalt be attended to thy grave; and what a costly monument shall be erected to thy memory. Well, since thou art so much joyed with a curious tomb, I shall take the pains to write thine epitaph, and if thou hast a spark of true love to thy soul, thou wilt think of it whilst thou livest, Here lies interred one that, to make his children gentlemen on earth for a few days, made himself a beggar in hell to all eternity. He was one that, to gain a little earthly treasure, of which he hath now taken an everlasting farewell, sold his precious soul, and the endless, blissful fruition of the blessed God. Did ever fool buy so dear, or sell so cheap? Oh, look on him, and learn to be righteous.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, Be righteous in thy words and expressions, as well as in thy works. The Christian's tongue should be his heart's interpreter, and reveal its mind and meaning; and the Christian's hand should justify his tongue, by turning his words into deeds. Though

the right Christian is not a worshipper of Mercury, to whom tongues were only offered in sacrifice, yet with the Athenians he doth speak well, as with the Lacedæmonians do well. The burgess of the new Jerusalem is known by this livery: 'He walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not,' Ps. xv. 2, 4.

First, He speaketh the truth in his heart. His speech is the genuine and natural offspring of his heart; there is a great resemblance between the child and the parent. That language, which is confused, and not to be understood, speaks not a citizen of Sion, but a builder of Babel or Babylon. When the words are spurious, and not the heart's own, like Abimelech, they destroy the family of which they descend; sometimes that tongue cuts the owner's throat: 'The getting of treasure by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death,' Prov. xxi. 6. The deceitful tongue seeketh death, though not intentionally, yet eventually. The saint's words and thoughts are univocal, they speak as they think, and are like clarified honey, clear to the bottom; his heart is the mine, his mind frameth the matter, and his tongue is the shop that exposeth it to public view.

Secondly, He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. His hand will make good his lawful promises, how much soever they shall be to his prejudice. There is a symmetry between his hand and his tongue; he is slow to promise, not hasty to enter into bonds, but being once engaged he will be sure to perform. He dares not falsify his word, knowing that his God was an ear-witness.

It was the saying of Lysander, that if the lion's skin would not serve (to cozen with) the fox's must be sewed to it; and that children were to be deceived with toys, and men with oaths; but this fox himself was at last taken in a trap, and slain at the foot of the Theban walls. The justice of God will some time or other seize upon such unjust men; false conceptions are as dangerous to the souls of men as to the bodies of women.

The Romans built a temple to the goddess Fidelity, and offered sacrifice to her image, so highly did they esteem of faithfulness. Attilius Regulus, their general against the Carthaginians, being taken prisoner and sent to Rome with conditions of peace, upon his word to return, if the terms were not accepted, judging the conditions dishonourable, he dissuaded the Romans from embracing them, and went back to his enemies according to his promise, though he knew beforehand, that upon his return they would pre-

sently put him to death.¹ The prisoner that got from Hannibal by eluding his oath, was by the senate apprehended and sent back again, saith Livy. *Attica fides*, was free or sure hold; and *Atticus testis*, one that keeps touch, because the Athenians were so faithful to their words. What a shame is it then for Christians to regard their promises and oaths no more than their old clothes, which they throw by, when they have made what use of them they desire. Such men do much wound their credit, (that after a little knowledge of such *Nullifidians* none will trust them,) but much more their consciences. The deceitful and bloody are joined together, Ps. v. 6. He that is deceitful to others is bloody to himself; he may raise others' skin, but he wrongs his own soul, and draweth his own heart-blood. Machiavel, as bad as he was, would not allow fraud to lodge save in soldiers' tents.²

The jealous God hath made himself known to be a God of truth in accomplishing his threatenings on those that have affirmed and attested such lies. One Ann Averies, widow, (in the days of Queen Elizabeth,) having bought six pound of tow in a shop in Wood Street, falsely said that she had paid for it, and swore to it; but she presently fell down and died, to the terror of all such unrighteous and perjured persons. The trade indeed of lying hath crept almost into all trades, as if it were the only way to get a livelihood, when it hath deprived some of their lives, Acts v. 7, 8. A lying tongue is one of the six things which the Lord hates, Prov. vi. 17. The Scripture speaks of such persons, that their own tongues shall fall upon them, meaning to destroy them, as Benaiah fell on Joab, and David's soldier on the Amalekite; for so the phrase is frequently taken, Ps. lxiv. 8; 1 Kings ii. 29, 30; 2 Sam. i. 15.

Reader, Be so true to thy own soul as to put away lying, and to speak the truth to thy neighbour, Eph. iv. 25. Do not delude thyself with mental reservations, or Jesuitical equivocation, but let thy words and thoughts join in concert. A Christian should be like crystal, the same all over, and visible throughout. As our clothes represent the proportion of our bodies, so should our words the proportion of our minds. It was an unpolitic precept which Louis the Eleventh of France gave his son, when he charged him to learn no more Latin than what would teach him to dissemble. Deceit is a gin that men set often to catch serpents, which, when they have caught, sting themselves. Cleomenes, king of Lacedæmonia, who, making truce with the Argives for seven days, and fell upon their

¹ Tul. de Offic.

² Usus fraudis in bello gerendo laudabilis, in aliis actionibus detestabilis.—*Machiav.*

quarters in the night, was repelled by the Argive women, and afterwards banished into Egypt, where he miserably slew himself. Promises are, as it were, the connexion and ligaments of the several parts in the body politic ; if they be once broken asunder and loosed, the whole will quickly be dissolved. Such men are like to some fruits, which by their luscious smell, and delightful colour, invite a man to eat, but prove unsavoury and unwholesome. He that had only nature's moonlight to see by, could say, *Perditissimi est hominis, fallere eum, qui læsus non esset, nisi credidisset* ; none but the most villainous will deceive him, who had been safe if he had not trusted, saith Cicero.

Thy righteousness must extend to all, according to their several places and relations. That righteousness which is real, will be universal. 'Render, therefore, to all their due : tribute to whom tribute is due : custom to whom custom : fear to whom fear : honour to whom honour,' Rom. xiii. 7. He that is just in his actions, hath a due respect to all persons, whether superiors, or equals, or inferiors. He who is righteous to his fellow-subjects, and wrongs his sovereign in his custom or tribute, is a rebel against the crown and dignity of Jesus Christ. He is undutiful to the king of nations, who payeth not his due to the king of that nation in which he liveth. Render, saith Christ, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Jerome, on that place, doth well observe, that the name of Cæsar is not proper, but appellative, because from the first Roman emperor, Julius Cæsar, all his successors were so called. Hereby Christ intimates that tribute belongs to every person clothed with the supreme power. And Gerrhard, in his Harmony, saith, that our Saviour doth particularly in that text understand Tiberius, that monster of men, enjoining payment of tribute to that persecuting prince. How great, then, is their crime, who cheat a king that is a Christian ! Such unnatural members must expect to fare the worse for impoverishing their head. The wealth of a political father, is both a credit and support to his children. If the root be kept without water, the branches must needs wither.

The ancients emblem'd a just man by one with a pair of balances in one hand, a sword in another, and both his eyes shut, to dispense impartially to all justice, both commutative and distributive ; a magistrate must distribute justice to every one alike. He may see a difference in causes, but no difference in persons. When righteousness reigneth, it is said to run down like water, and as a mighty stream, Amos v. 24. Now water is as free for the poor as

the rich, the stream runs down by the meanest cottage as much as by the prince's court. Righteousness must be as common as water, as universal as a stream: 'David reigned over all Israel, and executed justice and judgment to all his people,' 2 Sam. viii. 15. His righteousness was as large as his realm; to all his people.

SECTION V.

Secondly, As to the manner of thy dealings, thy duty is to be courteous as well as righteous. Some men soil the lustre of their justice, and hinder the honour it might bring to the gospel, by the crabbedness of their carriage. A rugged, unhewn piece of timber disgraceth, when a neat, smooth one crediteth the building. One end of our dealings with men (as I shall shew by and by) must be to gain them to mind godliness, which end will be much furthered by an affable conversation. Men delight not to walk in rugged ways, nor to deal with rugged men. As curious flowers draw the eyes, and rare music the ears, so doth courtesy allure the hearts of men after it. He that pleaseth all men in all things (indifferent) is the likeliest to save some, 1 Cor. x. 33. It was the affable carriage of Titus, amongst other things, which made him the delight of mankind. It is said of Julius Cæsar that he overcame their affections by his humanity, whose persons he had before subdued by his power and policy.¹ He gloried in nothing so much as in pardoning his enemies, and gratifying his friends, saith Augustine.² They who durst speak to Cæsar, saith Marius, were ignorant of his greatness, and they which durst not, were ignorant of his goodness. We may gain their love by soft words, who would hate us if we went about to ravish them, or to lay violent hands on them. Alexander won the love of his soldiers by calling them fellow-footmen. Courtesy, like the loadstone, will draw even iron to it. Pharaoh, a heathen, was full of courtesy, and, though a king, condescended much in his carriage towards Jacob. Abraham is noted not only for his faith in God and holiness, but also for his discreet familiarity and affable behaviour towards men, Gen. xlvii. 8, 9, and xxiii. 7. Our blessed Saviour is therefore said to come eating and drinking, because of the sweetness and attractiveness of his conversation. This Lord of glory, in all his converses, had a comely and winning grace. They who are truly noble are ever affable. Those that, like the Persian, keep up state, are but, according to the French dialect (of their

¹ Benignitate adeo præditus, ut quos armis subegerat, elementia magis vicerit. — *Solin.*

² Augustine, Epist. 5.

haughty upstarts) gentle villains. Contempt or arrogancy is a weed that ever groweth in dunghills. It is from the rankness of the soil that it hath its height and haughtiness. They are but windy spirits that bubble thus above others; it is the froth only that gets always to the top of the water.

It is a divine command, 'be courteous,' 1 Pet. iii. 8; the word signifieth friendly-minded, studious to do such things as are grateful to others.¹ Obedience to this command is cheap, and costeth nothing, which whosoever denieth will certainly never obey those precepts which will put him to charge. He who denieth men a good look, will not at God's call lay down his life for the gospel.

The Romans, because they would not have any defrauded of civil respect, retained admonitors, called *nomenclatores*, who should suggest the name and quality of every one they encountered, that so he might be saluted in a conformable style.

We read in Scripture frequently of salutations sent to and from the saints, Rom. xvi. God never intended that when men put on Christianity they should put off civility.² Those Quakers who, like idols, have eyes, and see not, mouths, and speak not, are so far from being invested, above others, as they pretend, with the divine nature, that they are even divested of the human nature. The very Turks' salutation to him they meet is, *Salaum aleek*, Peace be to thee; and the reply is, *Aleek salaum*, To thee be peace also.³ When Boaz came into his field, 'The Lord be with you,' saith he to his reapers; 'The Lord bless thee,' say they to him, Ruth ii. 4. Indeed, Christ commands his disciples, 'Salute no man,' Luke x. 4. But the occasion of this prohibition is considerable. The disciples were sent about business of importance and expedition; and the salutations Christ speaks of, are in the nature of those which we call compliments, a filling up of precious time with needless toys and trifles. As if Christ had said, Your work is of weight, and requires haste, do not therefore loiter by standing to talk with any by the way, but mind your business. It is not intended by a master who gives his servant such a charge, that therefore he must not put off his hat, or bid any good-morrow, or ask their neighbours how they do, for ever after. The same law-giver doth command

¹ φιλόφρων, comis, affabilis, humanus, et ad vitæ consuetudinem facilis commodusque.—*Eras.* Tanquam ὁ τὰ φίλα φρενῶν, Qui sapit amica, i.e., Qui studet facere ea quæ alteri sunt amica et grata.

² Comitas (alias dicta humanitas, affabilitas) est virtus in conversatione mediocritatem servans, ne quis juste offendatur.—*Prator.*, p. 2; *Theat. Eth.*, sect. 13.

³ Blunt's Voyage.

salutations by his own mouth: 'Into what house ye enter, say, Peace be to this house,' Luke x. 5, 6; and also commends it to us by his ministers, 1 Cor. xvi.; Col. iv. 10, 14. We may not bid them God-speed, whom we see employed about the devil's designs, lest we be partakers of their evil deeds; but if we know not their actions to be bad, our charity must hope the best. He that hath but common humanity must needs be a civilian. Though nature be a crab stock, yet if she be but grafted by education, this will be part of her sweet fruit.

3. As thy duty is to be righteous and courteous, so also to be meek in thy dealings with men. Courtesy is a good servant, to wait upon meekness as its master. Both together are no small credit to a professor. He that is highest in godliness is fullest of meekness. The purest gold is soonest melted, and they are usually the best blades that will bend well. The lion of Judah for courage, was a lamb for condescension. The saint must learn of his Saviour to be meek and lowly in heart. The passionate man is one of Lucifer's disciples, and followeth him in his fall from heaven. This meekness (I speak of it in relation to man as its object) is a virtue by which we moderate our passions, and keep them in subjection, lest we should wrong our neighbours. Patience is sister to meekness, and humility is its mother.¹ The passions of our minds are like the winds in the air; if they lie still, the ship must lie still too, or at least make but small speed; if they be too boisterous, they endanger the dashing the vessel upon a rock, or casting it upon the quicksands; but when they blow moderately, between a still calm and a violent storm, they are most helpful to the mariners. Our affections are of no use if they be suffered to sleep, and do not rise at all; for then, though the name of God himself be shot at, they will not hear the murdering piece. Such meekness is worse than mopishness. God did not give the soul these wings in vain.

On the other side, if our affections are tempestuous, and rise too high, they threaten to overturn both ourselves and our neighbours. A passionate man is, like the torrid zone, too hot for any to deal with him, or to dwell near him. The work therefore of meekness is to keep the affections within their bounds; so to moderate this fire that it may warm, not flame out to burn itself and others. He that

¹ Mansuetudo est virtus quæ mediocritatem servat circa iram.—*Golius.*, lib. iv.; *Eth.*, cap. 5. Mansuetudo est virtus quæ hominem ita tractabilem facit in communi conversatione, ut non præter æquum et bonum exasperetur aliorum ineptiis, morositatibus et peccatis levioribus etiam in suam injuriam tendentibus.—*Dav. in Col.* iii. 12.

is inebriated with passion is unfit for any action; like Samson's foxes, he scattereth firebrands abroad, to the hurt of all that are near him. Alexander, in his anger, flies upon his best friend; Parmenio himself must perish by that wild fire; Cato's best emperor was he *qui potuit imperare affectus*, that could keep his own passions in subjection. When one said he was a wise king that was kind to his friends, and sharp to his enemies; another said, he was a wiser prince, that could retain his friends in love, and make his enemies like them. The Spirit of God gives us a mark to know a wise and noble man by: 'Who is a wise man and indued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom,' James iii. 13.

Two particulars offer themselves to our view out of this verse.

1. That meekness is a sign of a wise man. The world counts them only the brave spirits, that scorn to suffer the least affront, and who will repay a single injury with double interest; but these in God's accounts are fools. What a fool is he that suffereth (his passion) that which should be his servant to become his master, and to tyrannise over him? What a fool is he that, perceiving a musket discharged, will not stoop a little, or fall down a while to avoid the bullet, but keep his place and height to the loss of his life? Truly, such a fool is he that will never yield to another's wrath. Is not he a fool that, seeing a fire in his neighbour's house, anger in his neighbour's heart, is so far from helping to quench it by the water of mildness, that he throweth more fuel on it, and increaseth its flame, even to the burning down of his own? is not he a fool that ventureth his inestimable soul at every trifling cast, and runneth headlong upon the greatest hazards? Surely it is not without reason the wise man speaks so often of a fool's wrath, and that anger resteth in the bosom of fools, Prov. xxvii. 3, and xvii. 12, &c. 'A wise man deferreth his anger, lest it burn with too hot a flame,' Prov. xxix. 11. He will draw back the brands, lest the fire exceeding its bounds should consume him. How many have been thrown, nay, utterly overthrown, by laying the reins upon the neck of their brutish passions, when their persons would have been safe, had but their passions been curbed! Charles the Sixth, king of France, was mad for anger and desire of revenge on the Duke of Brittany. Excess of wrath cost Ajax his life, if the poet may be believed.¹ Sylla, in the height of fury, vomited up his blood and his breath together, saith the historian.² When such winds blow, they raise black and dark clouds. A furious man hath few friends; like Ish-

¹ Ovid, *Metamor.*

² Plutarch.

mael, his hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him. The heron's name in Hebrew signifieth to be angry, and it is observed scarce any fowl hath so many foes; the eagle preyeth upon her, the fox catcheth her in the night, the hawk destroyeth her eggs. How foolish is the bee, that loseth her life and her sting together! she puts another to a little pain, but how dearly doth she pay for it!

The greatest conquest is to overcome ourselves, and the vilest bondage to be our own slaves, Prov. xvi. 32. He that is most mild, is most manly. It sullied the glory of all Cæsar's valour and victories, that he was his own vassal.¹ It is the glory of a man to pass by offences. Those dogs which were presented to Alexander, by the king of Albany, were counted the best in the world, and upon this account, because they were so noble as not to stir at all, when small beasts were brought to encounter them;² and through an overflowing of courage would never fight, save with lions and elephants. Those men, without question, are far from true worth, and most ignoble, who upon every supposed petty wrong, fly to the common law, or civil war, for revenge.³ By the laws of England, a nobleman hath this privilege, that he cannot be bound to the peace, because it is supposed that a noble person will scorn to engage himself in quarrels, but keep the peace without a bond. It is the base and vile bramble, the fruit of the earth's curse, that teareth and renteth what is next it.⁴

Plutarch reports of a falling out between two famous philosophers, Aristippus and Æschines, and how, after some time, Aristippus went to Æschines, saying, Shall we not be friends before we be a table-talk to all the town? Yea, with all my heart, saith Æschines. Remember then, saith Aristippus, that though I am your elder, yet I sued for peace. True, replied the other, I acknowledge you the better and worthier man; for I began the strife, but you the peace. In this pagan glass, many Christians may see their own deformities; for even heathen agree with Scripture in this first particular, that they are most wise and prudent who are most meek and peaceable.

¹ Infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas

Ultio; continuo sic collige, quod vindicta

Nemo magis gaudet quam fœmina.—*Juvenal*, Sat. xiii.

² Nobilissimum genus vindictæ est parcere.

³ Contemnere oportet injurias, et quas injuriarum umbras dixerim, contumelias, sive merito mihi accidunt, sive immerito. Si merito, non est contumelia, sed judicium. Si immerito, illi qui injusta facit, non mihi erubescendum est.—*Senec. quod in Sap non cadit injuria.*

⁴ If injuries be shameful, it is τῷ δικοῦντι, μὴ τῷ ἀδικομένῳ, to him that doth the wrong, not to him that suffereth the wrong, saith Socrates.

2. The other which floweth from the forementioned verse, is, that the Christian's meekness must be mixed with wisdom. The apostle calls it meekness of wisdom ; meekness opposeth fury in our own quarrel, not zeal in God's cause. The same Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove, appeared also in the form of fiery tongues. It may be my duty to be silent when I am wronged, but it is sinful not to speak when God is reproached. Though I may compound for my own debts, yet I have no power to compound for another's. It is a singular mark of a saint, to be wet tinder when men strike fire at himself, and touchwood, when men strike at God. The meekest man upon the face of the earth, was the fullest of fury in the cause of heaven, Num. xii. 2 ; Exod. xxxii. A skilful musician knoweth when to strike a string of a lower sound, when of a higher. A wise Christian knoweth when to abate, when to increase, his heats.

Naturalists observe of bees, that they will ordinarily suffer any prejudice when they are far from their hives, and their own particular is only concerned ; but when they are near their hives, that their commonwealth is engaged in their combats, they are furious, and will lose their lives, or conquer. Thy work, O Christian, is not to abate the least of God's due, but to pocket up many private injuries, and to forgive thy personal debts. Be not like some, as cold in God's cause as if they had neither sense nor life ; and as hot in their own, as if their work were to make good the opinion of Democritus, that the soul is of the nature of fire, nothing else but a hot subtle body, dispersing itself into fiery atoms. Excess of fury is a spiritual frenzy, and it is ill for them who come within the biting of such mad beasts.

I have read of Themistocles, that, having a house to let, he pasted on the door, Here is a house to be hired, that hath a good neighbour. It is a great comfort to dwell by a pious and meek person, but no small cross to live near the peevish and passionate. A meek man is a good neighbour in these respects. For,

1. He is so far from wronging others, that he will forgive those that wrong him. He is not only contrary to them who, like furious curs, fall upon every one that passeth by, without the least cause, but also if he be wronged, he never studieth revenge, though he may seek sometimes for justice. The world hath learned of the devil to offer injuries, and he hath learned of God to suffer injuries. He dares not usurp God's throne, but leaves his cause to the judge of all men, Lev. xix. 18. He knoweth also that good men must have their grains of allowance ; and children of the same father are

too prone to quarrel, therefore he beareth both with the bad and the good ; with the former for Christ's sake, with the latter because they are Christ's seed. Now such a one is a good neighbour. Calvin said, though Luther should call him Satan, yet he would honour Luther as a faithful servant of God.¹ It is reported of Cato, that when a rash, bold fellow struck him in the bath, and some time after came to ask him pardon, he had forgot that he had been injured, *Melius putavit non agnoscere, quam ignoscere*, saith Seneca. He scorned to approach so near revenge, as acknowledge that he had been wronged. It is below a generous moralist to take notice of petty affronts ; he kills such slimy worms by trampling on them. The Christian, upon a better consideration, destroyeth those vermin with the foot of contempt. He hath experience what millions of pounds are forgiven him by God, and therefore out of gratitude cannot but pardon some few pence to man : ' Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' Eph. iv. 32.² He knoweth that he needeth favour from others for his offences against them ; he doth not always walk so carefully, but some time or other he hath bespattered those that went near him, and it is but just that he should allow that pardon which he expecteth :³ Eccles. vii. 21, 22 ; Tit. iii. 2, 3, ' Shewing all meekness towards all men ; for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, living in malice, and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' The Lacedæmonians were wont to pray in their public service, that the gods would enable them to bear private wrongs with patience.

2. A meek person will part with much of his right to buy his peace. Where he may not wrong his family too much, nor dishonour his God, he will yield far to preserve or purchase a friend. Though his privilege be superior, yet he can be contented to hold the stirrup to others, and give them place. Abraham was the elder and the nobler man, yet he offereth Lot his choice of the country, and was willing to take what he would leave.

¹ Sæpe dicere solitus sum : Etiamsi me Lutherus diabolum vocaret, me tamen hoc illi honoris habiturum, ut insignem dei servum agnoscam.

² Jerome observeth upon Eph. iv. 32, that the apostle saith, *χαρίζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς*, that is, saith he, *αὐτοῖς ἑμῖν*, rather than *ἀλλήλοις*, freely forgiving yourselves. Nam quod bene in alium fit, magis ei reponitur qui præstitit, quam cui datum est.

³ Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.—*Horat.* Non vivitur inter perfectos et bonos, sed inter illos qui sæpe ex infirmitate, et inscitia peccant ; quod et nos ipsi etiam facimus. Æquum est igitur peccatis veniam poscentem, reddere rursus.—*Dav., ibid.*

SECTION VI.

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in thy dealings with all men, look not only to the manner of thy dealing, but also to the principle. Thy righteous, courteous, and meek carriage must proceed from obedience to God's command. Many of the heathen, as thou hast heard, were just in their contracts; they would as soon die as deceive. Now, how wouldst thou know whether thou exceedest them, but by a principle of conscience from which thou actest? If pagans and Christians be found travelling in the same path, the only way to difference them, is to inquire whence they both set out, and whither they are going; what is the principle from which they act, and what is the end of their journey. According to the principle of a man, such is his end. If the barrel of the musket be crooked, it will never carry the bullet right; therefore thy principle must especially be minded. There be many things that move orderly, and yet their motion is not from a principle of life; as a mill moveth by reason of the water, yet is no living creature. An outward principle of custom, or fashion, or glory, may make a man just and patient in his actings; many do the things commanded, not because they are commanded, but upon some sinister account. Morality and Christianity differ especially; the moralist worketh from nature, a little refined by study or education; the Christian from nature, thoroughly renewed by the Holy Ghost. Where this spring is wanting, no motion can be true; be the fruit never so fair to the eye, if the root whence it groweth be not good, it will be unpleasant and distasteful. Laban at the last was just in his agreement with Jacob, but shame, not conscience, was the curb that held him in. Such dealings, like fruits which are ripened by art and force, are not kindly, neither be they acceptable to the heavenly taste. Indeed, all such righteousness is unrighteousness, and all such persons, though they are just to men, and do them no wrong, yet are unjust to God, and deprive him of his right.

The true Christian's righteousness towards men proceedeth from the fear of his God: 'The former governors (saith Nehemiah) were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but this did not I, because of the fear of God,' Neh. v. 9, 15. The dread of the Most High was the hedge which kept him within his bounds.

Look therefore, friend, to the ground of thy dealings. Nothing will be commendable in God's eye, which doth not flow from his awe; if the desire to keep up thy name, or to please thy neighbour, whose good word thou valuest, be the main reason of thy righteousness, thou servest thyself, but not thy God. He is a false servant who payeth the debts his master appointeth him, but more in his own name, and lest he should be counted a cheat, than because of his master's command. Thou art a true servant, if therefore thou darest not deceive men, because thou darest the just and jealous God. Joseph encourageth his brethren to expect fair dealings from him upon this ground: 'Do this and live, for I fear God,' Gen. xlii. 18—*i.e.*, Ye need not fear unrighteous actions at my hands, since the fear of God is in my heart. As long as this guard is set upon me, I shall do violence to no man. It was a pretty answer of Xenophon's, when Lælius told him that he was a timorous fellow, because he durst not play at dice with him. Very timorous indeed, and fearful to do evil.¹

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in thy dealings with men, let thine end and aim in thy dealings be good. Have an eye in them, not only to thine own temporal good, (this is low and mean,) but chiefly to the glory of God, and the spiritual good of thyself and others. Christians must not deal together as Indians, merely for trade and outward advantage. It is but a beggarly calling to trade only for the dirt and pebbles of worldly profit; but it is high and honourable to be a merchant for the diamonds and pearls of spiritual riches. The heathen and the Christian both may meet in the manner of their dealings, but they part in their ends. The thief and the honest countryman are both found riding in the same road, but they have different ends therein, and that distinguisheth them. He is a dwarf indeed, and looks very low, whose eye in such actions is wholly upon earth. True saints soar aloft, and have more noble designs in their ordinary dealings, Mat. v. 16. Like the moon, they enlighten others with their borrowed brightness, and endeavour to their power to reflect their beams back to the sun, the fountain of their light.

How ungratefully doth he slink away, that dieth and returneth no glory to his Father, neither raiseth up any seed to his elder brother: 'I seek not mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved,' saith St Paul, 1 Cor. x. 33. He hath cause to fear his own going to heaven, who would go thither alone; true favourites desire their king may have many loyal sub-

¹ Plutarch.

jects. Every creature almost is of an assimilating nature: fire turneth what comes near it into fire, earth changeth what we commit to it into earth, water moistens what it meets with, stones grow and spread in the veins of the earth, even flowers and herbs will be scattering their seed for the increase of their kind. Good men cannot but desire and endeavour that all they converse with might be like themselves in goodness. The first blessing which God bestowed on man after his creation was this, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'

How industrious are Christ's enemies to spread their poison, and draw men from their allegiance to him! I have read of a Jew who turned Turk,¹ how, shortly after, in buying grapes, he fell out with a Turk and beat him soundly, whereupon a certain Jew asked the abused Turk why he would suffer himself to be so much wronged. The Turk answered, You shall beat me as much if you will turn Mussulman. It is too visible that Rome's agents are also sufficiently active to make proselytes to their idolatries, and wilt thou sit still and do nothing towards the gaining of subjects to thy Lord and Saviour? Holy David was more diligent to enlarge the borders of Christ's than of his own kingdom: he would blaze God's honour and power before the highest, and not shrink for shame, Ps. cxix; and the success of his industry is considerable. Though great fish are seldom caught by such angles, yet king Hiram came to be converted to God by his converse with David.

It is likely, reader, thou dealest with sinners; thy first care must be that thou mayest not partake of their sins. It is reported that at Belgrade in Hungary, Danubius and Sava, two famous rivers, the one pure, the other filthy, meet, and yet their waters mingle no more than water and oil; not that either float above the other, but both join unmixed, so that near the middle of the river, saith my author,² I have gone in a boat and tasted the Danow as clear as a spring, and, putting my hand an inch farther, I have taken of the Sava, as troubled as the street channel, tasting the gravel in my teeth; thus they run together unmingled sixty miles. So shouldst thou in thy contracts and dealings with the wicked keep thyself pure and undefiled. Thy next care must be to make them better; a meek, gracious carriage may win them to Christ. Some fish have been caught with a golden hook; sometimes by parting with a little of thy right, by losing a little silver, thou mayest gain a precious soul. He that always stands strictly and stiffly upon his right, may thereby wrong both God and his gospel. Heavenly-

¹ Turk. Hist., 1332.

² Sir Henry Blunt's Voyage into the Levant.

mindfulness, shining in a Christian's dealings with profane men, hath such a beauty in it, that it attracteth at the first sight the eyes of every beholder, like the sudden appearance of a candle in a dark room. 'As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men,' Gal. vi. 10. An opportunity to do good to others is a great mercy to ourselves. The oil of grace, like the widow's, 2 Kings iv. 6, increaseth by pouring out; an opportunity is a special season which God affordeth us for the benefit of our own and others souls. When time and helps meet and marry, their offspring is opportunity. Thou dealest with those at one time whom thou mayest never see again; possibly their hearts being big with sin, they bring forth in thy presence either swearing, or slandering, or mocking at holiness. Now God gives thee an opportunity, by a prudent, affectionate reproof, and by serious savoury advice, to kill those brats of hell as soon as they are born, and to make the parents barren in regard of such a cursed brood for ever after, which if thou neglectest thou shalt never have again. The bird of opportunity is usually upon the wing; she flieth away of a sudden, and we never see her again; therefore, whilst thou hast her, make the best use of her. Thou thinkest, it may be, that thy counsel to such men would be but cast away, as pure water in a nasty sink; but do thy work, which is to endeavour their conversion, and leave the success, which is God's work, to him. Benhadad's soldier drew a bow at a venture, and his arrow pierced within the joints of the harness and slew Ahab; the man shot the arrow at he knew not who, but God levelled it at the king amongst all the company. Do thou draw the bow according to thy duty, and God may so direct the arrow of admonition as to make it enter the sinner's heart, and let out the very life of his sin. Sometimes things are done best on a sudden; Tiberius was happier in his extempore speeches, than those which he made upon study and premeditation.¹ Thou mayest, as Philip to the eunuch, fall in with a person on a sudden whom thou never sawest before, nor shalt ever see again, and by seasonable counsel be instrumental to his eternal comfort. It may be thou meetest with such as do believe, then thy care must be to build them up; saints must be landmarks to direct others in the way to life. Apollos was a stranger to Aquila and Priscilla, but coming into his company they expounded to him the way of God more perfectly, Acts xviii. 25. The members of the mystical body must be helpful to one another. Christians, with whomsoever they converse, ought to endeavour

¹ Repentinis responsionibus et consiliis melior, quam meditatis.—*Aurel., Viet.*

either their gaining to, or growing up in, Jesus Christ. Alexander's body was of so exact and rare a constitution, saith the historian,¹ that it perfumed every place where he came. The gracious soul, being itself filled with spikenard, and calamus, and cassia, and all sweet spices, may well leave a sweet savour among the persons with whom he converseth; they are dead and withered grains of corn, out of which there doth not one ear spring up.

A good wish of a Christian in relation to his dealings with all men, wherein the former heads are applied.

The living and eternal God, whose I am, and whom I am infinitely bound to serve, whose unquestionable dominion over me calleth for universal subjection from me, having commanded me in his word to be holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation, and to walk by rule in my commerce with men, as well as in my immediate converses with his glorious majesty, I wish in general that I may make religion my business, not only in my sacred duties, but also in my civil dealings; that I may trade with God in divine performances as if men saw me, and traffic with men in human affairs as knowing that God beholdeth me, and herein daily exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men, Acts xxiv. 16. I wish, in particular, that my earthly actions may never clash with, or encroach upon, my heavenly calling; that I may not endanger the loss of religion in the throng and crowd of outward dealings, but may be so limited and directed therein by God's law that all my works may be worship; and when I am labouring for my body and family, I may be furthering the good of my soul and my eternal felicity; that as my chief natural quality, reason, commandeth in my lower actions of eating and drinking, so my supernatural excellency, religion, may bear sway in every passage of my life. Lord, who hast given me a perfect rule, and appointed me to order my life in all things according to it, be pleased to write all the laws in my heart, that I may be tender of both tables—love thee with all my soul and strength, and love my neighbour as myself, for thy sake. If one link of the golden chain of thy commands be broken, the whole is dissolved; they love one another too well to part company: where one precept is wilfully despised, all are disobeyed. Thou hast said it, He that breaks one

¹ Plut.

is guilty of all. Oh, enable me to be as universal in my conformity and duty as thou art in thy mercy and bounty, for then shall I not be ashamed, when I shall have respect to all thy commandments ! Ps. exix.

I wish that the soundness and integrity of my heart may appear in the cleanness and purity of my hands. The sound will speak what metal the bell is of ; the flowers that shew themselves above ground will declare the nature of the root which lieth hid. How often doth the face discover the faults of the vital parts ! If my tongue and speech be double, my spirit cannot be single ; if my actions be unrighteous, my inward man must needs be irreligious. How grossly do I delude myself, if I presume that I am holy because I mind the first table, if I be dishonest and live in the breach of the second ! When there is so much religion in the duties of the second table that there can be no religion without them, my deceitful heart is apt to suggest that it is but a small matter if I should supplant my brother, and that there is no such need of care in my ordinary outward carriage. But my sovereign, to whom I have sworn allegiance, hath told me in the word of truth, Mat. xxiii. 23, that justice and mercy are the weighty matters of the law, and hath commanded me, Micah vi. 8, to do justly, and to love mercy throughout my whole life. Oh that I might never allow myself in the breach of those precepts, which in the world's blind judgment are the least of his commands, and by my pattern teach men so, lest I be found at last the least in the kingdom of heaven ! Lord, thou hast enjoined me to keep thy law as the apple of mine eye, Prov. vii. I know a small thing will pain, a little dust will offend mine eye, but thy law is infinitely more tender ; thy word forbids and condemneth the smallest wandering ; the very conception of sin in a vain thought, much more its birth in an unrighteous action, is abominable and odious to it. Thou hast commanded me to keep thy precepts diligently. Oh that my ways were directed to keep all thy commandments ! Though I abound, and am never so strict in thine ordinances, if I be careless and loose in my contracts with men, thou canst espy the evil constitution of my soul notwithstanding such painting. Thou canst see the rottenness of my heart in the rottenness of my wares, under the false gloss I put upon them ; and if thy moral precept find not obedience with me, my spiritual performances will never find acceptance with thee. The pie, a speckled bird, whose feathers were white and black, was unclean. Should I seem pious in those duties which concern thy worship, and yet be perverse in my deal-

ings with men, I am in thy judgment a wicked person. Thou hast said of such, 'Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?' Micah vi. 11. If there be iniquity in my hands, there is hypocrisy in my heart. How clearly doth a person that picketh and chooseth his food, (liking this, and loathing that, though never so wholesome,) prove a foul stomach! and how fully do I demonstrate secret filth in my inward parts if I pick and choose amongst the food of my soul, the precepts! When the soul is clean and sound, every command will be sweet; if my heart be sincere, all my dealings will be square. Oh, let me never be like those Pharisees, who made long prayers for a cover, that they might prey the more closely upon their neighbours; but let thy Spirit in my heart send up the sap of grace into every branch of my life, that all the passages thereof may abound in the fruits of righteousness, and I may esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right.

I wish that the glory of religion may be so dear to my heart, that I may render it amiable to the eyes of others, by walking every way suitable to my profession. The name of my God is holy and reverend, and shall I offer it to reproach? Some write that the Jews would not foul their mouths with that unclean word of blaspheming God, but always expressed it by a contrary word of blessing God. If it were so execrable that they hated to speak it, shall I be so vile as to act it? It were a sin to wrong a man of his good name; what is it, then, to rob my God? If I dress myself in the livery of Christ, and in that habit wallow in the mire of unrighteous dealings, I give up the blessed Redeemer to the scorn and derision of the world. Every one that nameth the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. The colours of Christ, which I wear, cause many to look upon me; every professor is like a city on a hill, visible to all. Spots are sooner seen in scarlet than in sackcloth; blots appear fouler in a strict professor than in a loose and profane person. None wonders to see swine dirty; but to see the ermine's beautiful skin bemired is prodigious. How watchful are the wicked to observe my wanderings! All my familiars watch for my halting; they mark my steps when they watch for my soul. If they can find the least tincture of falseness in my words, or colour of unfaithfulness in my works, they soon make it much greater, looking on it through the spectacles of malice. How quick do they post it abroad, and publish it amongst their companions! 'I hear the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it.' What a shame was

it, that the great Turk should take the violated covenant of the Hungarian king out of his bosom, and present it to the blessed God as the act of those that wore his livery, and professed themselves his servants! When those that should be the beauty of Israel are slain in the high places, and those that, by their profession, are the mighty, fall in the streets, they soon tell it in Gath, and publish it in Askelon; the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, the sons of the uncircumcised triumph; then the banks of blasphemy are broken down, and the floods of scoffs and scorns come pouring in. Ezek. xxxvi. 20, 'And when they went among the heathen, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord.' How doth the world conclude? Surely the parents are very bad whom their own children discommend so much! Certainly there is little love, or power, or faithfulness in their father, when his own sons dare not trust him for a little food, but go up and down to steal and filch from others. Oh, how ordinary is it for the profane to throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of their profession! None give such wounds to the credit of the blessed God, as some who pretend to be his own children. The higher the place is whence a stone falls, the deeper it pierceth; no blows more mortal than those of a thunder-bolt. My profession is high; if my practices be vile and base, I strike religion to the very heart. Oh, let me never be so vile a traitor, as by my sordid courses, like Judas, to betray the holy Jesus to the buffetings and mockings of his adversaries! Why should I harden the bad, by my sinful shifts, in their wickedness? Shall I be the devil's broker, to put off those rotten wares for him, of cozening and cheating, which otherwise might lie upon his hands? Why should I sadden the good? Shall I cause them to hang down their heads with sorrow, as the patriarchs did theirs, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack? Lord, thou art tender of the reputation of thy chosen, and hast many a time wrought wonderfully for their renown and credit. When the wicked world hath blown upon their names, endeavouring to blast them and make them unsavoury, thou hast magnified thy power to vindicate their honour; and shall I make thy glorious name contemptible, when thou makest my vile name honourable? Can I be so void of love to thy Majesty, as to tread upon that name of thine, that is more worth than heaven and earth? Besides, many a season I have pleaded thy name in prayer, and that with success. My voice hath been in the behalf of my own soul: 'For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. Thou art my rock and my

fortress ; therefore, for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me ;' Ps. xxxv., and xxxi. 13. When thou hast answered me, ' Behold I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake ; I will defer mine anger for my name's sake, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. xlvi. 9. Oh, how many a blessing hath thy name been—both the orator to procure, and the messenger to bring ! when many others have treated to little purpose that that hath been the undeniable ambassador to prevail for peace and pardon. Thy name hath been my shelter in many a storm, and my supply in many a strait ; and shall I be an enemy to that which is so great a friend to me ? Can I be so unworthy as to cause others to trample this great favourite at heaven's court under their feet ? Hath not the polluting thy name been the argument which I have sometimes used for the perdition of thine enemies. I have cried to thee, ' Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name ;' and shall I be guilty of that which I plead as a reason for others' ruin ? Again, my daily prayer is, Hallowed be thy name ;' and shall my practices give my prayer the lie, and profane it ? Should I cheat and cozen, as the men of the world, my great profession would cause my sin, like a cart heavy laden, to make deep furrows, into which many might trip and fall. How ordinary is it for Egyptians to follow the dark side of the Israelites' pillar to their perdition ! Foolish man that I am, is not the burden of my own sins already intolerable, and shall I add to them by being partaker of other men's sins ? Is the river of wrath due to me so slow, so little, that I must invite streams from every place to swell it into an ocean ? Oh that for my own sake, for the sake of other men, and especially for thy sake, I may order all my ways by thy word ! Lord, preserve me by thy Spirit, that I may never lay a stumbling-block before the wicked, nor, as the unbelieving spies, by my distrust of thy providence, and using indirect courses to relieve my family, bring an ill report upon the good land. Assist me, that I may look not only to the power of religion, but also the honour of religion ; let thy grace ever accompany me, and enable me to keep a conscience void of guile before thee, and a conversation so void of guilt before men, that whereas they speak against me as an evil-doer, they may be ashamed at this day, and may, by my good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

I wish that I may look to the righteousness of my actions, as well as to the righteousness of my person, and never think that my

house can be firm, if it be built upon the rotten foundation of injustice. My God hath said, 'Woe be to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong.' As high as my house is raised, and as sure as it is seated, the breath of this curse will blow it down. Though my estate seem never so fair, yet how easily and how speedily may this scorching curse cause it to fade, and to wither in my hands as a flower. Have not mine eyes beheld the ruins of some stately dwellings, which have been built upon rapine? Unrighteousness, like rabbits in some countries, hath undermined the foundations, and overturned the buildings; and shall mine escape? Whether I will believe it or no, my God hath spoken, that unjust gain will prove my own loss, and he will see it accomplished. Whatsoever fine terms I may call my cheating by, as an art in my trade, or the mystery of my calling, yet my God counts it theft, and me for it but a thief. Though I may put a fair colour upon my false dealing, yet he forbids it under the plain censure of stealing: 'Thou shalt not steal.' And oh, how great a thief am I, if I be guilty of this in my ordinary dealings! I wrong my neighbours that trade with me, and that most hypocritically, under the pretence of doing them right. To kill a man in the field by force is wicked; but to poison him at my table by fraud is worse, because in this latter I pretend friendship. To rob on the highway by open power is grievous; but to rob in my shop by this hellish policy is more odious, for I wrong one that is my friend, and in such a way, that he hath no means to help himself. The righteous God saith, 'My hands are full of blood,' Isa. i. 15, not only when I murder a man's person, and take away his life, but also when I injure a man's portion, and take away his livelihood. Such unjust persons must expect sore punishments. The law of man punisheth cheats in some measure; but the law of the jealous God is more severe to such jugglers as endeavour to unglue the whole world's frame, knit together only by commerce and contracts.

I rob my own family as well as my neighbour's. He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house. False dealing, like fire, consumes what comes near it. My children were better be left beggars, than heirs of those riches which I have got by robbery. What is well-gotten will fare the worse for the neighbourhood of my ill-gotten wealth. This, as a rotten sheep, will infect the sound flock. Whilst I am digging deep, to lay the foundation of my house sure, I do but lay in barrels of powder to blow it up.

I rob my own soul most of all by my unrighteousness. How ill

is that gain which causeth the loss of my God ! How cheap do I sell those wares with which I buy endless and intolerable woe ! How dear do I buy that silver for which I sell my inestimable soul and salvation ! Ah, what an ill market doth he make, that puts off his soul at any price ! If it be unprofitable to gain the whole world and lose my own soul, what a fool, what a madman am I to set my soul to sale for a very small part of the world ! Into what a miserable dilemma doth my deceitful dealing bring me ! Either I must repent and vomit it up, which will tear and rack my very heart, or else I must burn for ever in hell. Oh that I might never be so bereaved of my wits, as to touch or meddle with such distracting wealth ! Lord, thou hast informed me that, 'A little which the righteous man hath, is better than the possessions of many wicked,' Ps. xxxvii. 16 ; that 'better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right,' Prov. xvi. 8. I know that the comfort of my life doth not depend upon a confluence of outward good things, but upon thy love and goodwill towards me. Let me rather choose the greatest want, than riches from Satan's hands, and in hell's way. Be thou pleased to sparkle my little with the precious diamond of thy love, and then it will be better indeed than the riches of many wicked, yea, more worth than all the world.

I wish that, in my buying and selling, I might ever have an eye to the balance of the sanctuary. My person must be tried by Scripture at the last day, for my everlasting life and death ; and shall not my actions be squared by it at this day ? How sad a bargain should I make, if I should buy my own bane ! What a dreadful trade should I drive, to sell, like that son of perdition, the incomparable Saviour for a little corruptible silver ! Is that wealth worth getting, which will make way for eternal want ? Though my heaps swell never so much by unlawful means, yet it is but like the swelling of the dropsy, a presage of death. O my soul, what will it avail thee to be rich here, and to be a beggar hereafter, and that for ever ? Thou pretendest to purity, but thy God tells thee that holiness and righteousness are like husband and wife, joined by him together, and none may part them asunder. Thou art unsound in all thy sacred duties, if thou art unrighteous in thy civil dealings. When the unjust dealer is cast into the unquenchable fire, what will become of the great professor ? 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul ?' Job xxvii. 8. When the thief is taken and carried to the jail, all the money he hath stolen is taken

from him. When death seizeth thee, and sendeth thee to the prison of hell, all thy ill-gotten goods must be left behind. When thou art lost eternally, what will become of thy unjust gains? Thy children may be ranting with it on earth, and thou art roaring for it in hell. Ah, what dear contracts dost thou make, to sell thy present peace, and thy future endless joy, for a little perishing pelf! The comfort of thy life now consisteth in communion with thy God; but he that saith he hath fellowship with God, and walketh in darkness, is a liar, 1 John i. 6. Thy God hates to taste of those waters which run out of such musty vessels; much less will he suffer any of such rotten hearts, and stinking breaths, to draw near to him in heaven. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' 1 Cor. vi. 9. No such cattle shall ever come into the celestial court. Unrighteous heathens shall be shut out of heaven, and surely, then, unrighteous Christians shall be cast into the lowest hell. Oh, let the fear of thy God ever possess thee, that the love of this world may never pollute thee! Manifest thy love to thy Saviour, by loving thy neighbour as thyself. Blessed God, who lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a righteous sceptre, who wilt render unto every man his righteousness, and who hast appeared to me by that grace which teacheth me to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously in this present evil world, let thy good Spirit fill me with all the fruits of righteousness. Do thou so lead me in the paths of equity, for thy name's sake, that I may follow after righteousness, and inherit a sure reward.

I wish that I may be righteous in every relation wherein I stand, and towards all persons with whom I deal, that I may give to superiors the things that are theirs, to inferiors the things that are theirs, lest by denying either I rob all. My God is no respecter of persons, but just in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. When shall I imitate his blessed Majesty? He tells me, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times,' Ps. cvi. 3. If I expect the blessing propounded, I must mind the righteousness enjoined, and that is to be righteous at all seasons. O my soul, what encouragement hast thou to do justly upon all occasions! Thy righteousness shall have a large recompense. Thy children may fare the better: 'The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him,' Prov. xii. 7; nay, thy whole family. The voice of joy and salvation is in the

tabernacle of the righteous. Whereas thou mayest fear that thy plain dealing may bring thee and thine to poverty, thou hast his promise, that he will make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous, Job viii. 6. Above all, thou thyself wilt have the greatest solace. Thy righteousness shall answer for thee in time to come; and whereas the dishonest wealth of others is a corroding worm to gnaw their consciences, thy justice will afford thee present comfort. 'In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare; but the righteous doth sing and rejoice,' Prov. xxix. 6. Ah, who would not sow righteousness, when he shall certainly reap so much mercy! Though others, as if they had pitchy hands, take to themselves whatsoever they touch, to the defiling of their own souls, and, like whirlpools, suck in all that comes near them, to their own destruction, do thou mete out all thy dealings by that royal measure: 'Whatsoever thou wouldst that men should do to thee, do the same to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' When thou art buying or selling, or about any bargain with thy neighbour, reflect upon thyself: Would I be glad to be thus dealt with? Were I in this man's case, would I be willing that he should serve me as I serve him? Am I as plain-hearted, as true, as just in my carriage towards him, as I would desire him to be in his trading with me? Would I be contented to be defrauded? Should I take it well to be defamed? Is this action of mine such as I could be contented to receive the like? Do I in this business love my neighbour as myself? Lord, who hast promised that the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance in this world, and shall shine as the sun in the other world, and who hast put the unrighteous, and lovers of themselves, in the front of that black list which is for the unquenchable fire, 2 Tim. iii. 2, do thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies, that I may serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life, Luke i. 75.

I wish that I may mind righteousness in my words, as well as in my works, and not dare to hide deceitful and foul intentions under fair and fawning expressions. To say what is true, and to be true to what I say, is the property of a true Christian. My God is a God that cannot lie, Titus i. 2; his people are a people that will not lie, Isa. lxiii. 8. If I therefore be found a liar, how unlike am I both to God and his people. 'Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight,' Prov. xii. 22. Though lying lips may be perfumed with sweet words to men, yet God smells the stench, and loatheth the ill savour of those rotten inwards whence they proceed. And though truth may beget hatred

from men, such sweet breath is his love and delight. He is the God of truth ; his law is the truth, Ps. cxix. 142 ; his gospel is the word of truth, Col. i. 5 ; his Son is the true and faithful witness, Rev. iii. 14. Oh that truth of heart, truth of words, and truth in deeds, may be all in me, which are so agreeable to the true God, and so acceptable to the God of truth ! Can that tongue lie so loud to men, which even now called so loud on God ? Shall those hands be filching in my neighbour's pocket, which were so lately lifted up to heaven in prayer ? Is my speech given me for my glory, and shall it be the drivelling of a devil, that father of lies ? Lord, let me in all my dealings choose rather to be a loser than a liar ; and let that be my character which thou hast given of the citizens of Zion, that I may never lift up my soul to vanity, nor swear deceitfully, but walk uprightly, work righteousness, and speak the truth in my heart, Ps. xxiv. 3, and xv. 2.

I wish that I may be courteous, as well as righteous, towards all with whom I converse. Humanity is a debt which I owe to all mankind ; why should I therefore, as some proud men, dam up and contract my civility into so narrow a compass, that it shall swell into flattery towards my superiors, and not suffer one drop to descend towards inferiors ! I would not, as formalists in fashion of habits or outward vesture, discover the lightness of a carnal mind ; nor like hypocrites, by composed actions, or artificial gesture, manifest the looseness of a frothy spirit ; but as a prudent, yet serious Christian, be so affable in my carriage, that I may be the more acceptable in my counsel for the good of others' souls. Humanity doth cast a lustre to attract the eyes and hearts of others. Courtesy is commendable, and an adorning adjunct to sanctity. Holiness is honoured by the attendance of this handmaid. Grace is rendered more lovely, when it is accompanied with a kind nature. It is pity that jewel should not ever be in this soft velvet cabinet. One end of my trading must be to commend to others the excellency of spiritual wares, and to encourage them to buy the truth ; but if my behaviour be morose and unkind, I shall fright men from being my customers, and inflict on myself part of Nebuchadnezzar's penalty—separate myself from amongst men, by forcing them to withdraw from me. If my language be fierce, and my looks frowning, I may deter men from my company, but shall never allure them to Christ. Where the carriage is sour and pouting, the counsel will never be sweet and prevalent. Oh that I might never disadvantage religion by any rugged disposition, but by the kindness of my nature may do a real kindness to grace, and become all things to all men, if by any

means I might save some. Yet I would not be so courteous to others, as to be discourteous to myself; I mean, be so courteous to sinners, as to comply with them in their sins. It is far better that the world should count me uncivil, than the Lord should esteem me ungodly. Let me be an enemy to their corruptions, when I shew myself most friendly to their persons, and never be so much a courtier as to forget that I am a Christian. Lord, who hast commanded thy people to be kindly affected one towards another, teach me to shew the true affection of my heart in the kindness of my tongue and hand. Courtesy is as salt, and drieth up these ill-humours which are distasteful to others, and will make my counsel the more savoury. Thine angels themselves used salutations in their occasional converses with mortals. Give me to do thy will on earth, as it is done by those noble courtiers in heaven; for I believe that they were in heaven when they were discoursing with thy chosen on earth. Grant me so much gracious good manners, as by my prayers to send the next man I meet, even all I deal with, to thee. Let me bestow the alms of some hearty ejaculation, as well as the outward expressions of *The Lord be with you*, upon them. Yea, let me, for thy sake, be kind and gentle to all men, that I may draw them to thyself: yet suffer me not to be so friendly in my words, as to have fellowship with any in their wickedness, but help me to dispense even my civilities by a standard measure, lest what I intend as shy net to take other souls, prove Satan's trap to catch mine.

I wish that I may be both so just as not to offer injuries to others, and also so meek as to suffer with patience what others offer to me. The world will never leave its old haunt of persecuting them that are holy; it is natural for wolves to hate and devour sheep. If I were of the world, I should be one of its darlings, for the world loveth its own. My God hath called me from it, and chosen me out of it, therefore it hates me. I need not marvel at its malice, when it did spit its venom at the author of its being, and took away life from him who gave life to it. The servant is not above his master, nor must the disciple look to fare better than his Lord. If the soft pillow of meekness be not laid on my back, I shall never bear the burdens of their calumnies and cruelties with the least comfort; what pain doth such vinegar cause when it meets with the raw wound of an impatient spirit! The more mad the world is, the more meek I had need to be, if I would enjoy myself; besides, there may be fallings out amongst the best friends. Good men are not all of the same stature, nor all of the same

temper; some are like broken bones—if but touched, they fret and fling. How full are some of jealousies and suspicions, which would soon be increased by my passions; and that spark which might be extinguished by my lenity, is blown into a flame by my fury. Some are sickly and in constant pain, others are under some smarting providence; some offend me upon mistake, and though others should do it out of malice, yet even they also call for my pity more than my passion. The best have need of pardon from man as well as God, and shall I, who want it more than others, not allow it to others? Alas! what harm do I get by others' heats? The air when beaten is not injured, no, not so much as divided, but returns to its place, and becomes thicker than before. The sharpest words cannot wound me, if I do not put my hand to the weapon. All those tongue-squibs of reproach which the malevolent world throw at me, will go out alone, and die of themselves, if I do not revive them. My well-grounded patience will, as a walking-staff, preserve me from many a fall whilst I travel in rugged ways.

The distracted world indeed judgeth him the bravest fellow that will not pocket up the least affronts; but the wisest man that ever was, nay, the only wise God, tells me, 'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit,' *Eccles. vii. 3.* O my soul, whom wilt thou believe?—the world, that long since hath lost its wits, and must ere long, for its frenzy, be fettered with the chains of everlasting darkness in the bridewell of the bottomless pit, or that God to whom angels themselves are comparative fools, *Job iv. 18.* Oh be not hasty to be angry! for anger resteth in the bosom of fools, *Eccles. vii. 4.* What a fool art thou to break thy own bones, to give another a smart blow! A furious man is like Tamar, who, to be revenged of her father-in-law, defiled him and herself with incest. Revenge is a thief that steals away a man's estate from the lawyers. It is of the nature of the viper, and eats out the bowels of that wealth which gave it birth. What a fool am I to defame myself! That rancour and spleen which I spit at others, is like his that spits against the wind, driven back into my own face, to the besmearing of my credit amongst all that are judicious. What a fool am I to destroy my own grace, my own peace! What flowers of holiness will grow, where such locusts abound? what fruits of righteousness can thrive in such a scorching climate? what good work can be done within-doors if the house be in a flame? How unfit is a man in a passion to go to God in prayer? surely no more than a person that comes reeking and sooted from a kiln is for the presence of his prince. I must not expect to meet God in

a duty, if my spirit be in a fury. A righteous man fallen down before the wicked is like a troubled fountain, Prov. xxv. 26. I seldom fall down more foully before wicked men, than when I render reviling for reviling, and revenge for revenge; but then how unfit am I to fall down in holy duties before my God, for I am as a troubled fountain; and if men will not drink of the water of a fountain, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled and muddy, can I think that my God will drink of that vessel that runs thick. Oh that I might never, because others are my enemies in defaming me, become my own enemy, in defiling my own soul, and hindering it of that comfort which it might have in divine communion. Lord, who art the God of peace, let me be known to be one of thine, by being a son of peace; enable me to pass on, like a wise traveller, in the way of thy commandments, and not to be stirred at the barking of those dogs that pursue me with open mouth. My confident neglect will soonest make them quiet; let me never break the peace but in the quarrel of truth. Give me, for peace sake, sometimes to part with my right, but never with my righteousness. Let the same mind be in me which was in Christ Jesus; teach me from him to be meek and lowly in heart, and yet to be eaten up with the zeal of thy house. Make me willing to suffer, but not to have thy name suffer. Grant me to follow peace with all men, and holiness. Oh bestow on me that wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and though hardly provoked, yet easy to be entreated.

I wish that those beautiful children of righteousness, courtesy, and meekness in my carriage, may have the Spirit of God for their parent; I mean, that the fear of my God may be the principle from which they flow. I shall lose the race, how well soever I run, if I do not set out at the right place. Men look only to my practices, and accordingly judge of my principle; if my life be without fault, their charity tells them that my heart is without fraud. But God's eye is on my principle, and accordingly he judgeth of my practices; if my affections be not gracious, he knoweth that my actions cannot be righteous. My God knoweth me through and through; he spieth the rottenness and crawling vermin that are in the bowels of a painted sepulchre. If I be like a peach, with a craggy stone in my heart, under the cover of a velvet coat, he understandeth it altogether. I may cozen the dark eyes of men, who, when they behold the inoffensiveness of my life, and the height of my profession, are ready to cry out of me, as Samuel of Eliab, when he saw the comeliness of his countenance, and the height of his stature, 'Surely

the Lord's anointed is before him,' 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7. But I cannot deceive God ; he seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Alas ! if I have no more to shew for my title to heaven than a fair outside, what have I more than a hypocrite, nay, than some heathen ! A few flourishes in a paper or parchment is but a poor evidence for an inheritance. How many be there in the world, who, as some revelling gallants, by their gay clothes, and gaudy attire, speak that they are worth thousands, when they have not a penny in their pockets ; who, by their outward conversations, seem to be rich in grace, when indeed, like Laodicea, they are poor and miserable, and blind and naked ! Oh that all my fruits of righteousness might grow upon the root of holiness, and spring from a renewed nature ! Then, and not till then, they will be acceptable to my Saviour ; then my beloved will come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. I would be mindful of these moral duties, because my God commandeth them, and as knowing that I cannot be religious if I be not righteous. Though the sensitive soul may be without the rational, as in beasts, yet the rational soul is never without the sensitive. Though righteousness towards men may be without holiness, yet holiness before God is never without righteousness before men. Lord, thou expectest and commandest that I should act both for thee, and from thee ; thou valuest the vessel, not by the ballast of a few good actions, which a heathen may gather up at any port, but by the freight of a sanctified heart, which is peculiar to thy chosen. Let my obedience to the second table arise from my conscience of the first table ; that whilst the righteous, friendly, and meek carriage of others, that runneth along amongst those with whom they converse, is little better than puddle water in thine esteem, because it proceedeth from the sinks of their natural and defiled hearts, justice may not only in my actions run down like water, and meekness in my conversation like a mighty stream, but be so fed with, and flow from, the spring of thy Holy Spirit dwelling in my heart, that it may be delightful, and of worth in thy sight.

I wish that I may design somewhat for my God in all my dealings with men, and carry myself the more sweetly and circumspectly, that I may gain their affections, and thereby win them to the greater love and liking of religion. Christianity is my calling, and wherever I go, my duty bindeth me to be always furthering it. It was one article which I sealed to, when I first entered myself Christ's servant, to endeavour the making others proselytes to his service ; and if I neglect it, I am unfaithful to my Master, and for-

feit my indenture. My pattern may with some be very prevalent. If I shine with a virtuous life, I am as a lighthouse set by the sea-side, whereby mariners sail aright, and avoid dangers; but if I pretend high, and walk loosely, as a false lantern, I shipwreck those that trust me. My holy life is a good lecture of holiness to others, which, if written in a fair character, will invite those with whom I converse, both to read it, and to learn it; my advice may to others be very advantageous. If in the morning I sow the seed of some savoury counsel, and in the evening withhold not my hand, though carnal reason tells me it is cast away upon barren earth, which will make no return, yet my God can cause it to spring up richly. Possibly other particular callings may depend on mine, and thereby many persons for their livelihoods, under God, on me; now what an opportunity of doing them good, of serving my Lord, and of furthering my own account, is put into my hands! How willing are those who have their dependence on me, to model themselves to such a form as will best suit my temper! Though they are as hard as rocks to others, they are as soft as wax to me; and shall not I labour to imprint the image of my God upon them! Oh that, by those cords which bind their civil interest, I might draw them to a consideration of their spiritual estates, and let them know that there is but one way of approving themselves to God and me! How false am I, if I do not improve the ground I have got in the hearts or hands of any for the honour of my Master! Enlightened souls are all liberal to disperse their rays for the good of others. How busy are most men to propagate that quality which is predominant in them! The scholar would have his companion learned, the courtier his associate handsome in his carriage, the soldier his comrade valiant; and shall not I endeavour that my friends be virtuous? Nay, how diligent are the devil's agents to spread the poison of vice amongst all with whom they converse! Though they find sin already thriving, yet they think it not enough to nourish those ill weeds which grow so fast of themselves, but even sow new seeds of oaths, and cozening, and profaneness, as if their mutual commerce did oblige them to diffuse their venom to each other, and as if it were a dishonour to the tradesman to go to hell without his customers and chapmen. O my soul! dost thou not blush at thy own backwardness in bringing souls to thy God, when the emissaries of hell are so forward? Do they devise wickedness continually? Prov. vi. 14; search out iniquity; yea, accomplish a diligent search? Ps. lxiv. 6; leave no means untried, no ways unattempted, but study and search narrowly for fit seasons,

when they may convey their infections to others, and communicate their plague-sores with the greatest success? and wilt not thou, as a liberal man, devise liberal things, sit down and contrive how thou mayest give counsel to poor sinners, administer comfort to poor saints, to the best advantage of their souls? Shall Satan go about, seeking whom he may devour, and wilt not thou go about seeking whom thou mayest recover out of the snares of the devil? Though grace sets bounds to thy conscience, yet it doth not to the love of thy God. If the love of thy God be without limits, will not thy desires and endeavours to exalt him be as large? It is his favour to trust thee with any talents for his honour. Opportunities of doing him service (which now and then he affordeth thee) are precious; the stump of time remaineth, when the branches of opportunity are lopped off. In times of scarcity, men pick up all the grains of corn, that none be lost; he that in a dearth gives his corn to his beasts, is himself a brute.

Seasons for the advancement of thy Saviour, and the soul-advantage of thy brother, are rare, and wilt thou throw them away upon vain talk and needless toys? David could say, Is there none left of the house of Saul, to whom I may shew kindness for Jonathan's sake? And mayest not thou say, Is there none left of the household of faith, or belonging to it, though now aliens from it, to whom I may shew kindness for Jesus' sake? Ah, Lord! whence is it that my soul is so backward in sending beggars to thy gate? Am I ashamed to let the world know how much I am indebted, and what bountiful alms I have there received? Art thou so bad a Master that I should blush to tell others to whom I belong, or afraid that, if I should commend thee to them, and send them to thee, they would find me false? Surely to sit at thy feet, and to wait at thy gate, is infinitely more honourable and comfortable than to sit on the highest worldly throne, and to be waited on by the greatest earthly princes. What, then, are the fetters that hinder me from running to invite others to thy gospel feast? Do I fear that thy house will not hold us all, or that the inheritance of thy saints, being divided amongst so many, the lesser share will fall to me? No, I believe that in my Father's house are many mansions, that there is room enough and to spare for all thy righteous ones, and that my sight of thee, the true Sun, will never be the less pleasing and refreshing though millions of worlds should enjoy thee. If ever it be true, it will be there, The more the merrier. An innumerable company, which all thy creatures cannot number, may draw water with joy out of the well of salvation, and yet there

not be one drop the less. Where still is the fault that I am so unfruitful, and do not encourage others to enter themselves in thy family? Am I the fig-tree which thou hast cursed, and said to, Never fruit grow on thee more? or is it not rather my wicked heart of unbelief that tells me, Godliness is grown with most but a dead commodity, and if I offer to put it into my chapman's hands, my own wares will go off the worse? How often hath it suggested to me, that to commend truth to my customers will be the way to lose my trade; that I must not follow holiness too close at the heels, lest it dash out my brains; that it is to no purpose to persuade men to godliness, and that I do but lose my labour in all my counsels and admonitions to others! This unbelief, Lord, is the traitor which is such an enemy to the crown and sceptre of thy dear Son. Oh, let it please thy Majesty to execute it speedily! Why should this worm lie gnawing at the root, and hinder my soul from glorifying thee, by bringing forth much fruit? Is not my soul a vine of thine own planting? Thou broughtst her out of Egypt, a state of bondage and slavery to sin and Satan, and she is come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved. Why doth this boar of the wood waste her, and this wild beast of the field devour her, even this evil heart of unbelief, whereby she departs away from the living God? Return, I beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; fence it by thine almighty power, prune it by thy providence, water it with the showers of thy grace, and so quicken it with the beams of thy favour that it may bring forth much fruit to thy glory.

I wish that I may, like Enoch, walk so with my God in all my actions, whilst I walk amongst men, that in thy good time my soul may be translated, and I may not see death, either as the wicked in this world do, with terror, or as the damned in the other world do, in torment, to their everlasting woe. Lord, thou art Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord my righteousness; be pleased to clothe my person with the robe of thy Son's imputed righteousness, that my nakedness may not appear before men and angels, to my eternal shame; let all my actions be covered with the garment of thy Spirit's imparted righteousness, that they may be acceptable and amiable in thine eye. Let thy grace so fill my heart that godliness may be visible in my hands, and I may thereby draw others towards heaven. Thou hast said, Behold, I make all things new; what wilt thou then do with this old corrupt nature of mine? Oh, renew that, or nothing will be new to my comfort. O God, create a

clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within me. I know the time will come that thou wilt create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. My body is the earth, and my soul is the heaven which thou hast already made; but might thy servant prevail with thy Majesty to create my soul thy new heavens, and my body thy new earth, wherein may dwell righteousness, how infinitely should I be bound to thy distinguishing mercy! Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; oh give me understanding, that I may keep thy commandments! Were my soul bespangled with the glorious stars of thy graces, and my body embroidered and curiously wrought, so as to be the temple of thy Spirit, then indeed thou mightst reflect upon what thou hadst made with complacency; for, behold, it would be very good. Hast thou not made the great world for man, and the little world, man, for thyself? When shall I be so pure as to invite thy presence, and so sanctified as to be set apart from all others, and to be only for thy service? Oh, make it appear that I am thy workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which thou hast before ordained that I should walk in them. If thou pleasest to set forth this heaven and earth, this little epitome of the creation, in a new edition, I know it would be done in so fair a character as to delight thine eyes, and to ravish the hearts of all that behold it. It is confessed the copy was perfect when it came out of thy hands; there was no unrighteousness or impatience, not the least blot or blemish in it; but my parents, who transmitted the book to the world, through their unfaithfulness, filled it from the beginning to the end with errors. Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, Gen. v. 3. The first sheet went off the press, through his cursed falseness and negligence, imperfect, and full of faults, and the many millions that followed have still retained the same defects. Yet, Lord, since thy Son was at the cost of a new impression, let it please thee, for his sake, to be at the pains of correcting this volume so effectually, that those who look into it may read righteousness, courtesy, meekness, faith, humility, patience, heavenly-mindedness, printed in so large a letter, free from the former errors, that they may so like it as to embrace and imitate it. Oh then I shall be assured that, at the general resurrection, when thy last hand shall pass on me, and I shall be published in the newest and last edition, none of those blots and blurs wherewith I have defiled it shall be found in it, but thy image shall be printed on me in such a lovely character, and in so perfect a manner, that thou wilt delight in me, and I in thee, for ever and ever! Amen.

CHAPTER II.

How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the choice of their companions.

Secondly, Thy duty is, to make religion thy business, and to exercise thyself to godliness, in relation to thy company. Man, saith the great philosopher, is ζῶον πολιτικόν, nature's good-fellow—as one Englisheth it, A creature in love with company.¹ Cosmographers observe, that the farthest islands of the world are so seated, that there is none so remote, but that from some shore of it another island or continent may be discovered, as if nature hereby invited countries to mutual commerce. God never intended that the world should be a wilderness, nor the chief inhabitants thereof, as barbarous beasts, to live alone, lurking in their dens. Monks, and nuns, and hermits, who, under pretence of sanctity, sequester themselves from all society, are so far from more holiness, and being better Christians, than others, that they seem to have put off the very human nature, and not to be so much as men. Unclean, nasty persons, love to be always private, and by their good will, would neither see, nor be seen of others. Birds of prey fly always alone, and ravenous brutes come not abroad till others are retired, Ps. civ. 23. Our very senses speak that God would have us sociable; nay, it is the natural voice of our tongues; for our speech, and hearing, and sight, would be in a great degree lost, and our Maker's end in giving us those organs and instruments for converse much frustrated, if every man should immure himself in his own cell. The graces and spiritual riches of saints would, in some measure, be useless, if they did not deal with some to whom they might distribute them. The law of man condemneth engrossers of external goods; and the law of God condemneth engrossers of spiritual good things. They who study to monopolise all to themselves, undo others. As the world shall never want poor men, that the wealthy may always have objects of charity, and opportunities of laying out and improving those talents which are committed to their trust; so the world shall never be without needy Christians, that those who are rich in grace may have fit objects and occasions of employing their

¹ Siquis est qui congressus, et societates hominum ferre non possit, aut nullo egeat, quod seipso contentus sit; is profecto in parte civitatis non est habendus; ita vel Deus putandus.—*Arist. lib. ii. De Repub. cap. 2.*

gifts.¹ The moralist's axiom is right, *Omne bonum quo communius eo melius*; Every good thing is so much the better, as it hath many sharers in it. In this sense, there is a truth in that, It is not good for man to be alone; not that it was a formal evil, but inconvenient. Infinite wisdom hath so dispensed his gifts and graces, that no man is so sterile, but he hath something wherewith to profit others, nor any man so furnished and fruitful, but he standeth in need of others' help.² The head cannot say to the foot, much less the foot to the head, I have no need of thee. The king himself, who seemeth to have least want, cannot subsist without the meanest workmen, even them that grind at the mill: 'the king is served by the field,' Eccles. v. 9.

Company is both comfortable and profitable.³ The pelican avoideth other birds, and keeps alone, but her tone is always sorrowful. Christians walk more merrily in the way of God's commandments, when they have many fellow-travellers; Christian discourse doth so enchant the hearts of the passengers, that God's statutes are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage. A partner, though it be in misery, is a mercy; and to have one to sympathise with us in our sufferings, is no small ease. The way to prevent the flying in pieces of these vessels, filled with the most piercing sorrows, is to give them vent, by opening ourselves to others. This made David bewail the want of such friends: 'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off.' Haman sings, or rather sighs, to the same doleful tune: 'Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness,' Ps. xxxviii. 11, and lxxxviii. 18. Besides, there is as much profit as comfort in companions. The Vulgate read that which we translate *company*, Job xvi. 7, the *members of my body*, because associates, as members of the same body, are serviceable to one another; as the several parts of the same building, they help to bear up each other in their proper places, which, if divided, would all fall to pieces. They never walk long, being soon weary, whoever walk alone.⁴ Many houses in the city have such weak walls, and are so slightly built, that if they stood several in the open fields, they would not stand a year; a high wind would easily

¹ Nullius rei sine socio jucunda possessio. Non magis utilitati est ager cum reditibus amplis, quam vicinus aequalis cum moribus bonis.—*Senec.*, Epist. 11.

² Amicitia est omnium humanarum divinarumque rerum benevolentia et charitate summa consensio, qua quidem haud scio, an, excepta sapientia, quicquam melius homini sit a diis immortalibus datum.—*Cicero*, *De Amicitia*.

³ Comes jucundus in via pro vehiculo est.—*Senec.*

⁴ Societas est adunatio hominum ad aliquid perficiendum.—*Aquin.*

tumble them down, which now, standing in streets together, receiving support from, and returning it to others, continue many scores of years. Thus many Christians would be easily overthrown by the storms of temptations, were they single and solitary, who resist them with courage, and come off with victory, being assisted with their companions.¹ But this benefit ariseth not from every companion; some are like coals, which, instead of warming us, do black, nay, burn us. It is better to travel alone, than with a thief. Better is a blank than an ill filling; bad humours infect the blood, and evil men infect the soul. It is better, though it be melancholy, to travel alone, than with them who lie in wait for our blood. He is no better than distracted, who knowingly goeth with them that will lead him into by-paths, to his ruin. Though God did not like that Adam should be alone, but intended him a companion, yet it was such a one as was a meet help. Beasts were no fit companions for Adam, nor those whom God calleth and counteth beasts, for Christians. Cato, being desired by a voluptuous wretch, that he might live with him, answered, *Cum eo vivere non possum, qui palatum magis sapit quam cor*,² I care not for living with him that hath more skill in his meat than in his mind. Therefore, reader, I shall—

1. Speak to the choice of thy companions.

2. To thy carriage in company.

In order to the first particular, I would offer thee some motives, that I may quicken thee to care in thy choice, and then direct thee about it.

SECTION I.

First, Consider of what concernment the choice of thy companions is to thee. They will either be great helps, or great hindrances, according as thy choice is right or wrong. Antisthenes wondered at the folly of those who were curious in buying but an earthen dish, to see that it had no cracks, and careless in the choice of friends, to take them with the flaws of vice. A friend is called the friend of our bosom. A companion is taken into our bosom; and surely men had need to be wary and wise what they take into their bosoms, whether saints or serpents, a disciple or a devil. We can converse frequently with nothing, but it is insensibly assim-

¹ Solem e mundo tollunt qui tollunt amicitiam.—*Amb. De Amicitia*, cap. 7.

² Plutarch.

lating us to its own predominant quality.¹ Waters vary their savour according to the veins of the soil through which they slide. Brutes alter their natures answerable to the climates in which they live. Men are apt to be changed for the better or worse, according to the conditions of them with whom they daily converse;² the election therefore of our companions is one of the weightiest actions of our lives, our future good or hurt dependeth so much upon it. It is an excellent speech of Chrysostom, If men, good and bad, be joined together in a special band of society, they either quickly part, or usually become alike. This made the mother of Alexander, the twenty-sixth emperor of Rome, keep a guard of men continually about, that no vicious persons might come to him to corrupt him.

If thy choice be bad, thou art in a double danger, of sin and suffering.

1. Thou art in danger of being drawn to sin. They who dwell in Ethiopia quickly change their skins into a black colour. It is ill and unwholesome for our souls to breathe in an infectious air. Looking-glasses that are very clear and clean, are quickly obscured and dimmed with the foul breath of such as blow upon them. The river Hypanis, famous for the sweetness of its water, by receiving the bitter waters of the fountain Erampes, is poisoned. Joseph learned the court phrase, to swear by the life of Pharaoh, by his living amongst them whose tongues were tipped with such language. David was brought to feign himself frantic, and to dissemble, as if he could have fought against God's favourites, and sheathed his sword in the bowels of his friends, by associating with uncircumcised Achish. If Peter needlessly thrust himself among the high priest's servants, how soon is he taught, even with a curse and an oath, to deny his Master! Men, like children, come in time to speak the wicked language and cursed dialects too of the country and company in which they dwell.³ 'Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go,' saith the wise man. But mark, reader, his reason, 'lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' The love of friends may quickly breed a love to their faults; and so, by getting a friend, thou gettest a snare to thy soul, Prov. xxii. 24, 25. If thou wouldst avoid the

¹ Vix dici potest quanto libentius imitatur eos quibus favemus—*Quint.*, lib. x. cap. 2.

² Ut nummum exploras, num sit adulterinus, priusquam eo sit opus, sic amicus probandus antequam eo sit opus.—*Plut. Moral.*

³ Amicitiae ut pares quærunt, ita et faciunt. Amicitia parem aut facit, aut accipit. *Jerome in Mich. Proph.*

contagion of sin, avoid all needless communion with sinners.¹ He who walks much in the sun is tanned insensibly. Wicked men will be likelier to make thee worse, than thou to make them better. Israel could not bring Egypt to worship the true God, but Egypt brought Israel to offer sacrifice to their false god. It was from them that the Jews sucked that poison which cost both them and their posterity so dear. The golden calf was first fashioned in the iron furnace. The tyrant Mezentius tied the living bodies of the captives to the dead; ² the dead stunk up the living, but the living could not quicken the dead. Lewd men are continual weights, pressing down others to wickedness. How few live in Venice but grow lecherous? or in Spain, but become proud? or in France, and are not fantastic? or among the Dutch, and do not drink in both their deceitfulness and their drunkenness? It is natural for men to put on the fashions, be they never so wicked, of the country or company wherein they abide. It is said of Rome, He that goeth thither once, shall see an evil man; if he like so well as to go a second time, he shall gain his acquaintance; but if he go a third time, he shall bring him home with him.³ The mind, like Jacob's sheep, receiveth the tincture and colour of those objects that are presented to it. Sin is a gangrene, which, if it seizeth one part, quickly spreadeth and infecteth the other parts which are near it, 2 Tim. ii. 17. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, whether it be the leaven of error, or of scandal, 1 Cor. v. 7; Gal. v. 9. Sinners are plague-sores, as the LXX read λοιμοὶ, pests, Ps. i. 1, which we translate scorers, that convey the contagion to all their companions. A little wormwood will embitter much honey, and one sinner destroyeth much good, Eccles. ix. 18. Of a certain prince of Germany it is said, *Esset alius si esset apud alios*, He would have been a better person, if he had but been with better companions. An unclean, leprous person under the law, tainted whatever he touched; therefore God would have him distinguished by his bald head, his torn habit, and his habitation apart, that all might avoid him. And what is the gospel of it, but that men should avoid the scandalous, infectious sinner, lest they be defiled

¹ *Rerum natura sic est, ut quoties bonus malo conjungitur, non ex bono malus melioretur, sed ex malo bonus contaminetur; diversitas enim rerum nunquam potest habere concordiam, et multos sollicitat societas nefanda.—Chrys. in Mat.*

² *Corpora corporibus jungebat, mortua vivis.*

³ *Ante ignem consistens, etiamsi ferreus sis, aliquando dissolveris; proximus periculo diu tutus non erit. Per assiduitatem cito peccat homo. Sæpe familiaris implicavit, sæpe occasionem peccandi dedit, sæpe quod voluntas non potuit assiduitas superavit.—Isidorus, lib. ii. Soliloq.*

with his sin. The Nicopolites so hated the braying of an ass, that for that cause they would not endure the noise of a trumpet. Reader, if thou hatest every false way, according to thy duty, if every sin be loathsome to thee, I doubt not but thou wilt be far from loving the cup in which this cursed potion is, I mean the sinner's company. Those that company much with dogs, may well swarm with fleas. God tells Israel, 'Thou shalt not make a covenant with them, (meaning the Canaanites.) They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me,' Exod. xxiii. 32, 33. 'There is great prevalency in evil patterns. Evil precepts persuade, but evil patterns compel men to sin; 'lest they *make* thee sin against me.' The Pelagian error is, that no sin came in by propagation, but all by imitation; but it is an experienced truth, that sin is much spread and increased by example. It is common to sin for company, and that cup usually goeth round, and is handed from one to another. At least, evil company will abate the good in thee. The herb of grace will never thrive in such a cold soil. How poorly doth the good corn grow which is compassed about with weeds! Cordials and restoratives will do little good to the natural body, whilst it aboundeth with ill-humours. Ordinances and duties are little effectual to our souls, whilst Christians are dis-tempered with such noxious inmates. It is said of the mountain Kadish, that whatsoever vine be planted near it, it causeth it to wither and die. It is exceeding rare for saints to thrive near such pull-backs. It is difficult, even to a miracle, to keep God's commandments and evil company too; therefore, when David would marry himself to God's commands, to love them, and live with them, for better for worse, all his days, he is forced to give a bill of divorce to wicked companions, knowing that otherwise the match could never be made: 'Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God,' Ps. cxix. 115. As if he had said, Be it known unto you, O sinners, that I am striking a hearty covenant with God's commands; I like them so well, that I am resolved to give myself up to them, and to please them well in all things, which I can never do unless ye depart; ye are like a strumpet, which will steal away the love from the true wife. I cannot as I ought obey my God's precepts, whilst ye abide in my presence; therefore depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God. Sometimes saints are ashamed to shew themselves whose servants they are, sometimes they are afraid of giving offence to their friends or neighbours of the synagogue of Satan; some snare or other the great soul-hunter

catcheth them in, when he finds them amongst his own, that they shall refrain their mouths from all good, while the wicked is before them, Ps. xxxix. 3. They who touch the fish called torpedo, lose their senses, and find their members so benumbed for a time that they cannot stir them. How often hath spiritual sense been taken away and grace been, as it were, in a swoon by the noisome vapours, and filthy exhalations, that have arisen from ungodly companions! How many of them, like the pine-tree, with their shadow, hinder all other from growing near them! A conjurer in Tindal's presence could not shew his cheats, but confessed there was some godly man in the room that hindered him. A Christian who thrusteth himself into vain fellows' company cannot do the good, shew the grace he should, and may acknowledge ungodly persons to be the cause. A tender person used to warm chambers, coming into the open air, finds his members chilled and unfit for action. Oh what a damp hath many a Christian found to come upon his spirit, by his conversing with those that are wholly carnal! Antisthenes would frequently say, It was a great oversight in men that would purge their wheat from darnel, not to purge their commonwealth from lewd persons.

2. Further, thou art in danger of suffering, as well as of sinning with them. The wheat hath many a blow for being amongst the chaff. The gold would not be put into the fire, if it were not for the dross with which it is mingled. God loves his saints so well, that he sometimes saveth sinners temporally for their sakes. Holy Paul was the plank upon which all that sailed with him got safe to shore; the grass in the alleys fares the better for the watering which the gardener bestoweth on his flowers in the banks. Israel is a blessing in the land of Assyria, Isa. xix. 24. The whole world will stand the longer, because Christians bear up the pillars thereof. But God hates sinners so much, that even his own people, being amongst them, have suffered temporally with them. Lot chose wicked Sodom for a pleasant habitation; but what did he get by it, when he was captivated with its inhabitants, and afterwards forced to leave that wealth, which drew him to love it, to the destroying flames? Josiah, though peerless for his piety, was not spared when he joined with the Assyrian, but his league with them cost him his life.¹ When two are parties in a bond,

¹ In the wars against the Albigenses, when the Popish army took the populous city of Beziers, they put to the sword above sixty thousand, amongst whom were many Catholics, their own friends, who suffered for being amongst their enemies. The Pope's legate being general, commanded it, and gave this reason, *Cedite eos omnes; novit enim Deus qui sunt ejus.*

though one be the principal, both may justly be cast into prison. It is ill being in a felon's company when the officer of justice overtakes him; he may come to suffer for the treason, who harbours and abetteth the traitor: 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed,' Prov. xiii. 20. The apostle St John, saith the ecclesiastical historian,¹ finding Cerinthus, a blasphemous heretic, in the bath, and some others as bad as he, departed away presently, lest divine vengeance should find them together. Nay, the very heathen had some sense how unsafe it was to associate with vicious men. When Bias was in a ship amongst a wicked crew, and a storm arising, they cried aloud for mercy; he bade them hold their peace, and not let the gods know they were there, lest the ship should be sunk, and all perish for their sakes.² When the great ordnance of wrath shattereth a wicked man in pieces, the force of it may strike down those that are next him. 'We command you, brethren,' saith the apostle, 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly,' 2 Thes. iii. 6. The word withdraw is an allusion to mariners' heedfulness to avoid rocks and sands, lest they should be ruined by them. They who would not shipwreck themselves, must decline both sinners' courses and company.³ The psalmist would not eat of their dish, lest he should pay their reckoning; 'let me not eat of their dainties, nor drink of their cup.' He durst not be so familiar as to feed with them, lest he should afterwards fare as they. Friend, as thou wouldst not suffer with sinners, take heed of sitting with them.

It is enough to bring a man into suspicion at court to be intimate with one whom the king hates. Entireness with wicked persons, saith one,⁴ is one of the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation both of sin and punishment. When the deer, pierced with the arrow, and pursued by the hounds, runneth to the herd for shelter, they will not admit her amongst them, out of a principle of self-preservation, lest the dogs, in fetching her out, should fall on them. If thou wouldst not have divine judgments to attack thee, beware of being found amongst them who are marked out for vengeance: 'Come out from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues,' Rev. xviii. 4. It was dangerous being near those who were to be cast into the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had

¹ Irenæus Advers. Heres., lib. v. cap. 3.

² Diogen. Laert. in Vit.

³ Στρέλλομαι verbum sumptum est a nautis, qui flexo cursu declinant scopulum aut periculum.—Eras. Ps. cxliii.

⁴ Bishop Hall.

made. The men that took them up were scorched to death. Clemens Alexandrinus tells it as the world's saying, If a fish that is taken break the snare, and get away, no other of that kind is taken that day. How many that, through mercy, have been given to ill company, and broke the snares, have told us the mischief thereof afterward. Let their example make thee fearful of such snares. Some tell us that swallows would not fly into Thebes, because their walls were so often beleaguered; and wilt thou run into that company which is always besieged with God's thundering curse? Oh take heed with whom thou strikest friendship, for when the breath of God's anger overturneth the house of the drunkard or swearer, the houses of their next, though best, neighbours, may fare the worse for its fall. Let me give thee the same advice which physicians do their friends, touching persons infected with the plague,—*Cito, longe, tarde*: speedily shun their company; fly far away from them. Let it be long, even till their sores be healed, before thou returnest to them again, for it may be truly said of evil companions, what one saith of Romney Marsh, It is bad in winter, hurtful in summer, good never.

If thy choice be good, it will redound very much to thine advantage. It is no small happiness to have him for thy friend who is a favourite in heaven's court. Elisha offered it as a great kindness to his courteous host, 'Shall I speak for thee to the king?' This favour thou mayest expect in a greater measure from thy Christian friend. He will speak for thee to the King of kings, and send many a rich venture for thee into the other world, whence the return will be certain, and the gain superabundant. Oh it is good to have an interest in that heart which hath an interest in heaven! The great apostle begs hard, as upon his knees, for a share in the saints' prayers. Seldom hast thou heard a starving beggar so importunate for a piece of bread, as he is to be a partner in their joint stock: Rom. xv. 30, 'I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in your prayers to God for me.' And what is the reason? Truly Paul knew that united force was stronger, that such persons' prayers would be prevalent ambassadors to obtain the errand they were sent about. The father who denieth or delayeth a single child, when several of them together desire favour, granteth it speedily. It is hard to turn stones into bread, to fetch meat out of the eater, affliction; yet the saints' prayers have been helpful to do it. 'I know that this,'—*i.e.*, great tribulation,—'shall turn to my salvation through your prayers,' Phil. i. 19. A good

companion is a rare jewel, and of great value. It is observable that Moses, proceeding by degrees, ascendeth at last to the highest step of persons that may win upon us, and nameth friends as the top of all, and dearer than all relations: 'If thy brother, or son, or daughter, or wife, or friend, which lieth in thy bosom, which is as thine own soul,' Deut. xiii. 6. A godly friend is a choice book, out of which we may learn many excellent things, and a precious treasure, whereby our souls may be enriched with virtue: 'He that walketh with the wise shall be wise,' Prov. xiii. 20. They who walk with them that are strong-scented with grace, must needs receive somewhat of its savour. The very sight of that holiness which shineth brightly in their works will kindle thy spirit, and enlarge thy mind with an honest emulation of their worth. If, —as some credibly relate of Persina, the Ethiopian queen, by seeing the fair picture of Perseus and Andromeda, she was delivered of a fair child,—the frequent view of a fair picture hath such an operation upon the body, as to cause an Egyptian woman to bring forth a beautiful child, surely thy constant beholding the amiable image of the blessed God in thy pious companion, may have such an energy on thy soul, as to assimilate thee to its own nature, and help thee to bring forth a lovely issue, a Jedediah, whom the Lord loveth. The ground is the more fruitful which is near such trees of righteousness, for the dunging and dressing which the good husbandman bestoweth on them. When a friend of Phocion's would have cast himself away, Phocion suffered him not, saying, I was made thy friend for this purpose.

Reader, if thou hast any truth of grace, thou wilt, above all things in the world, value God's presence; but if thou wouldst find him, it must be amongst his people; they are his habitation, where he always resides.¹ Joseph and Mary sought Jesus amongst his kindred. If thy soul have any longing after the holy Jesus, the best way to find him is amongst his disciples, for they only are his kindred. He stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, saying, 'Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,' Mat. xii. 50; Luke ii. 44.

Secondly, Consider, the choice of thy companions will discover thy condition. It is a Spanish proverb, *Dime con quem andis a*

¹ Amabilis socius omnibus est officiosus, et nulli onerosus, quia devotus ad Deum, benignus ad proximum, sobrius ad mundum. Domini servus, proximi socius, mundi dominus, superiora habet ad gaudium, æqualia ad consortium, inferiora ad servitium.—*Hugo*, lib. iii. *De Anima*.

dezirte he quem eres, Tell me with whom thou goest, and I will tell thee what thou art. Sylla shewed the vileness and viciousness of his disposition by his companions, which were, Roscius, a maker of common plays; Sorax, a prince of scoffers; and Metrobius, a singing man.¹ It is easy to know to what house some persons belong, by their usual walking with those of the same family, either children or servants. It will be manifest to others, whether thou appertainest to the household of God, or the synagogue of Satan, by those with whom thou delightest to associate. The sheep of Christ do not love the company of unclean and unsavoury goats. Augustus Cæsar found out the temper of his two daughters, by observing their company at a public show, where much people were present; at which time his daughter Livia discoursed with grave and prudent senators, and his daughter Julia joined with loose and riotous persons.² The Lacedæmonians, inquiring after the dispositions of their children sent abroad to school, only demanded of their masters to what playfellows they were linked, whether those who were studious and serious, or such as were wanton and vicious, not doubting but they were suitable to them in their natures, whose fellowship they fancied. Many, if they walked alone, would be thought, by reason of their rich clothes, men of better estate than they are, and others meaner than they are, by reason of their mean attire, who yet both are discerned of what rank they be by their companions.

“Dulce quidem dulci se adjungit, amaraque amaris,
Acce perinde acri accessit, salsum quoque salso.”

It is said of the apostles, that being dismissed from the council, they went *πρὸς τοὺς ἰδίους*, to their own, or to their proper and peculiar friends, so the original; we translate it, to their own company, because saints are a select corporation by themselves; their privilege or charter is peculiar, and so are their companions, and the persons interested in it. The citizens of Zion are a distinct company from the rest of the world; and when they can get loose from their persecutors, they go to them of their own livery. The disciples were amongst the high priests and wicked men by constraint, and to their grief; but amongst their own only out of choice, and with their good-will. Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of his enemy.

‘Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange

¹ Plut. in Vit. Syll.

² Sueton.

country, dwelling in tabernacles, (not with the Canaanites, the natives, though he dwelt amongst them, but,) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,' Heb. xi. 9. When a man comes into an inn, you may give a notable guess for what place he intends, by the company he inquires after. His question, (Do you know of any travelling towards London? I should be heartily glad of their company,) will speak his mind and his course. If he hear of any bound for another coast, he regards them not; but if he know of any honest passengers that are to ride in the same road, and set out for the same city with himself, he sends to them, and begs the favour of their good company. This world is an inn; all men are in some sense pilgrims and strangers, they have no abiding place here; now the company they inquire after and delight in, whether those that walk in the broad way of the flesh, or those who walk in the narrow way of the Spirit, will declare whether they are going towards heaven, or towards hell. A wicked man will not desire the company of them who walk in a contrary way, nor a saint delight in their society who go cross to his journey. Can two walk together except they be agreed? They who walk together are supposed to have one will, because they are seen to have one way, Amos iii. 3. When Elihu would prove Job to be bad, this is his argument: 'He goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men,' Job xxxiv. 8. If Job did not follow their ungodly calling of working iniquity, or acting sin with art, as the word signifieth, you would not find him so much in their company. His doctrine was true, though his application of it was false.¹ A godly man may fall into wicked company by chance, but he never walks with such out of choice. He may be necessitated to dwell with them, but he cannot delight in them. To associate with the profane, is proper to the profane. As soon as Paul was sanctified, this was almost one of the first signs it appeared by: 'And Paul assayed to join himself to the disciples,' Acts ix. 26. He that before was for the company of the high priests, and persecutors of the saints, when once converted, is for the company of the saints, though persecuted. He who before, as one mad with rage, breathed out nothing but prisons and slaughter against them; being now enlightened to see the beauty of their persons, and the excellency of their communion, assayeth to join himself to them.

The young partridges hatched under a hen, go for a time along with her chickens, and keep them company, scraping in the earth

¹ Qui æquo animo malis immiscetur, malus est.

together ; but when they are grown up, and their wings fit for the purpose, they mount up into the air, and seek for birds of their own nature. A Christian, before his conversion, is brought up under the prince of darkness, and walketh in company with his cursed crew, according to the course of the world ; but when the Spirit changeth his disposition, he quickly changeth his companions, and delighteth only in the saints that are on earth.

He that would not be found amongst sinners in the other world, must take heed that he do not frequent their company in this. Those whom the constable finds wandering with vagrants, may be sent with them to the house of correction. Lord, said a good woman on her deathbed, when in some doubt of her salvation, Send me not to hell amongst wicked men, for thou knowest I never loved their company all my life long. David deprecates their future doom upon the like ground, and argueth it as sign of his sincerity : ‘ I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers ; and will not sit with the wicked. O gather not my soul with sinners,’ Ps. xxvi. 4, 5, 9—*i.e.*, Lord, I have not loved the wicked so well as to sit with them for a little time, and shall I live with them for ever ? I have not lain amongst them rotting on the earth ; and wilt thou gather my soul with those sticks for the unquenchable fire of hell ? Lord, I have been so far from liking, that thou knowest I have loathed the congregation of evil-doers. Do not I hate them that hate thee ? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred ; and shall thy friend fare as thy foes ? I appeal to thy Majesty, that my great comfort is in thy chosen. I rejoice only to be amongst thy children here, and shall I be excluded their company hereafter ? Oh do not gather my soul with sinners, for the wine-press of thine eternal anger ! Marcion the heretic, seeing Polycarp, wondered that he would not own him. Do you not know me, Polycarp ? Yea, saith Polycarp, *Scio te esse primogenitum diaboli* ; I know thee to be the first-born of the devil, and so despised him.

SECTION II.

Thirdly, Consider that there can be no true friendship betwixt a godly and a wicked person ; therefore it concerneth thee to be the more wary in thy choice. He that in factions hath an eye to power, in friendship will have an eye to virtue. Friendship, according to the philosopher, is one soul in two bodies. But how can they ever be of one soul that are as different as air and earth,

and as contrary as fire and water ? All true love is, *Motus animi ad fruendum Deo propter ipsum; se et proximo propter Deum*,—A motion of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for himself, himself and his neighbours for God's sake ; so that he can never truly love man who doth not love his Maker.¹ God is the only foundation upon which we can build friendship ; therefore such as live without him, cannot love us in him. That building which is loose, without this foundation, can never stand long. A wicked man may call that profession he maketh to his brother by the name of love, but heathens can tell us that virtue alone is the hand which can twist the cords of love ; that other combinations are but a confederacy, and all other conjunctions in hypocrisy. It is impossible that vitiated nature should move any other way than the principle of self carrieth it, which is directly opposite to true friendship.² Unfeigned love, saith Aristotle, is a benevolent affection, willing good to another for his own sake. How, then, canst thou expect the comfort of a friend from him who steereth wholly by the compass of self ? He saith he loves thee ; I am sure his lust hath more of his heart than thou hast.³ Either then thou must love the dog, his brutish lust, or he will tell thee shortly thou dost not love the master. If ever thou happenest to touch on his sore place, to tell him of his fault, (which thou art bound to do, if thou wilt be faithful to God, to him, and to thy own soul,) he will soon kick up thy friendship, and publish to the world that thou art an uncivil, saucy, and intolerable person. Such are like unwholesome meat, which can neither be detained in the stomach without danger of diseases, nor cast up without pain. By patching up a friendship with a carnal man, thou bringest thyself to this miserable plunge ; either thou must turn caterer for his flesh, purvey for his sensual appetite, and provide the air of flattery (a more hellish wind than any the Laplanders sell) to feed theameleon of his pride, or else snap the bones and ligaments of friendship in sunder, which will not be done without some pain and regret on each part. Cardan tells us that he would never rend a false friendship in pieces, but fairly pick the threads by which it was sown together ; but this is hard to do. Oh what folly is it to make choice of him whom thou canst not keep for thy friend without God's disfavour.

¹ In deo diligere non potest qui deum non diligit.—*Bernard*.

² Hominum charitas gratuita est.—*Cicero, De Natura. Deor.*, lib. i.

³ Humanitas vetat superbum esse apud socios, vetat avarum verbis, rebus, affectibus ; communem se facilemque omnibus præstat ; nullum alienum malum putat, bonum autem suum ideo maxime quod alicujus bonum futurum esse amat.—*Sen.*, Epist. 11.

Reader, if thine end be good in desiring companions, thou wilt be wholly frustrated in it, unless thou art wise in thy choice.¹ Canst thou think that he can love thee sincerely who is hypocritical in his love to his own soul?² Jonathan was a true friend, and loved David as his own soul. So it is said of Basil and Nazianzen, *anima una, inclusa in duobus corporibus*,—a wicked man [will] quickly love thee as his own soul, but not in Jonathan's sense. He loved David as his own soul, according to a renewed and spiritual light, as one that saw the worth of his soul, and his eye affected his heart; but a wicked man hath no love to his own soul in this sense; he loveth (or rather seemeth to love it, by carking and caring to please and pamper it, for indeed he hateth) his dying flesh, but he careth not at all for his ever-living spirit, mindeth not whether it sink or swim for ever. Now is it likely that he should be a faithful friend to thee, to direct thee in thy doubts, reprove thee for thy faults, who is such a cruel enemy to himself? Such a one may scare birds, but he will never secure a Christian. As the dolphin, in a calm sea he is never from the sides of the ship; but if a tempest arise, he is gone. He may indeed shroud his private aims under the cloak of friendship, but this the very moralist³ will tell you, *non est amicitia, sed mercatura*, is only to make a trade and merchandise of one another. There may be fire in the pan, when there is none in the barrel of the piece; there may be a profession of love in his words, but there is no love in his heart. I cannot more fitly compare such a man's friendship than to some plants in rivers, which have broad leaves at the top of the water, but scarce any root at all.⁴ He may make a great show of love, and tell thee, You shall never know what I will do for you, and then he speaks true; but his high building hath no basis, his great profession hath no root, and therefore is rotten.

To be brief, reader, thou wilt easily grant that there can be no true friendship betwixt a man and a beast, their natures being so differing. I must tell thee, it is more impossible for true friendship to be betwixt a true Christian and a carnal person, for their natures are more differing.⁵ The beast and a profane man differ

¹ Inter dispares mores firma non potest esse amicitia.—*Aug., De Amicitia*, cap. 14.

² Omnium societatum, nulla prestantior est, nulla firmitior est, quam cum viri boni moribus similes sunt familiaritate conjuncti.—*Sen., Epist.* 11.

³ *Sen., Epist.* 9.

⁴ Amicus est qui amat, et redamatur.—*Arist., lib. ii. Rhet.*

⁵ Vera illa amicitia, et Christi glutino copulata, quam non utilitas rei familiaris, non præsentia corporum tantum, non subdola et palrans adulatio, sed Dei timor, et divinarum scripturarum conciliant studia.—*Jerome in Epist. ad Paulin.*

indeed, yet are not contrary, nay, they are so much alike, that the sensual appetite is the predominant quality and commander-in-chief in both; only beasts are innocent subjects to it, as breaking no law thereby; but man, by being a slave to that usurper, is a traitor to his supreme Lord, and to his viceroy within him, reason. But a saint and a wicked man are contrary; consider them from head to foot, they stand both in defiance against each other. Their understandings are contrary; the one is light, the other is darkness; the one judgeth sin to be the greatest and most abominable evil, the other judgeth it to be a pleasant, eligible good. Their wills are contrary; the one is a resolved soldier under the captain of his salvation, fully set to lose his life before he will give up his cause, or leave his colours, the other is a sworn officer under the prince of the powers of the air, (an implacable enemy to the former general,) and stoutly bent to die, nay, be damned, rather than desert him.¹ Their affections are contrary: the affections of the one, as fire, ascend upward, are set on things above; the affections of the other, like earth, tend downwards, and are set on things below. What the one loves above his life, the other hates unto death; what the one forsakes as worse than poison, the other followeth after as his only portion.

Are these two, reader, like to agree, and to be, as friends should, of one heart and of one soul? *Idem velle et idem nolle est vera amicitia*, saith the orator: It is true friendship to will and nill the same things. What kind of friendship must it be, then, between those that always will and nill contrary things?² Let thy own reason be judge. If likeness be the ground of love, what love can there be amongst them that are wholly unlike? Oh, let not any carnal interest sway thee to choose Sodom for the place of thy habitation, much less to accept of God's foe to be thy bosom friend: 'For what communion hath light with darkness? or what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?' 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Like as the elements, according to Empedocles' opinion, are always at strife together, but specially those that are nearest, so godly and evil men are

¹ Mos fuit inter reges barbaros, quoties in societatem coirent, applicare dexteras, pollicesque inter se vincire, nodoque constringere; et ubi mox sanguis in artus extremos pervenisset, levi vulnere cruorem eliciebant, atque invicem habebant, idque fœdus arcanum, quasi mutuo cruore sacratum haberi solitum.—*Tacitus*.

² Some tell us that two who desired to become intimate friends, came into Vulcan's shop, begging this boon of him, that he would beat them on his anvil, or melt them in his furnace, both into one, the which he granted.

always at odds, but those especially that are nearest. The horse hath a natural enmity against the camel, and the camel against the horse; therefore Cyrus being to fight with the Babylonians, who excelled in horses, used as many camels as he could get. The sinner is like the horse, altogether unclean; the Christian is like the camel, (that cheweth the cud, though he divideth not the hoof,) is partly clean, partly unclean. Now, there being an enmity betwixt these, there can never be any society. The feathers of eagles, say naturalists, will not mingle with the feathers of any other fowls. Many complain of the treachery of their friends, and say, as Queen Elizabeth, that in trust they have found treason; but most of these men have greatest cause, if all things be duly weighed, to complain of themselves for making no better choice. He is right served, in all men's judgments, who hath his liquor running out which he puts into a leaking vessel or riven dish.

SECTION III.

I come now to shew wherein the power of godliness consisteth, or how a man maketh religion his business in the choice of his companions.

First, Be as careful as thou canst, that the persons thou chooseth for thy companions be such as fear God.¹ The man in the Gospel was possessed with the devil, who dwelt amongst the tombs, and conversed with graves and carcases. Thou art far from walking after the good Spirit, if thou chooseth to converse with open sepulchres, and such as are dead in sins and trespasses. God will not shake the wicked by the hand, as the Vulgate read Job viii. 20, neither must the godly man. David proves the sincerity of his course, by his care to avoid such society: 'I have walked in thy truth; I have not sat with vain persons,' Ps. xxvi. 5, 6.

There is a twofold truth—

1. Truth of doctrine. Thy law is the truth, free from all dross of corruption, and falsehood of error.

2. Truth of affection, or of the inward parts. This may be called thy truth, or God's truth, though man be the subject of it, partly because it proceedeth from him, partly because it is so pleasant to him, in which respect a broken heart is called the 'sacrifice of God,' Ps. li. 6. As if he had said, I could not have walked in the power of religion, and in integrity, if I had associated with vile and

¹ Non sunt fideles in amicitia, quos munus, non gratia copulat, nam cito deserunt, nisi semper acceperint. Dilectio enim quæ munere glutinatur, eodem suspensio dissolvitur.—*Isid.* lib. iii. *De Sum. Bon.*

vain company ; I could never have walked in thy precepts, if I had sat with vain persons. Observe the phrase, I have not sat with vain persons.

1. Sitting is a posture of choice. It is at a man's liberty, whether he will sit or stand.

2. Sitting is a posture of pleasure. Men sit for their ease, and with delight ; therefore, the glorified are said to 'sit in heavenly places,' Eph. ii. 6.

3. Sitting is a posture of staying or abiding, 2 Kings v. 3. Standing is a posture of going, but sitting of staying. The blessed, who shall for ever be with the Lord and his chosen, are mentioned 'to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. viii. 11. David in neither of these senses durst sit with vain persons. He might, as his occasions required, use their company, but durst not knowingly choose such company. They could not be the object of his election, who were not the object of his affection : 'I hate the congregation of evil-doers,' saith he, in verse 7. As sitting is a posture of pleasure, he did not sit with vain persons. He was sometimes amongst them to his sorrow, but not to his solace. They were to him, as the Canaanites to the Israelites, pricks in his eyes, and thorns in his sides. 'Woe is me, for I dwell in Mesech, and my habitation is in the tents of Kedar !' Ps. cxx. 5. It caused grief, not gladness, that he was forced to be amongst the profane.

Again, he might stand amongst them, but durst not, unless necessitated, as a prisoner kept by force in a prison, sit with them. A godly man may go to such persons, as we do sometimes to felons in a jail, about business, but he likes not to stay in such a nasty place. It is said of the lizard, an unclean bird, that she liveth in graves, and such places of corruption ; but the dove, a clean creature, loves to build and lie clean. Though the sinner, like Satan, delights in herds of swine, the saint disesteemeth 'a vile person, and honoureth them that fear the Lord,' Ps. xv. 4.¹ The burgess of the new Jerusalem, saith one upon that text, *reprobos reprobat, et probos probat*, he rejecteth the vicious, and though they may be great and high, counteth them but vile. Elisha was so far from bestowing his love, that he thought an evil king not to deserve a look. 'As the Lord liveth, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee,' saith the prophet to the king of Israel, 2 Kings iii.

¹ One gave his friend this advice : Have communion with few, be intimate with one, deal justly with all, speak evil of none.

14. That unerring pattern, our blessed Saviour, did not judge wicked Herod worthy of one word: 'Then Herod questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing,' Luke xxiii. 9. But the true Christian honoureth them that fear the Lord, though he disesteemeth the wicked. Saints are God's jewels, and therefore must needs be of great price with them that have any judgment. Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves, at a feast, sets his pagan nobles in his hall below, and entertained a company of poor Christians at his own table in his presence-chamber, in the most royal manner, and with the costliest cheer that might be; and when this different dealing was wondered at by his peers, he gave them this reason: I do this act, not as king of the Draves, but as king of another world, where these poor men shall be my companions and fellow-princes.¹ David was a great sovereign, yet the saints only were his associates. 'Let them that fear thee, turn unto me, and such as keep thy righteous judgments.' 'They who but touched the carcasses of men,' and wicked men are but moving carcasses, 'were unclean seven days,' Num. xix. 11. 'The flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten,' Lev. vii. 19. God commanded the Jews, 'Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind. Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee,' Lev. xix. 19. This, indeed, taken literally, was ceremonial to them, and is vanished with their commonwealth; but taken mystically, there is something in it which is moral, and binding to us—namely, that God abhors mixtures of good and bad persons more than of different things, and the apostle applieth it to the same purpose.

Reader, if God hath opened thine eyes, thou seest that saints are lovely, though low, and precious, though poor. 'I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar,' Cant. i. 5. Kedar signifieth black, and the tents of Kedar were of hair-cloth, made of goats' hair, wherein they dwelt. Here the church, which elsewhere is called the 'tents of Jacob,' Jer. xxx. 18, is for her persecutions, and pilgrimage, and poverty compared to the tents of Kedar, saith Ainsworth; but I suppose there is one thing more in it, and that is, as the church did resemble the tents of Kedar in her outward condition, so also in her inside. The tents

¹ Convictor delicatus paulatim enervat et emollit, necesse est aut imiteris, aut oderis, utrumque autem devitandum est, ne aut similis malis fias quia multi sunt, ne vel inimicus multis quia dissimiles. Cum his conversare, qui te meliorem facturi sunt; illos admitte quos tu potes facere meliores.—*Senec.*, Epist. 11.

of Kedar were stored with gold, pleasant odours, and jewels within. Oh, how glorious is the king's daughter within ! Her inward ornaments are infinitely more worth than wrought, than choice gold ! Dost thou not behold the saints' virtues under their veil ? their beauty under their black cypress ? How they are a crown of glory, a royal diadem, princes in all his lands, higher than the kings of the earth, more excellent than their richest, wisest, and most honourable neighbours ; the Lord's portion, his peculiar people, his privy councillors, his children, his love and delight, and doth not thine understanding prize them, thy will choose them, and thy affections cling and close with them ? Surely, such persons are worthy to be thy companions. Christians must resemble the loadstone, to attract that only to them which is of some worth, and not, like the jet, draw stubble, and hay, and straw, to which wicked men are compared : ' To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight,' saith that man after God's own heart.

Further, it is thy interest to choose them only for thy friends ; others will one time or other prove false ; those men will stick closer than a brother. ' Greet them that love us in the faith ;' such love will be firm, Titus iii. 15. Ungodly men may be about us as mice in a barn, whilst something is to be had, but when all the corn is gone, they are gone too ; if thou ceaseest to give, they will cease to love. When the weather is foul—as swallows, though they chattered about our chimneys, and chattered in our chambers—they will take their flight, and leave nothing behind but dirt and dung, as the pledge of their friendship. Haman's friends, who, when he was in favour, were ready to kiss his feet, no sooner saw the king incensed against him, but they are as ready to cover his face, and help him to a halter. There is no faith in that man who hath no fear of the great God.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, If thou wouldst manifest godliness in the choice of thy companions, thy care must be, not only to choose such as are godly, but also to choose them because they are godly. As godliness must be a ruling quality in them that are chosen, so it must be the ground of thy choice. A man may keep company with godly men because they live near him, or because they are related to him, or because they are wise, learned, or ingenious persons, or because they may do, or have done, him a courtesy, and yet not put forth

the least grain of godliness in it. When God's grace in them is the only ground of our choice, and God's image on them the chief loadstone of our love, then we exercise ourselves to godliness in the choice of our companions. If I love my neighbour, and like his company, because he resembleth me in his feature or in his nature, or because he is a mild, meek, peaceable man, or because I expect some kindness from him, herein I shew my love to myself, but none to my God, and therefore nothing of godliness. Laban delighted to have Jacob with him, and would by no means hear of his departure; he sets him to be chief over his flock, he bendeth and boweth to him, he flattereth and fawneth on him, though his servant and underling, and who so much as Jacob in his books!—but mark the ground of all: 'And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thy sight, tarry; for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake,' Gen. xxx. 27. He loved Jacob for himself, or rather loved himself in Jacob; he courted him, not because he was a good man, but because he was a good servant. Herein was nothing of religion—as the Jews followed Christ, not for the miracle, but for the meat, John vi. Such men love others for the outward goods they bring to them, not for the grace or godliness they see in them; for if they were not holy, they would desire their company. This is feigned, and not the love the apostle speaks of, 1 Pet. i. 22, *εἰς φιλαδέλφειαν ἀνυπόκριτον*, 'the unfeigned love of the brethren,' or 'love without dissimulation.' The voice of a worldling in the choice of a friend, is much like that of Joram to Jehu, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' Is it wealth? is it honour? is it power? then be thou my friend. But the voice of a Christian is like that of Jehu to Jonadab, 'Is thy heart right, as mine is?' Is there the fear of God, truth of grace, in thy heart? then give me thy hand, come up into the chariot, be thou my friend.

The choice of a Christian must flow from another fountain than worldly profit—namely, the amiableness of the image of Christ in the person. The heat and light of a wicked man's love, as a lamp, is fed with, and floweth from, some earthly substance, and is extinguished when that is denied; but the heat and light of a saint's friendship, as the solar rays, springeth from a heavenly cause, and therefore will continue. The apostle speaketh of love out of a pure heart, 1 Tim. i. 5; that is, pure love, a pure stream, which ariseth from a pure heart, a pure spring—that is, not only the grace of God, secret in a Christian, but the grace of God, seen in his companion whom he loveth. It is clearly visible that many associate with

Christians, not for their virtues, but at a venture—they were possibly the first they fell in league with, or upon some other respect¹—for they know others as high in holiness whom they slight, nay, possibly hate; whereas he that loveth grace in one, loveth grace in all. It is an infallible sign of a crooked nature, saith Cicero, to be affected with none but prætors and great men. It is little sign, I am sure, of grace, to join only with those saints that are rich or high in the world. If thou admirest holiness in scarlet and robes, and contemnest it in sackcloth and russet, I must tell thee thou art grossly deceived; for thou admirest the scarlet and honour, not the holiness at all.

I do not deny but amongst Christians a man that hath the opportunity may choose out some, rather than others, to be his most intimate companions. Christ, though he loved all his disciples, yet had one especially, the beloved disciple, who leaned on Jesus' bosom. Amongst all the apostles, he vouchsafed to three only the favour of his extraordinary friendship. When he raised up the ruler's daughter, he suffered none to go in, save Peter, James, and John. When he was transfigured, he took up with him only Peter, James, and John; in his bitter and bloody agony, these three were taken out from the rest, Luke viii. 51; Mat. xvii. 5, and xxvi. 37.

But if I might advise thee, reader, in such a choice, I would give thee these two cautions:

First, That thou prefer those whom God prefers; I mean, such as have most grace. It is a sign of a coward to choose a weak enemy, and it is a sign of little grace to choose the weakest Christian friends; he that hath most of God's heart, deserveth most of thine. I am ready to think that Peter, James, and John, that had more of Christ's love than the rest, had more of his likeness and image than the rest. I confess, some respect in the choice of a bosom friend ought to be had to his prudence. Some men, though holy, are indiscreet, and in point of secrets are like sieves—can keep nothing committed to them, but let all run through. A blab of secrets is a traitor to society, as one that causeth much dissension. It is good to try him whom we intend for a bosom friend before we trust him,² as men prove their vessels with water before they fill them with wine; if we find them leaking, they will be useless

¹ Amicos secundæ res optime parant, adversæ certissime probant.—*Sen.*

² Diligentes agricolæ terram prius notulis quibusdam deprehendunt, et explorant, priusquam illi credant sementem. Ita explorandus amicus antequam committas arcanum.—*Erasmus.*

as to that purpose. Too many are like the Dead Sea, in which nothing, saith Aristotle, sinks to the bottom, but everything thrown into it swims at the top and is in sight. Nakedness in mind is as well a blemish as nakedness in body. It is wonderful folly which some persons manifest in stripping themselves naked before every one, and unbosoming themselves whoever stands by. Pictures that have no curtains before them gather much dust, and so do those minds that are ever open and exposed to every man's view. Others are like the sea, full of wealth and worth, of great abilities in spiritual things, but there is no coming at it; they are so concealed, that none is ever like to be the better for it. Those golden mines that are never known enrich none.

There are a middle sort of Christians between these, that, like a secret box in a cabinet, is not seen without some difficulty, but, as occasion is, it is opened, and then many jewels of rare value appear.¹ The bow that is hardest to bend doth the most service, for it sendeth forth the arrow with the greatest force. The nut that is hard to crack hath the best kernel. These Christians may, as likely as any, be thy bosom friends, though some respect, I confess, may be had to suitableness of disposition in him whom thou choosest for an intimate friend. As in marriage, so in friendship, it is best when there is some equality and likeness in pairs, as of tongs or gloves there must be a parity. Such friendship, founded both in grace and nature, is like to be lasting.

2. That in preferring some, thou castest no contempt upon others. The smallest piece of pearl is worthy of esteem; the little violet is pleasant. The poorest Christian, he that hath the least grace, deserveth our love and observance. Christ takes notice of two mites, of a little strength, of some good thing, and shall not we? Mat. xii. 43; Rev. iii. 8; 1 Kings xiii. 14. Babes in Christ, being unable to help themselves, have most need of good nurses; weak saints, who can hardly go alone, do most want a helping hand. A saint that is mean, as well as a mean saint, must be countenanced. It is good to countenance godliness in the rich, but it is evil not to encourage it in the poor. Our love must, like the ointment poured on Aaron's head, which ran down, not only to his beard, but to the very skirts of his garment, be drawn out to the highest, and fall down on the lowest saints; David by this shewed the life and truth of his love: 'I am a companion of all that fear thee, and keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 63. Of all; none that hath thy fear

¹ Tu omnia cum amico delibera, sed de ipso prius.—*Senec. De Benef.*, lib. vi. cap. 24.

but shall find me their friend : though I am their king, and above the highest, yet for thy sake I can cheerfully be companion to the lowest.

SECTION V.

Thirdly, In thy choice, have respect to spiritual ends, and accordingly improve it. Attend and intend thy own and thy companions' soul good in it. Friendship hath a key to the heart which it may use, not only to let itself into its secrets, but also to introduce its own conceptions. He hath a great advantage of persuading another to, and encouraging him, in holiness, who is already entertained as his friend into his heart. Where the person is so acceptable, the instruction will be the more welcome. We carry others sometimes along with us to our friends' houses, and they are kindly entertained for our sakes. Now, to improve this interest any other way than on God's behalf is sacrilege. How abominable were it then to use this key for the bringing in of thievish lusts and murderers upon him ! There is no nearer union than of intimate friends ; they are one soul.¹ He then that loves himself, and knoweth grace to be his own greatest perfection, must needs endeavour that his friend may have a large portion of it. Persons of quality have a great delight to adorn and beautify the places where they inhabit, and loathe to live in dirty styes or nasty dungeons. True friends dwell in each other. The soul is, saith one, not so much where it liveth, as where it loveth ; how delectable then must it needs be for them to seek the embellishing and embroidering those hearts with holiness, in which they have taken up their abode !² Love is apt to transport us, so far as to imitate the errors of those whom we affect, like unskilful painters, who express only the wrinkles and blemishes of a face, not being able to reach its beauty. Without question, this love, if rightly improved, would be more prevalent to make thy friend ambitious to resemble thee in virtue, in regard to the amiableness of virtue in itself, and its great advantage above error. It is clear that grace hath a much more ravishing and delectable appearance than vice, in all her paint and daubery, even when she is looked upon through the devil's optics.

A good friend in this respect is of much worth ; therefore Alex-

¹ Non est vera amicitia ubi est fallax adulatio.—*Amb., De Offic.*, lib. iii.

² Solatium hujus vitæ est, ut habeas, cui pectus tuum aperias, cui arcana communices, ut colloces tibi fidelem virum qui in prosperis gratuletur tibi, in tristibus compatiatur ; facilis vox et communis, Tuus sum totus, sed paucioris est effectus.—*Amb., De Offic.*, lib. iii.

ander, when one desired to see his treasure, shewed him, not ἀργυρίου τάλαντα, but τοὺς φίλους, not his talents of silver, but his friends; and Menander counted him a happy man that had but the shadow of one. Though fortune hath shewed me many favours, saith Plutarch,¹ that deserve I should be thankful to her for them, yet there is none that maketh me so much bound to her, as the love and good-will my brother Timon doth bear to me in all things.

God hath caused many wants and weaknesses in us, that we may be needful to one another, and purposely given diversity of gifts and graces, that we may be helpful to each other. No nations have all the commodities they use of their own growth, but need trading with others for their supply. Believers cannot keep house well without borrowing from their neighbours. There is 'that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,' Eph. iv. 10. If our Christian communion be not employed for this end, we are slothful servants, hiding our talents in a napkin; if to a contrary end, we are miserable alchemists, and extract poison out of a cordial. Countries that are joined together in a strict league, often grow rich by mutual traffic. Christians have found, by experience, that mutual commerce well employed hath brought them in very great gains. Paul himself, that was of a great spiritual estate, and much given to hospitality and feeding hungry Christians, yet expected sometimes to be entertained at his poor neighbours' tables. He writes to the Romans that he hopes to be filled with their company, Rom. xv. 24—filled or feasted with some heavenly repast by their company.

Oh it is lovely and happy when two friends are like Moses and Aaron: 'He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou to him instead of God,' Exod. iv. 16; where their love is shewn by edifying and building up one another in holiness. This were some prelibation of heaven, where those lines of love, which stretch themselves to every part of the circumference, do all meet in God as their centre. But I shall speak more to this in the fourth chapter.

I shall conclude this particular with an answer to two objections.

Oby. 1. Christ commandeth us to love our enemies, Mat. v. 45; Gal. iv. 10; and what love do we shew if we turn our backs always upon them, and banish them our company? Besides, we

¹ In Vit.

are commanded to do good to all. I am bound to seek my wicked neighbour's salvation, and to love my neighbours as myself, Lev. xix. 18, which how can I do if I always shun him? Again, if I should avoid all that are carnal, I must untie the bonds of my relations, which God and nature forbid, and cast up my calling, which I am commanded to mind.

Ans. In answer to these things, I shall first lay down one or two distinctions, and then some positions.

1. *Distinct.* There are sinners of several forms in Satan's school. Some that learn too much the lesson he sets them, but quarrel not with the scholars of a contrary master; though they are ungracious, yet they are not outrageous. These are wild beasts in a cage, or in chains, that a man may sometimes take notice of without any hurt. Others do not only study the lectures he sets them, be they never so full of blasphemy and debauchery, but seek to make proselytes, and cast scorn and contempt upon all piety, and rail at those that will not learn their black art; these are in his upper form, and have proceeded from standing in the way of sinners, to sitting in the seat of the scornful, and will be ready in a short time to be sent to hell, the only academy to which he prefers his scholars. These are worse than the dogs of Egypt; they, when the Israelites marched towards Canaan, did not stir their tongues, but these bark at all that sets out for heaven. Many who had risings and spots in the skin of the flesh, were not to be judged unclean, and shut out of the camp; but those that had the scab spreading much in the skin, (typifying those whose sinful courses were gaining and growing upon themselves or others, Lev. iii. 3, 4, 8,) they were to be thrust out of the camp.

2. *Distinct.* It is one thing to come into wicked men's company, as a man's occasions or relations require, and it is another thing to choose such company. David was frequently amongst the bad, but his delight and joy was only amongst the good. An acquaintance is one thing, and a companion is another thing: acquaintance is the herd, a companion is the particular one culled out of it for a special friend. It is one thing to have intimate familiarity, and another thing to have common and civil commerce with such men.

1. *Position.* To love my neighbour as myself, doth not infer an equality, but the quality of my love. A Christian must love all men truly, but is not bound to love all men equally. The greatest degree of our love is limited by God himself (next to his blessed Majesty and ourselves) to these two objects, the household of faith, and our own household—not excluding others, but

preferring these. For even within ourselves there is a difference in our love; we love our head, and heart, and other vital parts, with a closer affection than those outward integral parts that are not of so great concernment to us. I may therefore love every man as myself, and yet love some above others, and my own soul above all. *Exemplar potius est exemplato*, The example is before the thing exemplified. If a man is bound to love another as himself, he must needs love himself first, and more than another. Thy love to them may cause thee to hope that thou mayest convert them, but thy love to thyself should make thee fear lest they should pervert thee.

2. *Position*. A Christian is bound to avoid all needless society with wicked men. Mark, I say needless; when our relations command it, as amongst husbands and wives, and parents and children, or our vocations call for it, then it is necessary. Those precepts that enjoin us to forbear their company, are to be understood when we have no call to it. We may trade with wicked men, we must perform all moral duties to our kindred, and acts of courtesy and charity to the worst of our enemies, so we be careful to keep ourselves from their corruptions, and use their company no longer than the discharge of those duties doth require. When by admitting their persons, we cannot avoid their vices, we must deny both.

3. *Position*. Christians should, as God gives them opportunity, if there be any hope of doing good, endeavour to reform men, before they wholly reject their company; nay, and pray for their welfare after they have refused them for companions. It is small kindness to shut up a man that hath the plague, lest he should infect others, and to use no means for his own cure. If I find that a man is desperately bent in wickedness, that religion is the object of his laughter, and to give him any serious counsel is to cast pearl before swine, I must judge such Ishmaels and Esaus unworthy of human society; but it is a very hard case to shut a man up in a coffin, and bury him before he be quite dead. Sometimes vicious men are in distress, and a godly man hath a call from God to do him some charitable office; here the Christian may have less fear of receiving hurt from them. Afflictions are bonds, and these beasts in chains are not so unruly. Paul's viper, benumbed with cold, did not sting him. Here a Christian hath also more hope of doing good to them. The hard metal, when in the fire, may receive impressions. Men will take that physic willingly in their sickness which they refused in health.

4. *Position.* A Christian may love a wicked man sincerely, though he wholly shun his society. He may affect him with a love of pity, though not of complacency; he may shew his love by pouring out his heart in petitions to God for him. Though a saint deny a scandalous sinner his presence, yet he doth not deny him his pity nor his prayers; nay, our non-communion may be a means of their conversion: 'If any obey not the word, have no company with him, that he may be ashamed,' 2 Thes. iii. 14. Shame and confusion is a good step towards conversion. A wicked man's presence burdens a saint, and a godly man's presence hardens a sinner. Surely, thinks he, I am, if not praiseworthy, yet tolerable, and not very bad, since such a good man is so much with me. They who did eat and drink in Christ's presence on earth, wondered much to be excluded from his heavenly banquet, Mat. vii. 23. Hymeneus and Alexander were excluded Christian society, that they might learn not to blaspheme, 1 Tim. i. 20. This wounding is the way to healing; it makes profane men bethink themselves, when sober persons avoid their presence.

Obj. 2. Did not Jesus Christ accompany with wicked men? Can I follow a better pattern? or can any pretend to more purity? Is not Christ upon this account called a friend of publicans and sinners?

Ans. 1. I answer, more generally, All our Saviour's actions are for our instruction, but all are not for our imitation. Christ indeed hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21, but not in all the prints of his feet. Christ did nothing amiss; but he that shall undertake to do in all things as he did, will follow him too close, and do many things amiss. It may be commendable to imitate my sovereign, but it is possible enough to do it so far as to be guilty of treason by it. Some of Christ's actions were done by him as man, others were done by him as mediator, or God-man. In many of these latter we cannot imitate him, in others we may not. Who can work miracles, forgive sins, &c., as Christ did? Who may appoint apostles, constitute laws for the church, &c., as Christ did?

Ans. 2. More particularly, Christ had a call, which all others have not, to go amongst wicked men. Where should a physician be but amongst his patients? To deal with such is his calling. Christ came to call sinners to repentance, to heal their vitiated natures; and therefore it was necessary he should associate with them. He went amongst them, not as a friend to their sins, but as a physician to their souls. How should he otherwise have cast

out devils, cured their sicknesses, and proved his deity to their faces? An ambassador, being commissioned by his prince, may do that which, if an ordinary subject should do, may cost him his life. Abraham might, having liberty from God, stand still and behold Sodom flaming, when Lot might not so much as cast an eye, or have a glance towards it. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and so he went to them in discharge of his errand and mission; he had also a commission under his Father's hand and seal, Luke iv. 18; John vi. 27.

Ans. 3. Christ had no tinder about him to take fire, being conceived without sin; but we are little else than dry tinder, and therefore have cause to avoid the least spark. 'The prince of this world cometh,' saith Christ, 'and findeth nothing in me,' John xiv. 30; he cometh with his baits, but there is nothing in me that will be nibbling at them. Besides, his deity was a perfect antidote against all infection. As the beams of the sun, he could be in filthy places, and amongst defiling persons, and not receive the least pollution; when we have such infectious souls, that we are ready to receive the contagion from the least infectious breath. Our corrupt nature is like fire, which, if there be any infection in the room, draweth it straight to itself.

Ans. 4. Christ did not choose the company of publicans and sinners, though he was often amongst them. A physician is not in a pest-house with delight, though his own pity, and their misery, may call him thither. Sinners were the guests, saints only the delight of Christ; wicked men had his company, but the disciples only were his companions. He was intimate with none but believers; others were his care, they his comfort. It was to them he said, I have not called you servants, but friends; 'for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you,' John xv. 15, 16.

To conclude, reader, be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them: charity forbids the former, and Christianity the latter. Love to them must preserve thee from envy, but love to thyself must keep thee from keeping them company. Whenever providence calleth thee amongst them, make them thy fear, not thy familiars; 'For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief,' Prov. xxiv. 1, 2.

1. Society in evil we may not hold; no, not with the best men, Eph. v. 7, 11. *Si cum malis, non tamen in malis*, Ps. cxli. 4.

2. Society in good, (*i.e., in sacris*,) in the worship of God,

we may hold with the worst men, Mat. xxiii. 1, 2, and xxi. 12, 13.

3. Society in things indifferent we may have with all men, as in civil commerce and offices of humanity, Gen. xxiii ; 1 Cor. x. 27.

A good wish of a Christian about the choice of his companions, wherein the former particulars are applied.

The blessed and glorious God, the Father of mercies, and foundation of all communion, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, who hath sufficiently evidenced the good of companions in saying, It is not good for man to be alone, and who hath sanctified society by his own example in creating angels and men, not only for mutual comfort in the fruition of each other, but also that his sacred Majesty, and those heaven-born spirits, might have fellowship together, as intimate friends, and especially in that infinite complacency which he had in his beloved Son, and his Son in him from all eternity, who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him ; having made me rational, and thereby meet for converse with men, religious, and thereby capable of communion with Christians, I wish that I may never abuse his kindness by shutting up myself, as monks and nuns, in cells or cloisters, or as some melancholy persons, in a closet or chamber ; but may know both how to be alone, and how to be in company, and be so sensible of his love in affording me fellow-travellers, that my journey to my Father's house may be the more pleasant, that I may accept it thankfully, and improve it faithfully to his own praise. My God suffereth my spiritual wants, that I may look for help, under him, from others' wealth ; and he affords me spiritual riches, that I might be able to supply others' poverty. It is his pleasure that none of his children (though to some he gives liberal estates, to all a competency) should be able to live without being beholden to their neighbours. Though privacy hath fewer incitations to evil, company hath more provocations to good, by so much as doing good is better than not doing evil. Let me prefer society before solitariness ; yet, Lord, let me never be a good fellow in the world's sense, to join with all sorts, but let my fellowship be with them that have fellowship with thee. Though I may have bad acquaintance, let me not have a bad companion ; whatsoever commerce I may have with sinners, let my communion be only with thy Majesty

and thy saints. Oh, let them that fear thee turn unto me, and such as keep thy righteous judgments, Ps. cxix. 79.

I wish that the consideration of the great influence which companions will have upon me, to hinder or help me in the way of holiness, may make me the more prudent in my choice. Though there be some quicksets of grace in the soil of my heart, yet these evil weeds may endanger their death, at least will prejudice their growth. How often hath ill company, as an east wind, nipped and destroyed those buds which gave hopes of becoming in time good and wholesome fruit! If the fire of my godliness be not extinguished, (no thanks for that to myself,) yet it is sure to be abated, by these waters. My spiritual life is maintained only by that provision which my God is pleased daily to send me in; and can I expect that he should send supplies into his enemy's quarters? What man will send goodly furniture into his house until the dust and rubbish be cast out? With what reason can I look for succour from heaven, when I run myself into the jaws of hell? Though others that are found out by their grand foe may receive help from God, and come off with conquest, yet if I go to seek out the tempter (for where can I sooner find him than in his house?) amongst his own children, I shall have little pity, and may well expect to be foiled in the fight. Again, how doth familiarity with what is evil make it less frightful! Children are much startled at some creatures, which, when they are accustomed to, they are not at all afraid of. Possibly my anger against sin at present is very hot; but evil company is a drug that will much allay the heat of that simple. The filthiest disease is not so loathsome in a wife or child as in a stranger, nor in an intimate friend as in another. If there be not a due distance betwixt the visive faculty and the object, there can be no true sight. If the sin be too near me, (in a friend that lieth in my bosom,) I cannot behold its ugliness and deformity, its heinous, hateful nature. I doubt not but that poisonous apple, which had eternal death at its core, would have been far more loathsome and detestable in Adam's eyes (much less would it have been so lovely and acceptable) had he seen it in any other hands than of his dearest and only companion on earth. Oh that, since he was wounded by the hand of his nearest and most intimate friend, who had the breastplate of complete righteousness and perfection of grace for his shield, I might never dare to thrust myself amongst such enemies, who am, compared with him, wholly naked and unarmed! I am apt to think that I can secure myself against their shot; but, alas! the long and often playing of the cannon

will batter the strongest wall ; a continual dropping will pierce a stone. Doth not experience tell me, that it is no hard matter to give such a weakling as I am a fall ? And is it likely that I should stand fast in so slippery a place ? My God asketh me, Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt ? Can one go upon coals, and his feet not be burnt ? My clothes, notwithstanding all my care to the contrary, will smell of the coals, and my feet will blister with the fire. My God tells me that sin is a canker, a gangrene, and experience teacheth how spreading and infectious sinners are, 2 Tim. ii. 17. I may think to make them better, but they are more likely to make me worse. Sickness is catching, but not health ; the rotten sheep infect the sound, but the sound sheep do not cure the rotten. Solomon's bosom companions drew his heart from his God ; but I read not of any one of them whose heart he drew to his God. If pitch be but touched, it defileth ; but fuller's earth doth not so soon cleanse. If Israel once join themselves to Baal-peor, they quickly eat the offerings of the dead, and bow down to their idols. It is as ordinary to put on other men's faults as their outward fashions. One Korah did but kindle the fire of rebellion, and presently two hundred and fifty captains brought wood to increase its flame, to their own destruction. If I know of any that have infectious diseases, love to my body will not suffer me to drink of their cup, or to sit at their table ; and when I know of them that have such contagious spiritual sicknesses, shall not love to my soul move me to forbear their society ? Lord, my prayer hath often been, Lead me not into temptation ; shall I run into temptation ? Thou knowest how prone I am, should I walk with wicked persons, to walk in their wicked paths, and hast therefore laid thy strict command upon me, 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away,' Prov. iv. 14, 15. Keep me from hazarding this frail potsherd (my flesh) upon the rock of evil company, from venturing amongst those vipers, lest I be stung. Enable me to avoid the congregation of evil-doers, and keep me from going with the wicked, lest I learn their ways, and get a snare to my soul.

I wish that I may be the more fearful of joining with sinners, lest my God join me with them in their sufferings. It is evil and woeful to be found in that house which is all over in a flame. The anger of my God is worse than a consuming fire, and shall I associate with them that are always under his fury ? When a city is taken by storm in the night, the sword makes no difference, amongst the inhabitants, betwixt friends and foes. What safety

can I expect in being near them that are far from God's law and love? Wicked men are dross, they have no good metal in them; they are neither fit vessels to serve, nor current money to enrich me. But though I be gold, if mingled with such dross, I must look to be melted. If the stork accompany the cranes, it is no wonder if she be taken in the same net. Jehoshaphat was a good man, yet for joining with the wicked, wrath came upon him from the Lord, 2 Chron. xix. 2. If I follow him in his sin, shall I be free? All that sailed in the ship fared the worse for one disobedient Jonah; his company cost them the loss of their lading, and was like to have cost them their lives. The whole body of Israel fell before their enemies, because wicked Achan stood amongst them. O my soul! dost thou think, then, to afford such thy presence, and not to share in their punishment? Consider with seriousness what thy God saith: 'Depart from the tabernacle of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins.' Wouldst thou, for any carnal profit, be found amongst those persons who are every moment in danger of the bottomless pit? The earth clave asunder that was under them, and swallowed them up—their houses, goods, and all that appertained to them. Oh what man, unless bereft of his wits, would be one hour contentedly in the company of these Korahs, that are always liable to God's curse? Let the great use thou makest of such dreadful doctrines be, not to partake of their sins so much as by thy presence, that thou mayest not partake of their plagues. 'And they that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said, Let us be gone quickly, lest the earth swallow up us also,' Num. xvi. 26, and xxxi. 34. Lord, thine enemies enjoy many mercies, through their neighbourhood to thy friends. Thou art so loving a Father, that the servants of sin, whom thou countest no better than dogs, do fare much the better for that bountiful table which thou keepest for thine own children. The dogs have eaten the crumbs which fall from the children's table. The tares continue the longer in the field, and the sickle of thy justice doth not yet cut them down for the unquenchable fire, because the wheat is amongst them; but thy saints have suffered much outward misery for their nearness to sinners. Thou art such a holy jealous God, thine hatred of sin is so infinite, that when the fire of thy wrath hath consumed unbelievers, some sparks of it have lighted on their best neighbours. When the hand of thy fury hath fallen heavy on the workers of iniquity, thy chosen sitting by them have been sensible of the blow. My prayer hath often been, Remove thy stroke away from me, and my complaint,

for I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. I tremble to think of the frowns of thy face, but surely the weight of thy hand would sink me indeed. Oh guard thy servant so powerfully by thy grace, that I may avoid all appearance of evil. As I would avoid thy batteries, let me avoid the camp of thine enemies, and keep me from giving them the least countenance, that I may not be wrapt up in their vengeance.

I wish that the great gain which I may get by good companions, may make me the more diligent to find them out. Though it is no small unhappiness to be joined to them that are ever standing under the spout of the Lord's fury, yet it is blessed to be near them that are always under the droppings of divine favour. Christ is always present with his people, and therefore I may say with Peter, 'It is good to be there.' When a king comes to visit one of his peers, all the family oftentimes tasteth of his bounty, but the nobleman's relations of his grace and love; he converseth with them, and they with him. If sinners are the better for the neighbourhood of the saints, and for their sakes God lets his enemies experience his goodness, surely believers shall be the better for the neighbourhood of their brethren, and shall have experience of special good-will. I cannot conceive the kindnesses which may be done for me by these friends at court. Their interest is great in the blessed and glorious potentate. The King is not he (as was once said in another sense) that can deny them anything: Whatsoever they ask the Father in Christ's name, he will do it for them. When guilt flieth in my face, and I dare not appear, or when, through the prevalency of temptation, I cannot pour out a prayer, they will appear for me, put up my suits, and that with success; if I be dull, they may quicken me; if I am in doubts, they may resolve me; if I wander, they will be faithful in acquainting me with my faults to reduce me; if I walk uprightly, they will be helpful, by administering heavenly cordials, to encourage me. A faithful friend will be my second self, and love me as his own soul. When I faint, he will endeavour to revive me; when I fall, he will do his utmost to recover me; he will rejoice with me in my joys, and sympathise with me in my sufferings; in every condition, to his power, be a suitable consolation. Oh that the value and virtue of this pearl may make me esteem it at a high price, and the more wary that I be not cheated in my choice! Lord, thou hast ordained the communion of saints to be for mutual comfort and counsel, let me choose those for my friends that will be faithful to their own, and to my soul.

I wish that I may manifest to my own conscience the truth of my conversion by my companions, and that I am passed from death to life, because I join with, and love the brethren. Beasts flock together, sinners join hand in hand, and saints are of the same heart, and walk together towards the same heaven. My associates will discover my nature, whether virtue or vice be my master. My comrades will speak to what captain I belong. If I join with the black regiment of the prince of darkness, it is a sign I am an enemy to the Lord of hosts. The members of Christ's mystical body go in company. It is presumed they are unchaste women who company with known harlots, and it is supposed they are dishonest men who are familiar with thieves. If Christ and grace be predominant in me, I cannot like and love their enemies. A holy soul cannot delight in profane sinners. Melted gold will unite itself with the substance of gold, but not incorporate with dross. A heart truly good cannot brook those that are evil. All creatures desire to join with such as are of the same nature. Fish, fowls, birds, beasts, all, every one strive to be with them that are of the same species. Confederacy in sin is the livery by which the black guard of hell is distinguished from the rest of the rational creatures. True friendship is the cognisance of true Christians: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' Love is the badge of the household of faith, which witnesseth to what lord they appertain. Where love is in truth to their persons, there will be a delight in their presence. For what is love but a motion of the soul towards, and its complacency in, the object beloved. In vain do I pretend myself a disciple, without sincere love, which is the life of a disciple. Love to my God is the soul of religion, which keeps it in being, in motion; without this, the whole body of it decayeth and dieth. All my performances, if this be lacking, are but as an unsavoury corpse, without either loveliness or life. Love to my brethren is the sign of religion, which ever sheweth itself at the door, where the substance is within. He that loveth him that begetteth, must needs love him also that is begotten. The child is acceptable for the father's sake. The picture is amiable, because of the person it representeth. Oh, how grossly do they delude their souls, that think they love the head, when they hate and despise the members! that say they affect and prize Christ above their lives, when they reject and persecute Christians to the very death! Lord, thou hast told me, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' All thy children are my brethren; they have the same father, the same mother. Oh, suffer

me not to give conscience cause to witness against me, that I am in a state of death, of damnation, for want of this brotherly affection; but grant that the hot beams of thy love may so warm my heart, that I may be always reflecting back love to thyself and thy saints, as an evidence of my eternal salvation.

I wish that I may consider whom I choose for my companions, lest I be disappointed in the ends of company. My God intendeth society to be helpful to his people in the best things; but they are never likely to further me in holiness, who walk in the broad way that leadeth to hell. Satan's servants will not teach me to do the Lord's work. That friendship is ill made which is soon broken: no band can hold him who is a stranger to religion. Where there is no fear of God in the heart, there can be no true friendship. They who are two in disposition will scarce be one in affection. Where there is no true likeness there can be no true love. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Grace is the only cement which conglutinates hearts, and maketh two friends. A brutish sinner and a believer are contrary each to other. An unjust man is abominable to the just, and he that is upright in his way is abominable to the wicked. The eagle hath perpetual enmity with serpents, and dragons, and their seed; so hath the eagle-eyed Christian with the seed of the serpent. Beasts hate fire, and so do those whom God calleth foxes, and lions, and bulls, the fire of grace that burneth in a saint's heart, and flameth out in his life. Lambs and wolves, doves and ravens, cannot unite. Jerusalem and Babylon, Zion and Sodom, can never be compact and at unity together. Can I expect love from that person that hath none for his own soul, nor for the blessed God? Can contraries meet and not fight? Is there any hope of an amicable conjunction betwixt them that are not only differing, but opposite? I am born of God, he is of his father the devil. My work is to do the will of my Father in heaven, his work is to do the lusts of the wicked one. Self is the bias by which he moveth, Scripture is the compass by which I sail. I am travelling towards heaven, he is hastening to hell; and is it possible for us to have one heart? Oh that no worldly advantage might make me ever strive to strike a covenant with them to whom I am thus contrary! They must needs be false to me, that are made up of unfaithfulness. A true friend is another self. A vicious man cannot be a true friend, because he is never himself. Sometimes he is drunk with passion, and so loseth his guide, and leaveth the dictates of reason; those servants are often in rebellion, and then, like the troubled sea, he casteth up mire and dirt. In

his fury he will strike at friends or foes, and discover what he knows, and more many times. Passion is a high fever, wherein men talk idly; therefore the wise man gives a special caution against such companions: 'Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go,' Prov. xxii. 24. Sometimes he is overcome with wine, and then the beast in him puts the curb into the mouth of reason, and hath the command of it. A drunken man hath Nebuchadnezzar's brutish heart, and is fit only to graze with cattle. Clitus is killed by his drunken master; and such a one speaketh and doth, he knows not what. He speaks what he should forget, and forgets what he hath spoke. The drunkard's mind and stomach are alike, neither can retain what they receive. Solomon likewise sets a brand at this man's door, to discourage every sober man from coming there: 'Be not amongst winebibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh.' Always he hath some lust or other lording it over him; and according as their interests lead him, so he acteth, that his friend must expect no more of him than they can spare; and is such a person like to prove a cordial friend? He may abound in frothy words, but I must expect no faithful deeds from him, if ever I come to sufferings. Like a drum in a battle, he may make a great sound, but will act nothing for my succour. Like a cipher, though now in my prosperity he stands for thousands, in my adversity he will stand for nothing. Such a friend will be like a familiar devil, which forsakes the witch when she is in fetters. How much shall I miss of my expected help from him, when I am brought into hardship! As a lemon, he may be hot without, but is altogether cold and cooling within. Oh that I might never manifest so much folly, as to choose him for my friend whose principles will teach him to be false! He so often changeth his dwelling for his own end and interest, that I shall not know where to find him when I stand in most need. As a fly, he will tarry no longer in the kitchen than there is grease to feed him. I am but his pond, which he will use whilst there is any water, but when dry, I shall hear no more of him. Lord, how far would thine end of society be frustrated, and my hopes of comfort in companions be disappointed, should I choose him who is ruled neither by religion nor reason? I beseech thee, let my lot fall amongst those persons that are filled with the fruits of thy Spirit, for they only will be faithful to the true and holy ends for which thou hast ordained friendship. Preserve me from walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners, lest, being found in their company, I come to inherit their curses.

I wish that I may, like Paul, join myself to the disciples, and be in league only with them who are joined to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten. I profess myself to be a follower of God; my God hath set apart him that is godly for himself, Ps. iv. 3. If the godly man be the object of my God's choice, he may well be of mine. If he be separated for his service, he is without question worthy of my society. Surely there is some value in those vessels which are meet for the master's use. Common and ordinary things are not fit for a prince's table; neither is every person meet for a king's presence. They are specially qualified with parts and abilities that stand before great men. Pharaoh would have none but men of activity to serve him in tending his cattle. Nebuchadnezzar would have children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding sciences, and such as had ability in them, Dan. i. 4, to stand in the king's palace. What manner of men are those, then, whom the glorious God hath chosen to wait upon him? There cannot but be rare perfections in them that are set apart to shew forth all his praise. He is infinitely wise, and would not honour them so much that are not of eminent worth. O my soul, what a loadstone is here to draw forth thy love towards the saints! Thy constant, thy loving, thy best friend, sets a high price upon them. All the world besides is a wild wilderness to him; they only are his garden, wherein he delights, and wilt not thou walk there with him, amongst such fragrant flowers, and pleasant fruits? He esteems others but as dust; they are his jewels. Observe what he tells thee: 'The heart of a wicked man is little worth, but the tongue of the righteous is as choice silver.' The heart of man includes the understanding, will, and affections, the soul, and all its faculties, and is the noblest part of man; it is the fountain of life, the spring of motion, the feet of his empire and regiment; nay, the commander-in-chief, that ordereth and disposeth of all at pleasure. Yet this heart, which is the most excellent part, in a wicked man is of small price, it is little worth—nay, is worse than naught; but the tongue (a far inferior member) of the righteous, is (no mean metal) as choice silver, and makes a most delightful sound. Wilt not thou join thyself to these excellent ones? If their tongues be as choice silver, surely their hearts do infinitely excel fine gold; nay, are more precious than rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, neither shall they be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. Who would not be greedy of acquaintance with men of such surpassing eminence? It would bewray extreme

want of wisdom not to be ambitious of communion with persons of such worth. Besides, should I join with others, I choose them that are my God's enemies. It is not only ingratitude, but treason, to countenance them that are traitors against the crown and dignity of Jesus Christ. It was a sharp and cutting reproof which Jehu gave to king Jehoshaphat. I wish I may never give cause for the like to me. Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? My God counts my enemies his enemies, and hates them that hate me, and shall I esteem his enemies my friends, and love those that hate him? Wicked men are a generation of vipers; they hiss at godliness, and spit their poison at God himself: 'They stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty,' Job xv. I shew but small kindness to the God of all my comforts, if I take his foes to be my friends. Once more, I disgrace my birth, my breeding, I dishonour my profession, my prince, if I accompany with wicked persons. It is below a great heir to company with beggars. It is a discredit to a king to be taken up with porters: 'A companion of riotous men shameth his father on earth,' Prov. xxviii. 7. A companion of vicious men shameth his Father in heaven: it speaketh his education to be very mean, and his expectation to be low, both which reflect upon his father. Oh that I might never disgrace my God's goodness, in the cost and charge he hath been at with me, by choosing the scullions and filth of the world to be my companions, nor disparage my own judgment in refusing the excellent of the earth, and them that are princes in all lands. Lord, thy people are thy portion: 'Jacob is the lot of thine inheritance; they are precious in thy sight, and honourable, for thou hast loved them: they are fair in thine eyes, and altogether lovely.' Help thy poor servant to resemble thy Majesty. Give me spiritual eyes to see their beauty; and let my soul be so ravished with that comeliness in them, which thy Spirit hath put upon them, that those which are a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a peculiar people, higher than the kings of the earth, the glory of Christ, and a royal diadem in thine hand, may be the delight of mine eyes, the joy of my heart, and my fellow-travellers towards that house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

I wish that the commands of my God may be the warrant of my election; and the beautiful image of my God may be the only motive of my affection to his chosen. Should I shew favour to the saints, and not with respect to the fear of my God in them, I manifest no sanctity. It is possible for me to love the man, and yet

hate the Christian, in the same person. How frequent is it to love men that are godly, and yet not to love godliness ! Potiphar respected Joseph, a good man, but not for his goodness' sake ; he preferred him as a good servant to him, not as a good subject to God. The children of Heth honoured Abraham for the sake of his riches, or courtesy, not upon the account of his righteousness and piety. Abimelech struck a covenant with Isaac as a good neighbour, not as a believer. It is one thing to love peace, and another thing to love purity ; this latter is proper to a Christian, the former compatible to heathen. Oh that my love might never, as Laban's to Jacob, be mercenary—carried out towards any of God's people, more for the good I get by them, than for the good that is in them ! How unsuitable is such a love to the divine nature, and how unworthy of my profession ! If I love them for their wealth or their bounty, I love their riches, not them ; or rather, I love myself, and neither them, nor anything of theirs. This is self-love, not saint-love. If their persons were stripped of those ornaments wherewith they are now clothed, such love would languish and die. Should these be the wheels upon which my love moves, when they are wanting, my love will stand still ; such friendship is but like a fire of straw, which burns brightly whilst it hath matter to feed upon, but that being neglected, it is extinguished, and turned into ashes. O my soul, consider what foundation thy love is built on, lest it appear to be feigned. If thou lovest men for their parts, or for thy own profit, thou dost not love thy Saviour in them, but thy carnal self, and thereby dost evidence thine hypocrisy more than thy sincerity. It is not all kindness to saints, nor all joining with Christian society, which is an act or sign of sanctity. The Baptist had fair respect from Herod, and yet the king could take off his head. The barbarians shewed great courtesy to Paul and his companions, but not the least Christianity. Thy God commandeth thee to love the brotherhood, that is, to love them as brethren, not as kind, or wise, or great, or wealthy ; and to love the whole fraternity and brood of thy Father, not this or that brother. Oh do thou, in the choice of thy familiars, look over those natural or civil excellencies which infinite wisdom bestoweth only upon some, and mind chiefly that supernatural quality which is truly praiseworthy, and inherent in all. Thy God hath chosen the poor of the world, and he is no respecter of persons. Oh do thou follow his honourable pattern, and let the poor, the mean, the lowest members of Christ, be lovely and amiable in thine eye ! Choose godliness in all, and then thou wilt refuse none, but choose all that are godly. Though

the holiness of some be but as the smoking flax, do not thou choke, but cherish it. Lord, thou hast a tender respect for thy little children and babes in Christ, Mat. xviii. 6; it is thy pleasure that thy little ones should not be offended, that such as are weak in the faith should be received, Rom. xiv. 1. Cause thy servant to love all thy saints, and to be able to say, with that man after thine own heart, 'I am a companion of all that fear thee, and keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 63.

I wish that my end, in the choice of my companions, may be principally to further my own and their everlasting peace. If I use any company upon other accounts, I frustrate my God, I cozen my own soul. For me and others to unite in sin would be a conspiracy against heaven, and too lively a resemblance of those governors of hell, whose only work is to draw others to, and to encourage them in, wickedness. For us to join in gratifying the flesh, and purveying for our appetites, and passing away the time that it may be less tedious, would be a confederacy against the Spirit, and but a more cleanly and neat acting of the part of beasts, who understand no other happiness than to feed and sport together. For us to accompany only about worldly employments, to get an insight into commodities and callings, that we might be wiser to buy and sell, or to hear and tell news, this would become a Turk, and were but a cutting time, the most precious commodity of all, to waste. For us to associate, barely to increase our knowledge, and widen the windows of our understandings, or to quicken and raise our fancies, and enlarge our natural parts and endowments, even this would be but a transcript of the lives of the most refined heathen, who were ignorant of the true weight and worth of eternal concerns; but to meet together, as Christ did with his apostles, to discourse about the things appertaining to the kingdom of God, to provoke one another to love and to good works, to admonish, advise, encourage, and comfort, and to build up one another in the most holy faith, this is a work worthy of a Christian, and becoming them that are called to be saints. Oh that my God's end may be much in my mind, when I converse with any of his chosen, that all our conjunctions may be fruitful in holiness! Christians are choice tutors and rare masters, by whom many precious things may be learned; my God hath lent them me for a little while, and intendeth shortly to send for them home; why should I loiter or trifle with them, when such excellent lessons are given me by them? Lord, I know within a few days I shall be deprived of these and all other helps. Oh help thy most unworthy

creature, in that little time that he doth enjoy them, to make the most, the best improvement of them, to love them as my own soul, and to do them the greatest service I can; enable both them and me to be fellow-workers and fellow-helpers unto thy kingdom, that when we come thither they may bless thee for me, and I may bless thee for them, and all of us may bless thee for thy dear Son, and thy blessed self, for ever and ever.

Finally, I wish that I, who am a pilgrim and stranger in this earth, may join myself, not with the natives, the men of the world, whose portion is in this life, by whose company I am sure to contract either guilt or grief, but with my fellow-sojourners, who are travelling with me towards the same heaven. Though I love the wicked with a love of pity, I would love only the saints with a love of delight. Let my choice be of them now, with whom I would choose to be for ever. Oh let me join with those on earth, and that in discoursing of thy gracious word and glorious works, with whom I hope to join in heaven in admiring thy boundless perfections, and giving thee everlasting praise. Lord, if there be such comfort in thy chosen, and their voices be so lovely, and their faces so comely here below in the estate of their minority, when they are blacked with the world's calumnies and cruelties, and besmeared with their own corruptions, what delight will there be in them above, when they shall come to their full age, be parted from all their defilements, and be perfectly adorned with thine image! How lovely will their voices be, when they shall join with thy celestial choir in singing hallelujahs, and in running division on thine infinite attributes and excellencies! How comely will their faces be, when they shall be freed from all the freckles and spots of sin, and so see thee as to be fully like thee! Oh if grace in its infancy be so ravishing, what will it be in its maturity! If the morning of holiness be so glorious, how glorious will it be in its noonday lustre! Lord, if my soul rejoice so much in thy saints, who shine only as stars in their several orbs, with a borrowed light, what joy may I have in thyself, the true Sun! Oh, cause thy servant so to glorify thee in my choice of companions, and in my carriage in all companies, that I may come at last to enjoy immediate communion with thy beautiful saints and thy blessed Majesty, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in evil company.

Having spoken to the choice of companions, I proceed, reader, to thy carriage in company ; and, first, in evil company.

Though evil men are not to be the object of a Christian's choice or delight, yet he must sometimes fall into their company, or go out of the world,¹ 1 Cor. v. 10. Our relations, or vocations, or offices of charity, which we owe to the worst of men, will command our presence now and then amongst them. Civil commerce with them is lawful, though intimate communion be sinful. It is certain, the less we have of their society, the more of safety ; but because civility and our necessities require us sometimes to be with them, Christianity must help us, as a glass window, to let in the light, and keep out the rain, to get what good we may, and to prevent the hurt they intend.² God, in the first creation, separated the light from the darkness, and so must the godly man amongst wicked persons. Swine will be cleanly in a fair meadow ; sinners civil, sometimes, in the society of saints ; but Christians must keep their garments unspotted when they walk in dirty places, and amongst defiled persons. Godliness will be thy best armour to ward off those blows, and hinder those wounds, which those sons of violence and villany would cause in thee. A wise physician, whatsoever diseased patients he goeth amongst, will take some preservative ; but if he be to go into a pest-house, an antidote. It will be a sign of an excellent complexion, if thou canst walk, as occasion is, in the sun, and not be tanned. The Romans had a law, that every one, wherever he went, should wear a badge of his profession, or trade, either on his garment or in his hat, that he might be known. Christianity must be owned in every company, as that which is our great and worthy calling. The nobleman carrieth his garter or George with him in all places, because he esteems them his glory and honour ; and if he be of the blood-royal, he desireth that all may take notice of it. Oh, what an honour and happiness is it to be a Christian, to be related to Jesus Christ ! and how willing

¹ *Malorum consortia fugere debemus, quoad privatam consuetudinem, non quoad publicam conversationem ; corde, non corpore.*—*Amb. Q.ſſic.*, lib. i. cap. 20.

² *A malis corde semper disjungimini, ad tempus caute corpore copulemini.*—*Aug.*, lib. *De Salut. Document.*

shouldst thou be to own and acknowledge it as the badge of thine honour, amongst all persons ! He is a base servant that is ashamed of his lord's livery. It is said of the teal,¹ a certain wild beast in Ethiopia, that he hath two horns of a cubit long, which he moveth as he pleaseth—either both forward, to offend his enemy, or both backward, to defend himself, or one forward, and the other backward, to both uses at once. A Christian in evil company should be as wise as a serpent, that he do not bring himself into suffering, but yet as innocent as a dove, that others do not draw him to sin. Walk as prudently as thou canst, only walk piously. Use as much caution as thou wilt, but be sure thou keepest a good conscience.

The apostle gives a special precept for our pious carriage in such company : ' Walk wisely towards them that are without,' Col. iv. 5 ; in which words the qualification of the act, and the specification of the subject, are considerable.

1. The qualification of the act : ' Walk wisely,'—that is, graciously. Grace is wisdom : ' To fear God is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.' He who walketh in the law of the Lord, and according to the rule of the word, is the wise walker, Job xxviii. 28 ; Ps. cxix. 1 ; Gal. xvi. 16. Whatsoever our company be, we must walk by precept, not by pattern ; he may be a good courtier, but he is a bad Christian, that alters and orders his carriage according to his company. If, like musicians, we play no lessons but what the company calls for, and what pleaseth them, our music will be harsh and jarring in God's ears : ' If I please men,' saith Paul, ' I am not the servant of Christ,' Gal. i. 10. He walks foolishly that, to please a few weak, dying men, displeaseth the jealous and almighty God ; he walks wisely who will be sure, whoever be offended, to please him upon whose favour his life and all his comforts depend.

2. The specification of the subject : ' Towards them that are without.' Wicked men are said to be without ;

1. Because they are visibly without the church. Scandalous sinners proclaim to the world that they are not so much as visible members of Christ : ' What have I to do to judge them that are without ? do not ye judge them that are within ? but them that are without God judgeth,' 1 Cor. v. 12, 13.

2. Because they are really without God and Christ. God may be in their mouths, and they may call him Father, but he is far from their hearts, and will never own them for his children. ' That at that time ye were without Christ, and without God in the world,' Eph. ii. 12.

¹ Plin., Nat. Hist., lib. viii, cap. 21.

3. Because they shall go at last without heaven. This followeth from the former ; they being visibly without the church, and really without God and Christ, must needs be without heaven. Without are dogs, children only are within-doors, Rev. xxii. 15 ; Luke xiii. 25. The manner of the apostle's expression is worth our observation. He saith not, Walk with them—no, they ought not to be our companions—but walk wisely towards them ; let them be the object of your caution. As if he had said, I know your callings, or relations, or some occasions or other will bring you into the company of many that are not members of the church militant, and shall be excluded the church triumphant ; but take heed to yourselves that ye keep good consciences in such company, that ye defile not your own souls by being partaker of their sins ; be watchful that ye give no offence to them, and that ye take no infection from them. Walk wisely towards them that are without.

SECT. I.

Friend, to quicken thee to the greater caution, I shall offer thee these two thoughts.

First, Consider that evil company is very infectious. Wicked men, like the crocodile, slime the way to make thee fall, and when thou art down, suck out, as it were, thy blood, and with it fatten their insulting envy. Thy experience tells thee, that they are industrious to make men wicked and wretched. Such is the corruption of our nature, and the nature of our corruption, that we are sooner polluted by the wicked than they purified and amended by us, as the good corn is rather soiled by the bad, than the smutty made bright by the good. The fresh waters run into the sea, yet they do not sweeten, but are made brackish by it. Our sinful hearts, as onions, if there be any infection in the room, are apt to draw all to themselves. We may hope to save them, when they may destroy us. How many have leaped into the waters to save others from drowning, and been drowned with them ! Wholesome plants, if in conjunction with those that are malevolent, are of bad influence. It is recorded by the Holy Ghost, concerning the Israelites, ' They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their ways,' Ps. cvi. 35. They who join with wicked persons are prone to learn their wicked practices. Evil men are as mildew to the good corn, which makes it black. It is an encouragement to men to walk in bad and byways when they have

company with them. Sinners are compared to dust, that breeds vermin in houses ; to sepulchres, which send forth noisome vapours ; and to thorns and briers, that pierce and pain such as meddle with them. Can they be too wary, then, that handle them ? Luke xv. 8 ; Rom. iii. 13 ; Heb. vi. 8. The owl is a night bird, and altogether for darkness ; but they that hawk for birds, make a stale of her, and whilst the silly birds are wondering at her, catch and kill them. The devil, who makes it his work to take and destroy souls, doth often make use of ungodly men as stales to further his designs.¹ Samson was too hard for the Philistines when they opposed him by force ; but when they procured Delilah, a wicked companion, to tempt him, by that fraud they prevailed against him. The reason, according to some, why our Saviour forbade the disciple to go and bury his father was, not out of averseness to civil, much less to natural respect, but lest his corrupt kindred, who might be present at the funeral, should corrupt him again, and so he should die with them. When the raven went out of the ark, it returned not again, meeting, as is supposed, with some dead carcasses by the way. The caprimulgus, or goat-sucker, flieth upon the goats, and sucketh them, that their milk drieth up, and they are afterwards blind.² I write these things, reader, to make thee more careful in such company. If thou wouldst keep thy graces lively and flaming amongst such damps and waters of wickedness, thy watchfulness must be more than ordinary. The more stones lie in thy way, the greater must thy caution be if thou wouldst not stumble. A common pilot may serve in a calm sea, but he that would steer a vessel right in a tempestuous ocean, amidst rocks and quicksands, had need to be eminent both for skill and care.

Secondly, Consider, it is possible for thee, not only to keep thyself from waxing worse, but to be the better for evil company. I speak not this to encourage thee to cast thyself into temptations, but to quicken thee to the more care when God calleth thee among them. The weasel is an unclean creature, and many ways hurtful, yet it devoureth mice, (whence it is named in Latin *mustela*,) and so is useful. Unclean sinners, that are intentionally pernicious, may be providentially profitable to the saints. Some creatures can draw nourishment from hard bones. A saint may suck honey out of dry and bitter herbs. The wise God would not send evil things, (as afflictions,) but for the good of his chosen, nor suffer evil persons, but for

¹ Melius est, habere malorum odium quam consortium. Sicut bona multa habet communis vita sanctorum, sic plurima mala affert societas malorum. — *Isidorus*, lib. ii. *Solil.*

² Arist., *Hist. Anim.*, lib. vi. cap. 19.

their profit. 'Pluck not up the tares, lest the wheat be pulled up also,' Mat. xiii. The good husbandman makes a hedge of unfruitful plants, as briars and crab-trees, and other barren trees, to defend the vineyard from cattle, and the good trees in it from harm. The lion, as cruel as he was, defended the old prophet's body. God left some Canaanites amongst the Jews, lest the beasts of the field should overrun the country, Exod. xxiii. 29. God leaves some wicked ones amongst his chosen in this world, to keep under their brutish lusts, which otherwise might undo them. The lees are helpful to preserve the wine, and the chaff is useful to preserve the corn; vermin are good against the jaundice. The taunts and scoffs of evil men have sometimes been instrumental to cure good men of their spiritual diseases. The sword of an enemy may let out thy rank blood. Jason had his imposthume opened, and so healed by a blow that he received in the wars from his enemies, which his friends the physicians could not cure. Those tongues which have been as sharp as razors, piercing the Christian's good name, have proved instrumental to heal their depraved natures. The more the wicked twit thee with thy weaknesses, the more they may quicken thee to watchfulness. Thou wantest, possibly, a faithful friend to admonish thee, therefore God sendeth thee furious enemies to cast thy faults in thy teeth, and if now thou dischargest thy duty, thou mayest hope that their malice shall be a medicine to increase thine inward health and welfare.¹ A fool loseth the improvement of his friends, but a wise man can make an advantage of his enemies. As the herb called *Ros solis*, though the heat of the sun lie upon it all day, yet the hotter the sun is, the moister it is; so the Christian is the more softened and tender, when others are hardened and bitter against godliness.

SECTION II.

I proceed now to shew wherein the exercise of godliness in evil company consisteth.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil society, labour to keep thyself unspotted from their sins. Ungodly men are called filthy, and compared to swine, that are apt to defile all that have to do with them. They, as the night, are dark, and full of unwholesome vapours; it concerns thee, therefore, to be well fenced, that thy spiritual health may not be impaired by them.

¹ Sicut amici adulantes pervertunt, sic inimici litigantes plerunque corrigunt.—*Aug. Confess.*, ix.

Be careful that they hurt thee not, either inwardly or outwardly. Thou art in a double danger amongst sinners; thou art in danger of having thy soul wounded, and also of having thy name and estate blasted. There is a necessity, therefore, of a double guard; of a guard upon thy soul, that it may not be wronged, and of a guard upon thy tongue, that thy outward comforts may not be ruined. I say,

1. Be watchful over thy soul, that thou contractest no guilt. It is hard to be near those that are dirty and defiled, and yet to keep our garments unspotted and clean. Wicked men, as dyers and painters, who use colours, are usually besmeared themselves in their hands and habits, and they also besmear others. The Lake of Sodom is called Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea, because of the venomous vapours which arise out of it, insomuch that birds which fly over it fall down dead, and beasts that drink of it sicken and die. Some men have found evil society as poisonous to their souls, as brutes have found the Dead Sea to their bodies. Pope Nicholas the Third's concubine, by looking on a bear frequently, was brought a-bed of a monster. Thy frequent vision of their wicked actions may cause too great a likeness in thy conversation. But the saint should resemble the carbuncle, which being cast into the fire, is no whit defiled or impaired thereby, but therein shines most brightly. If it be closed fast, say some, in a ring of lead, and cast into the fire, we may see the lead molten, but the carbuncle not so much as mollified, or in the least blemished.

Thy watchfulness, friend, must be great, if thou wouldst keep thyself unspotted from the world, James i. 27. Rust will fret into the hardest steel, but not into the emerald. Sin will find speedy acceptance with a profane sinner, but not with a precious saint. Joseph kept his chastity, though often in the company of his wanton mistress. Lot did not lose his sanctity, though he dwelt amongst ungodly Sodomites. The archangel disputed with the arch-devil, yet was not infected by his poisonous breath. Satan did set upon the blessed Saviour, but could not fasten the least sin upon him. Naturalists tell us that the diamond, if true, will lie in the fire and not consume. The herb Narcissus, or Yellow Crowberries, flowereth in February, and keepeth its flower under the snow. The olive-tree, in the midst of the flood, kept its branches green. The Christian ought so to converse with the wicked, that his grace may neither waste, nor his conscience be wounded. Thy duty is, as clothes well dyed, to keep thy colour in all weathers; and, as a good constitution, to retain thy spiritual health in the most unwhole-

some airs. The apostle writes to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. v. 11, 'Not to company with any that are called brethren, and are fornicators, or covetous, or idolaters, or railers, or drunkards, or extortioners.' The word in the original is *συναναμίγνυσθαι*, both in the ninth and eleventh verses, which signifieth, not to mingle with them.¹ They may be amongst them, but they may not mingle with them. That which mingleth with any filthy thing, receiveth of its filth; and though it were pure before, is polluted thereby. The people of God ought not in this sense to mingle with the world, but to keep themselves, though not untouched, yet untainted. It is storied that the rivers of Peru run into the main sea twenty or thirty miles, and yet are not mingled with the sea, but continue fresh water. So the river Rhodanus is said to run purely through the lake Lemanus, without mixture of waters.² It is also reported of the river Dee, in Merionethshire, in Wales, that runneth through Pimbe Mere, it remaineth entire, and mingleth not with the waters of the lake.³ Thus should the people of God, those crystal streams, though they are necessitated sometimes to meet with, keep themselves entire, and not mingle with the puddle water of unclean persons. Pliny reports of a family near Rome, that could walk on live coals, and not be burnt. It is honourable to keep thyself pure among them that are evangelically perfect; but to preserve thyself from pollution amongst them that are profane, is heroical. It is the excellency of a Christian to hold on his course without slipping or falling, when many rubs and hindrances are laid in his way; and it is the glory of grace to keep its beauty and lustre, notwithstanding the attempts of the world and the wicked one to soil it. It was a notable speech of the soldier that Erasmus speaks of, who, being told of a numerous army coming against him, answered, *Tanto plus glorie referemus, quanto sunt plures quos superabimus*, The more famous our opposition, the more illustrious our conquest. That great commander had never been so renowned, if he had not eaten his way over the Alps, that were supposed inaccessible. The greater our difficulties, and the more grievous our enemies, the greater our valour, and the more glorious our victory. That expression concerning Asia hath some worth, Though it be no praise never to have seen it, yet to have lived soberly and temperately in it, is praiseworthy indeed.

The Holy Ghost giveth thee wholesome counsel: 'Be not partaker

¹ *Idem* in 2 Thes. iii. 14. *Μη συναναμίγνυσθε*. Ne commercium habete.—*Beza*. Ne commisceamini.—*Vulg*.

² Abbot's Geogr.

³ Cambd. Britt.

of other men's sins: keep thyself pure,' 1 Tim. v. 22. It may be, reader, thou art called sometimes amongst swearing, drunken, and ungodly persons. Well, thou art in more danger than in a pest-house; therefore, look well to thyself. Satan thinks, though he could not conquer thee amongst the saints, that now he hath caught thee amongst a company of venomous serpents, one or other of them will sting thee, and then he hopes to overthrow thee. Watch thyself narrowly, if thou wouldst be safe: 'Be not partaker of other men's sins.' It may be as bad to have communion with others' sins, as to commit sin in thy own person. He that is surety for another, is as liable to the debt as the principal, and we count him most foolish that takes another's debt upon himself. Indeed, Satan hath this for his comfort, that hereby he hath the more in bonds to the law's curse.

Three ways thou mayest partake of those sins which are committed in thy company. I shall not speak of thy commanding men to sin; so David was guilty of Uriah's death, though the sword of the Ammonites slew him, 2 Sam. xii. 3. Nor of counselling men to sin; so Jonadab was guilty of Amnon's incest, 2 Sam. xvi. 21. Nor of commending others for sin; so a man may be accessory after the fact, Rom. i. 32; Ps. x. 9. Nor of setting others a bad example; so Jeroboam was guilty of the idolatry of the Jews; but of those ways whereby Christians are usually guilty of others' sins when they are amongst the wicked.

1. By compliance. If, when thou seest or hearest others sin, thou dost inwardly approve it, thou art partaker of it. He that consents, though but in his thoughts, to another's fraud, is before God a felon. Paul, before his conversion, was consenting to the death of the proto-martyr, Acts viii. 1; and after his conversion, pleads guilty of the murder, Acts xxii. 20. It may be, reader, when thou hearest lascivious stories, or sinful, witty jestings, or tales of sly, subtle cheats, or the like, thou dost secretly applaud and approve them. I tell thee, thou art partaker of them. If thou hast a heart in the sin, thou hast a hand in the sin. Thy affecting it makes thee as really guilty as if thou didst act it. Nay, I must tell thee, the greatest guilt ariseth from the fullest consent of the will. It is possible for the approver to be more guilty than the actor.

2. By silence, or not reproving sin. A man may sin by speaking, and he may sin by silence. This silence, when sin is committed, speaks thy consent to it. It was a speech of a heathen, that he had often repented of speaking, but never of holding his peace; but there is a sinful holding the peace, as well as a sinful speaking.

It is bad to hold the breath long. Nicodemus, though he was at first fearful, and wore the badge of his profession under his cloak, out of sight, yet when he was amongst the enemies of Christ, he took courage, and would not, by his silence, betray his Saviour, and wrong his own soul, John vii. 50, 51.¹ It is a sign of little love to see men wounding, by oaths and blasphemies, or scoffs and jeers, our best friend, and not to wish them to forbear, and do our utmost to take them off. Dion writes of Severus, that he was careful what he did, but careless what he heard; but the good Christian is careful of the latter, as well as the former, knowing that sin may enter in at that casement, and remembering that the cannon bullet, which split the vessel in which all the hopes of mankind were embarked, was shot in at that port-hole. The crocodile, because he hath no use of a tongue, living always in the waters, hath none; but God hath given man a tongue, and calls it his glory, Ps. xvi. 9 with Acts ii. 26, partly because speech is one thing wherein men excel beasts. Brute creatures can make a noise, but man only articulate his voice, partly because it is given him to glorify God withal. It is pity he should ever open his lips, whose mouth will not shew forth God's praise. Thou canst usually no way better clear thyself, than by condemning the sin to the very face of the sinner. As the world thinks of God when he is silent, and doth not destroy them with the breath of his mouth, so the wicked think of the godly when they are silent, and do not open their mouths to reprove them: 'These things thou didst, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself,' Ps. l. 21. Silence in the presence of sin implieth a liking of it. Though thou sayest not *euge*, saith Augustine,² yet if thou sayest not *apage*, there is a mutual approbation. Nay, he goeth farther, and saith, *Pejor es tacendo quam ille convitiando*,—Thy silence is more dangerous to thee than his sin to him. But I shall speak more largely to this duty of reprovng before I conclude this chapter.

3. Thou mayest be partaker of others' sins by provoking them to sin. Our Lord is said to be crucified at Rome, Rev. xi. 8, because he was sentenced by a Roman judge, executed by Roman soldiers, and put to death by authority of the Roman empire; yet the murder of Christ is all along in Scripture charged on the Jews. Peter, preaching to them, saith, 'Whom by wicked hands ye have taken and slain;' and Stephen expressly, 'Of whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers;' because, though the execution of it was

¹ Consentire est silere cum arguere possis.—*Bernard*.

² Aug. in Mat. xvi.

from the Romans, yet the provocation to it was from the Jews, Acts ii. 23, and vii. 52. That which is committed by our instigation, is ours by just imputation. I fear many good men are partakers of others' sins in this sense, either by stirring up others that are passionate to anger, or by inciting some that have been guilty of handsome—in the world's judgment—cheats, to relate and boast of them; for it is little difference whether men hold the sack open or fill it—both are guilty.

SECTION III.

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil company, do not needlessly expose thyself to sufferings. He is but a fool that will lay his life in another's lap without a call. Christ did not commit himself to the Jews, because he knew their hearts, and we are not lightly to commit ourselves to any, because we know not their hearts. Set a watch before thy tongue, lest it make thy throat thy sepulchre—a grave to bury thy estate and outward comforts in. It is a sin in many Christians that they know not when to be silent. The wise man tells us, 'There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence,' Eccles. iii. 7. This is a great part of Christian prudence, to understand when to keep silence. It is much harder to learn to be silent than to learn to speak. Though we must not, as some Turks, be always dumb, *perpetuum silentium tenent ut muti*, yet we ought sometimes to hold our breath in: 'Therefore the prudent shall keep silence, for it is an evil time,' Amos v. 13.

1. Their cross was weighty; it was an evil time, a time of much danger and difficulty. Sin abounded, sinners were enraged, God was provoked, and the godly oppressed.¹

2. Their carriage was wise; they shall keep silence. The words may have a twofold exposition:

(1.) If they be taken in relation to God, as some think, they speak the patient submission of the faithful, in that evil day, to the divine providence and pleasure.

(2.) If they be taken in relation to men, as others expound them, they speak the prudent conversation of the gracious in that day of persecution; they shall not causelessly throw themselves into greater

¹ Non turbatur navis quæ Petrum habebat, sed turbatur illa quæ Judam habebat; etsi multa illorum discipulorum merita naufragabant, tamen adhuc perfidia proditoris agitabatur; in utraque Petrus; sed qui suis meritis firmus est, turbatur alienis. Caveamus igitur perfidum, Caveamus proditorem, ne per unum plurimi fluctuemus.—*Amb., Super. Luc.*, lib. iv.

miseries, but shall keep all due silence, to avoid needless sufferings. Indeed, thy care must be to own Christ ever, and to profess him publicly when thou art called to it; but as thy policy should not eat up thy zeal, so thy zeal must not eat up thy wisdom. I would not discourage thee from confessing the Lord Jesus, yet I must tell thee that thou art not bound to proclaim in all companies of what judgment thou art, nor what church government thou wouldst choose, nor what society thou meetest in, &c.; nay, thou art bound to the contrary. He that hath a good mixture of zeal and prudence, is like a fire on the hearth, of much use and service; but zeal without discretion is like fire on the top of the chimney, which often doth much mischief. Zeal to a Christian is like a high wind filling the sails of a ship, which, unless it be ballasted with discretion, doth but the sooner overturn it. Abdias, a bishop, raised a dreadful storm of persecution by his intemperate zeal. I doubt not but the whole company of believers in some nations have suffered through the indiscreet heats of some particular persons. Zeal in a man is like wings to a bird, or mettle to a horse; but the bridle of discretion is requisite, as the poets fable that Minerva put a golden bridle on Pegasus, lest he should fly too fast. Bernard hath a good saying, Discretion without zeal is slow-paced, and zeal without discretion is heady; let therefore zeal spur on discretion, and discretion rein in zeal. Paul was full of heavenly fire. It is said of him, when he came to Athens, and beheld their idolatry, that his spirit, *παρωξύνετο*, was stirred within him, Acts xvii. 16; yet it is worthy our observation, though he preached much against idols in general, yet he pleads not at all against Diana in particular, the goddess of whom the Athenians were so foolishly fond. His zeal moved him to oppose idolatry to his power, but his prudence directed him to forbear particular invectives against Diana, and to do it in such a way as might be, in probability, most profitable for them, and least dangerous to himself. The rash zeal of some godly persons hath set others at a further distance from piety. When every unskilful Phaeton takes upon him to drive the chariot of the sun, it is no wonder that the whole world be in a flame.

Geese, say some, when they fly over Taurus, keep stones in their mouths, lest by their gaggling they should discover themselves to the eagles which are amongst the mountains, waiting there to take them. It were well for some persons if they could keep their mouths with a bridle, whilst the wicked are amongst them, who wait and watch to destroy them.

Reader, I would be understood rightly; I do not intend, by any-

thing I have written, to incite thee to take all courses, good or bad, to avoid suffering, but to dissuade thee from bringing thyself into suffering. Grace may teach thee not to choose sin, and both grace and nature teach thee not to choose suffering. Follow the lamb wherever he goeth, and whithersoever he calleth thee; but take heed of going before him, lest he leave thee to suffer at thy own charges. He that will take a bear by the tooth, or a mad dog by the ear, may thank himself if he be well bitten.

It is too ordinary for some Christians, when wicked men give them a few good words, and pretend a little goodwill, to open their minds fully and freely to them, even to the hazard of their own liberties and lives; but such do not consider the counsel which God gives them: 'Trust ye not in a friend, (much less in an enemy, as every wicked man is to the godly,) put ye not confidence in a guide, (though he may be full of power, and policy, and promises:) keep the door of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom,' (lest, as Samson's wife, she tell all to thy undoing,) Micah vii. 5. Every smooth face and smiling countenance is not to be trusted; kisses do sometimes betray us. When the tongues of some cry *Ave*, they threaten a *Væ*, saith Augustine. They come, Ps. cxviii. 12, about me like bees, with honey in their mouths, and a sting in their tails. As butchers, they claw the ox about the ribs, that they may have the fairer blow at his head. The pelican swalloweth shell-fish, and warmeth them in her stomach, but it is to make them gape, that she may pick them out of the shells (where they are safe whilst they are shut) and devour them. Thus some ungodly men frequently warm Christians with flatteries, to make them (κεχηνότες, according to Aristophanes's expression of a fool) gapers, and to utter all they know and think, that they may make a prey of them. Friend, do not only look on wicked men as gins to entangle thy soul, but also as snares to entrap thy livelihood and life. It was the complaint of Luther, *A falsis amicis plus est mihi periculi quam a toto papatu*: That he was in more danger by reason of false friends, than by the pope and all his hierarchy. As conies, those unclean creatures, are dangerous about the places where they lurk;—the island Majorica was overthrown, according to historians, by the digging of conies;—so unclean men, even by their crouching under thee, may undermine and overthrow thee. Consider their hatred of thee, notwithstanding all their show of love, is real and inward; and of all wounds, those which rankle inwardly are most to be feared. The devil confessed Christ, yet hated him to the death; and his children do all take after him. It is said of Anto-

ninus Geta that he would always shew most love where he intended to bereave of life; therefore men were more afraid of his favour than of his anger. Antigonus kept a priest on purpose to pray and offer up sacrifice to the gods, that they would preserve him from his seeming friends. There may be some profit of that Italian proverb, The Lord deliver us from our friends; we will watch ourselves over our enemies, that they do not hurt us. Solomon gives thee a good caution in his character of a fool and a wise man: 'A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards,' Prov. xxix. 11. And those words of Hugo Victorinus have much weight in them, and are somewhat near Solomon's: There is a time when nothing is to be spoken, there is a time when something, but no time when all things are to be spoken.¹ Especially if thou hast found a man false once, beware of him the second time. He deserves to break his shins that stumbleth twice at one stone. That proverb of the Italians is worthy of consideration, If a man deceive me once, it is his own fault; if a second time, it is my fault. He had need to sit sure who backs that horse which hath once cast his rider.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil company, be sure thou dost not disown thy profession, and deny Jesus Christ. Though it behoveth thee to walk wisely, because sinners lie in wait to destroy thy life, yet be careful thou dost not walk wickedly, for sin lieth in wait to destroy thy soul. It may consist with grace, not always openly to proclaim thy profession, yet it is a graceless part at any time to deny it. It was a blot to Nicodemus that he was a night-bird. If the honour of Christ be engaged, and by thy silence the gospel will suffer, then not to publish what thou art is a sin. The light of religion ought not to be carried in a dark lantern, and to be shewn only when thy own interest will permit, and at other times to be hid. Christ tells us, 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven,' Mat. x. 33. Not to confess Christ openly when thou art called to it, is to deny him; and expect the same measure from Christ in the other world which thou givest to him in this. How justly will he be disowned for a servant hereafter, that was ashamed to own so noble a Master here! And how dreadful will his condition be whom Christ shall deny before his Father! All thy happiness depends upon his confessing thee. If he disclaim thee, devils will lay claim to thee, and theirs thou shalt be for ever.

¹ Est tempus quando nihil, est tempus quando aliquid, nullum autem tempus in quo dicenda sunt omnia.

It concerns thee, therefore, to confess Christ, how dear soever it may cost, and to own religion in all companies; for thou mayest truly say, what an honest man did, being occasionally in a pirate's ship when it was searched, and the pirates cried out, Woe be to us if we be known; he said, Woe be to me if I be not known.

There are a sort of men that, like Mercury, the good-fellow planet, are according to their company—good if with the good, bad if in conjunction with bad; but the true Christian hath not so learned Christ. He who, like the mariner, changeth his course upon the change of the weather, is but an unsound professor. We read of some that feared the Lord, and served graven images, 2 Kings xvii. 41. They divided themselves between the true God and idols, as the Jewish children, which spake half Hebrew, and half in the language of Ashdod, Neh. xiii. 24; and as some gentlemen, that speak Italian when they are amongst Italians, French amongst Frenchmen, and order their language answerable to their associates. So some, that would be called Christians, change themselves, both for words and deeds, into the nature of their companions. Amongst the godly they own God, but amongst the wicked they deny him. They alter their colour as the sole, say naturalists, according to that which is nearest, and expose the name of God, rather than their own, to contempt. Beza said of Baldwinus that he had *religionem ephemeram*, a religion for every day. Some men have a deportment suitable to all with whom they converse, resembling such as are sinful, and dissembling with them that are holy: these are either ashamed or afraid of Christ, both which are unreasonable.

1. Some will not own him out of shame, though he be the glory of his people Israel. The paint of women in some countries is the dung of the crocodile, and their sweet powder the excrement of a cat; yet people can esteem these their honour. The drunkard can boast of his strength to drink, the cunning cheat of his deceitful doings; and, alas! many Christians are ashamed of Christ. Oh how unworthy is it, that wicked men should glory in their shame, and good men be ashamed of their glory! that the scum of hell should be prided in, and the sovereign of heaven be esteemed a disgrace! that some should with brows of brass boast of the ugly monster, begotten of Satan, and others not dare to own the fairest of ten thousands, and the only begotten of the Father! It is reported of Aristotle's daughter, that being asked what colour was best, she should answer the blush colour. Diogenes was wont to say, that blushing was the colour of virtue. However this colour may be commendable on other occasions, it is abominable in the cause

of Christ. David saith, 'I will speak of thy judgments before kings, and will not be ashamed,' Ps. cxix. 46; neither the greatness of their power, nor the brightness of their splendour, shall make me bashful and ashamed to own thee. Shame doth excellently become sin, but it is wholly unbecoming the blessed Saviour, Rom. vi. 21; Mark viii. 38.

2. Some will not own Christ out of fear; as an owl peeps at the sun out of a barn, but dares not come near it, so some peep at the Sun of righteousness, but stand aloof, as if they were more afraid to be nigh God than the devil. This made Peter deny his master. How daunted have many been to look danger in the face; he who had sometimes courage enough to take a lion by the beard, lost his colour, and changed his behaviour, before wicked Achish. Slavish fear is a great foe to godliness. The great philosopher gives this reason why the chameleon changeth colour so frequently;¹ he being a fearful creature, swelleth by drawing in the air, hereby his skin is pent in and made smooth, and more apt to receive the colour of those objects that are next him. They who are fearful of suffering will easily, if their company require it, change their colour, and disown their Saviour. Timorous creatures will run into any unclean places for shelter, when a magnanimous spirit, in a good cause, will defy death itself. He who fears his skin is no friend to his soul, but will defile the latter to defend the former. Fear surprising the heart takes it away, and makes the Christian weak; and then it is no wonder if the smallest blow conquer him, and, like a reed, he bend with the least blast of wind; but how unreasonable is it that any should be afraid to own the blessed Saviour, when in sticking close to him is their only safety! Nothing can hurt thee but sin; it is that alone which exposeth thee to injuries and miseries; if thou fearest that, thou needest fear nothing else. What a foolish bargain dost thou make, by denying Christ, to make wicked and weak men thy seeming friends, and the jealous God thy real enemy! Is not he distracted, who, to avoid the scratch of a pin, layeth himself open to the shattering of a cannon? And art thou not worse, if, to avoid the fury of poor mortals, thou incurrest the wrath of the Almighty? Remember that the fearful are the first in the black list for the eternal fire, Rev. xxi. 8; and do not play the coward, as Furius Fulvius, to sound a retreat, when thou shouldst, as a man of courage, sound an alarm. The mulberry tree is esteemed the wisest of all trees, because it only bringeth forth its leaves after the cold frosts be past; but in Christianity, he is a fool who dares not

¹ Arist., Hist. Anim., lib. ii. cap. 11.

profess himself a Christian till dangers be over. St Augustine,¹ in his Confessions, relates a story of one Victorinus, who, being converted, because he had many great friends that were heathens, durst not own Christ publicly, but went to Simplicianus, and whispered him in the ear, I am a Christian ; but Simplicianus answered him, *Vix credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos*, &c. ; I do not believe it, nor will count thee a Christian, till I see thee profess it openly. Victorinus at first derided this answer, but afterwards, considering the words of our Saviour, Mark viii. 38, he acknowledged it openly. It is very dangerous to walk in the dark. Saints are children of the light, and should have their light shining before others. Louis the Eleventh of France was better at carnal politics than real piety, who desired his son might learn no more than this, He who cannot counterfeit, must not wear a crown.²

SECTION IV.

Fourthly, Labour to get some good by such as are evil. The precious stone amianthon, being cast into the fire, is made the more clear and pure. A skilful naturalist will make some use of the most venomous herbs and serpents. A gracious person may improve the vilest sinner's company to his own spiritual profit. As wicked men are helpful to the temporal good, so often to the eternal good, of God's people. Like leaves, though they are nothing worth in themselves, yet they keep the good fruit from blasting, and hereby are instrumental to its further growth and ripening. Ismenias, the Theban musician, taught his scholars, not only by shewing them such as struck a clean stroke with, Do so, but also by shewing them such as bungled at it with, Do not so. Antigenidas thought men would like better, and contend the more for skill, if they heard untunable notes. Satan intendeth wicked men as dirt and earth, only to besmear and defile them ; but God outshoots him in his own bow, and makes them as fuller's earth, to purge and purify them. As poisonous as they are in their own nature, through the correctives of the Spirit they become not only not hurtful, but helpful, to the believer. Ungodly men are compared to dung and filth, which we know, being applied to the good trees, makes them more fruitful. That slime and mud which the overflowing of Nilus carrieth along with it in the summer solstice, causeth Egypt to bring forth abundantly. The graces of saints have increased, even by the abominations and oppositions of sinners. Lot's hatred

¹ Aug. Conf., lib. viii.

² Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare.—*Phil. Com.*

of sin was the greater by viewing the unclean conversations of the Sodomites. The serpent Tyrus, saith Brittenbacchus, is so venomous, that there is no remedy against its bitings but by cutting off the member ; yet even of this there is a treacle made which serveth for excellent purposes. Though the flesh of the vulture, saith Pliny, be unwholesome and unmeet for meat, yet it is most medicinable ; an ointment made of the fat of it is specially strengthening to the sinews. Though ungodly men are ill food, and not fit to be our ordinary constant diet, yet they may be good physic, and profitable, when necessity compelleth us to use them. A debauched, lewd master may teach a scholar many good lessons. If God send us to school to the beasts of the field, Job xii. 7, 'ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee,' I know no reason but much good may be learned from these brutes in the shape of men. Some tell us that gold was extracted out of Ennius's dung. Thou mayest, reader, through the help of the Spirit, get that which is better than gold out of these noisome and loathsome persons. The smell of trefoil is often stronger in a moist and cloudy dark season, than in fair weather ; so should the savour of a saint's graces be most fragrant amongst evil companions.

1. Let thy zeal be the more inflamed. Zeal is the heat or intension of the affections ; it is a holy warmth, whereby our love and anger are drawn out to the utmost for God and his glory. Now, our love to God and his ways, and our hatred of wickedness, should be increased, because of ungodly men. Cloudy and dark colours in a table, make those that are fresh and lively to appear more beautiful ; others' sins should make God and godliness more amiable in thine eyes.¹ Thy heart should take fire by striking on such cold flints. David, by a holy antiperistasis, did kindle from others' coldness : Ps. cxix. 39, 'My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word.' Cold blasts make a fire to flame the higher, and burn the hotter. A true child, hearing others speak faintly, is the more fervent in the commendation of his father : 'Because the wicked forsake thy law ; therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold,' Ps. cxix. 127. Do others in thy presence declare their loathing of God's precepts ? do thou love them the more. Do they trample them under their feet ? do thou prize them at the greater rate. Truly, the more they dishonour God by their swearing and scoffing

¹ Quemadmodum si quis margaritam in luto conculcet, ejus amplius demonstrat pulchritudinem. Sic virtus sanctorum, quocunque eam projeceris, declarat suum splendorem, in servitute, in carcere, in prosperitate.—*Chrys.*, Hom. 62 in *Genes*.

at godliness, the more reason thou hast to honour him. Phinehas is sainted in God's calendar for being zealous in God's cause. As varnish addeth a lustre to all colours, and makes them amiable, so zeal addeth a beauty to all our services, and makes them the more acceptable. The Spirit of God works like fire, and if it dwell in thee, it will make thee fervent in spirit. How little sign have they of their saintship, who can hear sinners belch out their blasphemies against God, and tear the precious body of Christ in pieces with oaths, and yet are as senseless as stocks and stones, as if they had no relation to God and Christ! The redeemed of the Lord are a zealous people, Tit. ii. 14. Thou art but false in thy profession of friendship, if thou canst behold others abusing thy friend, and sit still. Ah, what true Christian can see hellish lusts embraced publicly, and the glorious Lord disowned openly, and not loathe the former, and love the latter the more for it! The Grecians would bring their children to hate drunkenness, by shewing them drunkards wallowing in their vomits, what loathsome persons they were in such conditions. Good examples are provocations to holiness, Mal. iii. 8; bad examples may work a detestation of vice, Deut. xviii. 9; Eph. iv. 17. Wise men have more to learn of fools, than fools of wise men, said Cato. That trumpet which is filled only with wind, may encourage and awaken a living man to the battle; that person who is dead in sin, may rouse up a sleepy yet living Christian, and raise his affections more towards God.

2. Let thy heart be the more enlarged in thankfulness. Dost thou behold the profane glorying in their pollutions? Dost thou see sinners abusing God's creatures? Dost thou discern ungodly ones making a mock of sin, jeering at holiness, and riding post to hell? How should thy heart be raised in thankfulness to thy dearest Redeemer, that thou dost not run with them to the same excess of riot, and in the same road of eternal ruin! Every time thou comest into such company, and observest their wicked courses, thou mayest well pity such deluded souls, and praise thy gracious Saviour. Mayest thou not think thus with thyself: Lo, here are those that play with the eternal fire, and sport with the Almighty's fury; that dance merrily over the bottomless pit, and take pleasure in the way to endless pains; that are wholly regardless of God, and Christ, and heaven, and their unchangeable estates in the other world. I was as bad as the worst of them, or at least I had slipped as deep into that mire of profaneness, and equalled or exceeded them in all manner of impiety, if free grace had not withheld and prevented me. I have the same root of bitterness, and had doubtless brought forth

the same cursed fruits, if the hand of mercy had not new grafted me. What thanks do I owe to my Redeemer, who makes me to differ ! and what cause have I to love and laud, to please and praise him, world without end ! Oh, friend, if the Israelites blessed God for their preservation from those waters in which the Egyptians were drowned, hast not thou cause to give thanks for preservation from that wickedness in which others are damned ?

3. Thy care and watchfulness should be the more increased. The falls and failings of others should be sea-marks, and give thee warning to avoid those rocks and shallows, if thou wouldst avoid shipwreck. Thou hast the same poisonous seed, therefore take heed lest thou committest the same sin. 'These things,' saith the apostle, 'were written for our example, to the intent we should not lust after evil things,' as they did, 1 Cor. x. 6, 16. All these things happened unto them for examples, and they were written for our admonition. As the sins and sufferings of others are recorded for our instruction, so God lets them be acted before our eyes for our admonition. If he that walketh before me falleth and breaketh his neck, I have the more reason to ponder the paths of my feet. If a fire break out in one house, every wise man will look the more to his own. If enemies be near the walls, the garrison will be the more diligent to keep watch and ward. Ah, how foolish is that mariner, who beholdeth a ship before him, cast away upon some rock, and doth not steer his course with the greater care !

Thus the sword of Goliath may be serviceable to a David, and those weapons of unrighteousness, which are designed for our destruction, may be helpful to our preservation. Those kites that destroy chickens, do also eat up offals of beasts, and many noisome things, which otherwise would infect the air ; whence, say some, it is a law in England, that near a market-town they should not be killed. Unclean beasts are serviceable to men, and unclean men may be helpful to Christians.

SECTION V.

Fifthly, Endeavour their reformation. Thy duty is, as a good physician, to loathe the noisome disease, but to pity and strive to recover the patient. What difference is there betwixt thee and a carnal person, if thou sufferest him to die, and offerest not thy help for his cure ! Thy Father doth good to all ; he causeth his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust. Oh, remember that thou art

his son, and that his pattern is worthy of imitation.¹ That piece of iron which is rubbed with the loadstone, will draw another piece of iron. We read of magnetical rocks in some islands, that draw all ships to them which have iron pins, and hold them so fast that they are not able to stir. Shew that thou hast been touched with the Spirit, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in thee, by thy endeavours to draw others to God. Christ never sat at table with any sinners, but he made better cheer than he found. If he sat with the profane, he did convert them, if with the pious, he did confirm them, Luke vii.

Be not discouraged at the weakness of thy gifts, or the small degree of thy graces, but consider that the event of the enterprise depends upon him who sets thee a-work, and that it is all one to him whether ye have great means, or small means, or no means. A poor contemptible fly may hinder an elephant from sleeping; a poor upright Christian may awaken great sinners out of their spiritual sleep and lethargy. A little boat may land a man at a large continent; a weak believer may help a soul to heaven.

Endeavour to reform them these three ways:

1. By wholesome counsel. Every place thou comest into should be like Libnah, in which the Israelites pitched—a place of frankincense, perfumed by thy presence. The breath of a man serves him both to cool his broth when hot, and warm his fingers when cold. The breath of a Christian should serve to put some warmth into them that are cold heavenward, and to cool and slake them that are hot hellward. ‘A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,’ Prov. xv. 12. Thy tongue should be like the tree of life in Eden, of which he that did eat was to live for ever, Gen. iii. 22; or like that tree of life in the midst of the street, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations, Rev. xxii. 2. I have read of a person who led a dissolute life,² and was so wrought upon by the counsel of a good man, that he turned over a new leaf; and when his companions asked the ground of that change, which they soon observed in him, and why he would not walk along with them in his old wicked ways, he answered them, I am busy, meditating and reading in a little book, which hath but three leaves in it, so that I have no leisure so much as to think of any other business. In the first leaf, which is red, I meditate on the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, and of that pre-

¹ Christus omnibus omnia factus est, pauper pauperibus, dives divitibus,—Cum Maria flet, cum apostolis epulatur, &c.—*Amb.*, *Sup. Luc.*, lib. iv.

² Ant. Douralt. Speculum Exemplorum.

cious blood which he shed for the remission of my sins; in the second leaf, which is white, I meditate on the unspeakable joys of heaven, purchased for me by the death of my Redeemer; in the third leaf, which is black, I meditate on the intolerable torments of hell, provided and kept in store for the wicked and ungodly. Prudent and pious advice may bring wandering sinners home to Christ's fold. There is a special art in baiting the hook aright, so as thou mayest take sinners ere they are aware: 'I being crafty, caught you with guile,' 2 Cor. xii. 16. It is possible thou art amongst men that are moral and civil, yet unsanctified; by commending civility, yet discovering its insufficiency, thou mayest beat them out of their rotten holds, and cause them to run to Christ for help, Mat. v. 20. It may be thou meetest with those that are openly profane; by bringing in wisely an example of God's judgments on such persons, thou mayest fright them from such lewd practices. Sometimes thou mayest turn earthly discourse by degrees into heavenly, and spread a table, and set a running banquet before them, which they never thought of. Do they ask, for want of other discourse, what news? After some prudent preface, answer them, that thou canst tell them good news from a far country, which is worthy of all acceptance—namely, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Do they ask how such and such do? acquaint them concerning their bodily welfare, and, if it may be done conveniently, that the health of the soul is most to be inquired after, as that which is of greatest weight and worth. Do they ask into the price of commodities? thou mayest thereby raise their hearts to the wine and milk which is to be bought of Christ, without money and without price. This is true alchymy, and will turn all into gold. What heavenly fruit did our Redeemer gather from such earthly trees! When the Pharisees spake of eating with defiled, that is, unwashen hands, he told them of inward defilements, and what danger therè was in unwashen hearts, Mat. xv. 20. When the woman of Samaria came to draw water, how soon doth he lift up his discourse to living water, of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst! John iv. 21. When the multitude followed him for the loaves, he improves that occasion to quicken them to labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, John vi. 25-27. Thus thou mayest, reader, distil cordial water out of dregs and lees.

2. Endeavour to reform them by thy gracious carriage in their company. A Christian is God's jewel, Mal. iii. 17, and should always cast a radiancy and lustre before the eyes of others, but

especially amongst them that are wicked. He is double guilty who walks disorderly amidst his Master's enemies. Saints should, like diamonds, sparkle graciously in a ditch, and as stars, shine the brighter in cold nights: 'Be blameless and harmless, without rebuke, shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,' Phil. ii. 15. Believers should, like lights hung out in the city, shine so brightly as to prevent others wandering and stumbling; the word is *φωστῆρες*, such lights as the sun, moon, and stars are, which do not keep their light to themselves, but communicate it to others.¹ This gracious conversation is often profitable to the conviction of others. They who, as the Atlantes, are ready to curse the sun, because it scorcheth them with its beams, to hate the light, because it discovereth their deeds of darkness, may nevertheless in their consciences be so convinced of its beauty and glory, that they may turn Persians, to admire and adore it.² 'Shew thyself a pattern of good works, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you,' Tit. ii. 7, 8; 1 Peter iii. 15, 16. Grace doth powerfully, though silently, oppose and overthrow profaneness; it forceth reverence from its bitterest enemies. The righteousness of Noah condemned the old world; the holiness of the Baptist did obtain respect from wicked Herod. How did the magnanimous sanctity of the three worthies triumph in the conscience of Nebuchadnezzar! and the innocency of Daniel in the soul of Darius! Many a sinner hath been struck dumb by the exemplary and heroic faith and patience of the saints. Such a gracious carriage is sometimes helpful to the conversation of others. They who stood out against the word of God, have been won by the works of men. Sanctified actions are unanswerable syllogisms, and effectual demonstrations. Though the ears have been shut against pious precepts, the heart itself hath been opened to a gracious pattern: 'Abstain from fleshly lusts, and have your conversations honest; that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation,' 1 Peter ii. 11, 12. Good works are

¹ *φωστῆρ α φῶς* lumen, et *τηρέω* servo, quod receptum lumen servat; significat tale quid quod lumen ex se emittit, ut Sol, Luna, Stella.

² Sicuti cæli luminaria ac sidera in firmamento cæli a Deo collocata, cunctis indesinenter quæ sub cælo sunt, fulgent, et omnibus quæ super terram sunt, per tempora ac tempora, per generationes ac generationes, mirabiliter relucent; alia quidem per noctem, ut luna et stellæ, alia nihilominus per diem, ut solis speciosissimi radii. Sic et sanctorum virtutis insignia atque beatissimi eorum agones, omnibus in perpetuum singulariter fulgent, omnibus in æternum bonorum formam tribuunt, omnibus sub sole pietatis exemplum ostendunt.—*Orig.*, Homil. 1. in *Job*.

a means, not only of silencing, but even of sanctifying evil workers ; and hereby those who spake evil of the children, come to glorify the Father. A holy life is a real confutation of unholy lusts ;¹ and whereas counsel may persuade, this compelleth the sinner either to embrace sanctity, or to live condemned of himself. Louis the Twelfth of France, hearing ill of the Waldenses, sent some to observe and pry into their lives, who returning, told the king that they were free from all scandal, sanctified the Sabbath, baptized and catechised their children ; whereupon the king, their enemy, swore that they were better men than himself, or any of his subjects. The church of God is compared to a vineyard, Luke xx. 9. Pliny tells us, that the smell of a vineyard is such that it drives away all serpents and venomous creatures. The lives of God's people should be spotless and exemplary, that their enemies, as in Tertullian's days, may honour them for their holiness. Of Bucer it was said, he so lived that his friends could not sufficiently praise him, nor his enemies justly blame him ; so should every child of God.

SECTION VI.

3. Endeavour to reform them by faithful reprehension. Reprehension is like a dam, which, though it cause the waters to swell, stops its violent course ; as thunder, it purifieth the air, which otherwise would putrify. When thou comest amongst vicious persons, thy spirit, as Paul's amongst the idolatrous Athenians, must be stirred within thee, and thy zeal must appear in reproving the offenders, or else, as a pearl in a toad's head, it will be of no use. Servetus condemned Zuinglius for his heat and harshness ; but he answered, In other things I will be meek and mild, but not in blasphemies against Christ.² Good blood will not belie itself, but when occasion is offered, shew itself: the zeal of God's house did eat the Redeemer up, and he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple. In the cause of God, saith Luther,³ I am, and ever shall be, stout and stern ; herein I take upon me this motto, *Nulli cedo*, I give place to none.

That expression of Augustine hath weight in it, *Qui non zelat non amat* ; He hath no love to God, who hath no zeal for God, and truly he hath little love to his neighbour: 'Thou shalt not hate thy

¹ Viva lectio est vita sanctorum.—*Greg. Moral.*, 24.

² In aliis mansuetus ero, in blasphemias in Christum non ita.—*Epist. ad Servet.* '

³ In Vita ejus per Anonym.

brother in thine heart ; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him,' Lev. ix. 17.

First, Here is no privilege as to persons either reproving or offending.

1. Reproving : 'Thou shalt rebuke.' It is to be done in our own persons, and not by a proxy.

2. Offending : 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.' All our neighbours, made of the same earth, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, capable of the same heaven. God excludes none, but offers both his grace and glory universally : 'Whosoever will, let him,' &c., Rev. xxii. 17.

Secondly, No dispensation granted as to crimes : 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him.' If it be a sin, it must not be suffered.

Thirdly, No pleading of any excuse : 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not hate him.' To suffer any in unholiness is a sign of hatred, and such seeming charity is the greatest cruelty. Besides, whilst we let such men alone in their profaneness, we provoke God against ourselves.¹ John the Baptist rebuked Herod, Nathan reprov'd David, and Latimer, Henry VIII. Though the offenders were potent and high, yet the ministers of God would not fear their faces, but freely tell them of their faults. Nay, some heathen have had courage enough to check the greatest for their crimes. How plain was Seneca in reproving Nero, Diogenes in reproving Alexander, and Zeno, Nearchus !² It is said of Suetonius, that in writing the lives of the twelve Cæsars, he took the same liberty in declaring their vices which they took to commit them.³ And shall not Christians be as bold to check sin as others are to act it ?

Reader, what love dost thou shew to thy neighbour, if thou seest him wounding and piercing his inestimable soul, and thou dost not endeavour, though against his will, to hold his hand ? If thou shouldst see him take a knife to stab himself at the heart, thou wouldst not stay to ask his leave, or fear his anger, but do thy utmost to hinder him ; and canst thou see him destroying his soul, and not seek to prevent him ? That pity, without question, is the best, which relateth to the better part. There was a barbarous law among the Lacedæmonians, that no man should tell his neighbour any ill news that befell him, but every one should be left in

¹ Non omnis qui parcit, amicus est ; nec omnis qui verberat, inimicus. Melius est cum severitate diligere, quam cum lenitate decipere.—*Aug. Confes.*, 9.

² Magis amat objurgator sanans, quam adulator dissimulans.—*Idem. in Epist. ad Mat.*

³ Mihi aliquando arguere permissum, tibi nunquam peccare.—*Amb.*

process of time to find it out himself.¹ Alas! what will become of poor sinners, if none should tell them what they are doing, whither they are going, till they come to find it in the place of torments? Were love burning in our hearts, (as fire was in the temple,) or were our faces towards one another, (like those cherubims which covered the mercy-seat with their wings,) we should not only not lie in sin ourselves, but also endeavour that others should not die in their sins. That person who refused to smite his neighbour, when commanded in the name of the Lord, was slain by a lion, 1 Kings xx. 35. If we refuse to smite sin, God's wrath will smite us.

Because this duty is of such concernment, I shall give thee some few brief directions.²

1. Be sure that which thou reprovest be a sin, and not a lawful, or indifferent thing. Some shew much heat, but little holiness, in keeping a great stir about nothing. The Israelites raised a great army to fight against their brethren, upon a supposition that they had built an altar for sacrifice, Joshua xxii. 16. Eli was mistaken in chiding Hannah for drunkenness, and thinking she was not sober, because she was almost overwhelmed with sorrow, 1 Sam. ii. It is dangerous to apply corroding medicines, upon supposition that the person hath a festered sore, or to cut a man for the stone who is not troubled with that distemper. It were better by much to be silent, than to cry out against that which we cannot by Scripture prove to be sin. He that reproves the deed, will do more hurt than good, if he be not able to convince the doer, Tit. i. 9. To some it may be said, as Job to his friends, who accused him of hypocrisy because of his calamity, as if the stick could not be straight because it was brought to the fire, 'How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?' Job vi. 25.³ Right words have great weight; naked truth will be too hard for armed error; but what power have mistaken or misapplied arguments? what doth such arguing reprove? Such arguings seldom reprove any but the arguer, and him they always reprove.

2. Reprove seriously. Reproof is an edged tool, and must not be jested with. Cold reproofs are like the noise of cannons a great way off, nothing affrighting us. He that reproves sin merrily, as one that takes a pride to shew his wit, and make the company laugh, will destroy the sinner instead of the sin. There are those that spit out their friends with their tongues, and laugh them into

¹ Plut. Moral.

² Tot quotidie occidimus, quot ad mortem ire tepidi et tacentes videmus.—*Greg.*

³ Cum vera objurgas, sic inimice juvas.—*Auson.*

enemies. Sharpness and acuteness doth ill in sportful festivals, but it becomes purging potions. Lightness is commendable in nothing, but worst in things that are weighty. A vain jesting admonition is like rubbing a person with a poisoned oil, which spreads the more for being put into such a fleeting suppleness. The Areopagites banished Stilpo for proving, by his sophistry, that Minerva was no goddess, alleging this for their reason, that it was not safe for any to dally with things that were divine. Reproof is strong physic, and worketh many times to purpose, and therefore is not to be given in jest. Sin, which is the object of it, is not to be played with; nor hell, its consequent, a jesting matter, Titus i. 13. The apostle enjoins Titus to reprove sharply; the word is *ἀποτόμως*, cuttingly, *ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει*, that they may be sound in the faith. He that mindeth his patient's health, will not toy, or trifle, or play with his mortal diseases; the flesh must feel the plaster, or it will never eat up the corruption in it. Shouldst thou apply a healing plaster to skin the wound aloft, when there is need of a corrosive to take away the dead flesh, thou wouldst be false and unfaithful to thy friend.¹ When the water was bitter, and the ground barren, Elisha cast a cruse of salt into it, and it healed both. Reproof, like salt, must have in it both sharpness and savouriness. Alas! how fierce is that wrath, how hot is that fire, to which poor sinners are liable! And wilt thou sport with their souls, and join with them in making a mock of sin? Saints must be zealous, not only in good works, but also in reprovng evil workers. The command is, 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin,' Isa. lviii. 1. This belongs in some sense to every member, as well as to the minister. They must reprove sin powerfully: 'Cry aloud, lift up thy voice as a trumpet;' particularly, 'shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin.' Admonition, without serious application, is like an arrow with too many feathers, which, though we level at the mark, is taken by the wind, and carried quite from it.

Some men shoot their reprehensions, like pellets through a trunk, with no more strength than will kill a sparrow. Those make sinners believe that sin is no such dreadful evil, and the wrath of God no such frightful end. He that would hit the mark, and recover the sinner, must draw his arrow of reproof home. Reproof must

¹ Regat disciplinæ vigor mansuetudinem, et mansuetudo ornet vigorem, et sic alterum commendetur ex altero, ut nec vigor sit rigidus, nec mansuetudo dissoluta.—*Greg.*, lib. v. *Moral.*

be powerful: the hammer of the word breaks not the heart, if it be lightly laid on; if the flesh doth not feel the plaster, it will hardly be healed by it. It must also be so particular, that the offender may think himself concerned. Some, in reproof, will seem to aim at the sinner, but so order it, that their arrows shall be sure to miss him. As Domitian, when a boy held for a mark afar off his hand spread, with his fingers severed, he shot his arrows so, that all hit the empty spaces between his fingers.¹ Be the reproof never so gracious, the plaster never so good, it will be ineffectual if not applied to the patient, 2 Sam. xii. 7; Acts ii. 36, 37.

3. Reprove seasonably. Reprehension is not necessary or convenient at all seasons; admonition is like physic, rather profitable than pleasant. Now, the best physic may be thrown away, if a fit time of giving it be not observed. Some unskilful physicians have wronged their patients in administering suitable potions out of season. It is a great part of Christian prudence to discern the fittest time of lancing spiritual sores; if they be taken when they are ripe, the corrupt matter may be all let out, and the party be the healthier whilst he liveth; but if before they be ripe, it will not be so well. A fool will always be talking, and is ready to burst if he may not have vent; but a wise man will keep a word for afterward, Prov. xxix. He will neither run before an opportunity, nor neglect to follow after it. Many a fair child is spoiled by an untimely birth, and good duty prejudiced by an unseasonable performance.

Sometimes a sudden reproof, upon the commission of the sin, hath reformed the sinner; but this is not always safe.² When men are rebuked before their companions, their hearts are usually enraged against the reprover, suspecting him to intend their disparagement rather than their amendment.³ Besides, when their spirits are hot, and their minds drunk with passion, they are apter to beat the Christian than to hear his counsel. When a person is in a violent fever, it is not good to give him physic; it is safest to stay till the fit be abated or over. Abigail would not tell Nabal of his danger till he was sober. Some small fish are twitched up with

¹ Suet. in Vita.

² There are two cases wherein reproof may be omitted. 1. When there is danger of bringing more dishonour to God by speaking than by forbearing, Mat. vii. 6. 2. When we can see no likelihood of doing good by our reproving.—*Hildersham on Ps. li., lect. 9.; Vide plur., ibid.*

³ Qui non corrigit resecanda committit, et facientis culpam habet qui quod potest corrigere, negligit emendare.—*Greg.*

the violence of a sudden pull, when the like action would break the line whereon a great one hangs.

But I would not be understood, reader, to encourage thee in the least, under pretence of deferring it till a fitter day, to omit the duty; if there be no probability of a better season, nor any hope of doing good, after some ejaculations to heaven for assistance and success, take the present opportunity. Fabius conquered by delaying, but Cæsar overcame by expedition. Though it is not ordinarily so good to sow corn when the wind is high, yet the husbandman will rather do it in such weather than not at all, or than to want his harvest. As the bird often flieth away, whilst the fowler still seeks to get nearer and nearer her; so doth a season of advantaging our brethren's souls, whilst we wait still for a fitter. It is thy duty, therefore, to take hold of the present, where thou hast no likelihood of another, and to improve the first good opportunity, rather than to adventure the loss of all, by expecting a better.

4. Reprove prudently. A Christian's wisdom in the matter of his reproof will very much further its working: 'As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprove to an obedient ear,' Prov. xxv. 12. A wise reprove is a credit to the reprove; it is an honour to be wounded thus by one that is wise. Some men would receive blows with more patience, if they were given them with more prudence. None so likely to find an obedient hearing, as they that are wise in reprove; the best ear will hardly brook foolish speaking; there is a way to make men take down their bitter potions before they are aware. The recovering of a fallen sinner, is the setting of a bone in joint, which requireth much skill and dexterity. Every mountebank is not fit to undertake this task.

First, Have respect to the person whom thou reprovest.

Secondly, Have respect to the crime for which thou reprovest.

First, Respect is to be had to the person, both as to his condition and his disposition.

1. To his condition and quality. Though the sins of superiors may, nay must, be reprove, by those that have a call to it, yet not in that bold manner which is allowable to our equals, nor without some acknowledgment of that reverence which is due to their callings and conditions: 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father,' 1 Tim. v. 1. When Daniel was to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and to acquaint him with his danger, observe with what respectful language he clothed his dreadful message, Dan. iv. 19, 24, 27. The prophets that spake so boldly to their princes,

were commanded and commissioned by God what to say. Though superiors ought to be reprov'd, yet they ought not to be reviled.

Paul, as I conceive, acknowledged his passion, when he had spoken irreverently to the high priest: 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest;' I did not consider, as I ought, to whom I spake, Acts xxiii. 5. It will not excuse us to give ill words, though we receive ill wounds from magistrates: 'Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?' Job xxxiv. 18. Though this text doth not silence all from acquainting kings with their faults, much less justify any that shall daub them with their flatteries, 1 Kings xviii. 18; 2 Kings iii. 13, yet it proves that princes must be spoken to respectfully, because of their places. Superiors may be amended by exhortation, equals by friendly admonition, inferiors by severe reprehension.

Secondly, Respect is to be had to the disposition of the offender. Some, in their fainting fits, are recovered easily, with throwing some cold water in their faces; others must be beaten, or rubbed very hard. Some men are like briars, you may handle them gently without harm, but if you grasp them hard they will fetch blood; others as nettles, if dealt with roughly, do the less wrong: Jude 22, 23, 'And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear.' Some are like tiled houses, that can admit a brand of fire to fall on them and not be burnt; yet some, again, are covered with light, dry straw, which with the least touch will kindle and flame about your ears. By screwing strings moderately, we may make good music, but if too high, we break them. All the strings of a viol are not of equal strength, nor will endure to be wound up to the same pitch. We may soothe a lion into bondage, but sooner hew him in pieces than beat him into a chain. A difference ought to be observed between party and party. An exhortation will do more with some, than a severe commination with others. The sturdy oak will not be so easily bowed as the gentle willow. Elisha recovered the dead child with a kiss, but Lazarus was restored to life with a loud, strong voice. Reproof must be warily given, for it is like a razor, whose edge is keen, and therefore the sooner rebated. It is dangerous to give a medicine stronger than the disease and constitution of the patient require. A gentle fire makes the best distilled waters.

Respect is to be had also to their faults. Wise physicians will distinguish between a pimple and a plague-sore. Those that sin of infirmity, are to be admonished more mildly than they that sin obstinately; who would give as great a blow to kill a fly as to

kill an ox. Old festered sores must be handled in a rougher manner than green wounds, Phil. iii. 15; Tit. iii. 10. Ordinary physic will serve for a distemper newly begun, but a chronical disease must have harsher and stronger purges. Some offend ignorantly, others out of contumacy. Some offend out of meekness, being overborne by a sudden passion; others of premeditated, contrived wickedness and perverseness. Some sins are of a lower nature, of lesser moment and influence upon others; other sins overthrow the foundations of Christianity, and devour the vitals of religion. Now, according to the nature of the disease, and constitution of the patients, must the prescription be for their cure.¹ Though all sins have one price for their satisfaction, yet not one way for their reprehension. If the linen be but a little foul, ordinary rubbing may serve; but if it be dyed with dirt, it must have the more. Our Saviour called Herod, fox; the master of the synagogue, hypocrite; the scribes and pharisees, vipers. St Stephen calls the Jews, traitors and murderers. Cutting reproofs are for notorious offenders. A weak dose will but stir up, not purge away, their noxious humours.²

5. Reprove compassionately; soft words and hard arguments do well together.³ Passion will heat the sinner's blood, but compassion heal his conscience. Our reprehension may be sharp, but our spirits must be meek. The probe that searcheth the wound will put the patient to less pain, and do the more good, if covered with soft lint: those who oppose themselves are to be instructed in meekness, 2 Tim. ii. 25. There is a rigid austerity, which is apt to creep into, and corrupt our reproofs. Mollifying ointments are often instrumental to abate great swellings. The iron of Naphtali's shoes were dipped in oil. Reproofs should be as oils or ointments, gently rubbed in by the warm fire of love. The chirurgeon that setteth the bone stroketh the part. If love do not play its part in this scene, we do but act a tragedy. The more thou canst persuade him of thy affection, the better will he take thy reprehension. The sweetest kisses of an enemy are rejected with disdain, but even the wounds of a friend are received with applause, Prov. xxvii. 6. Such as, in reproving, shew their anger more than their love, rather

¹ Juvenes plerunque severitas admonitionis ad profectum dirigit; Senes vero ad meliora opera deprecatio blanda componit.—*Greg.*

² Qui blando verbo castigatus non corrigitur, acrius necesse est arguatur; cum dolore sunt abscindenda, quæ leniter sanari non possunt.—*Isid.*, lib. iii. *De Somno*, cap. 46.

³ Plus proficit amica correctio quam accusatio turbulenta; illa pudorem incutit, hæc indignationem movet.—*Amb. in Lucam.*

exasperate than heal. Of all seasons, the chirurgion had need to be sober, and farthest from being drunk with passion, when he is to cut off a gangrened member. The reprover should have a lion's stout heart, or he will not be faithful; and a lady's soft hand, or he is not like to be successful. Holy Paul, speaking of his coming to reprove some delinquents amongst the Corinthians, tells them, 'And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned,' 2 Cor. xi. 21. He that would gather fruit, must pluck the bough gently towards him; if too hard, he may break it. A reprover is like one that is taking a mote out of his brother's eye; now this must be done very tenderly. For this purpose it would be convenient (where it may be) that reproofs be given privately. We administer physic to persons in their chamber. He that proclaims another's crimes up and down the country, wrongs his own soul, in walking contrary to the command, 'First tell him his fault between him and thee,' Mat. xviii. 15, 16; and he wrongs his neighbour in hardening him hereby in his sin; for this man thinks the sinner designeth to reproach, not to reform, therefore he throweth the reproof with indignation back in his face. Socrates,¹ at a banquet, falling out with one of his friends, twitted him with his faults; How much better had this been done in private? said Plato. And had you not done better to have told me so privately? said Socrates. *Qui peccant coram omnibus, coram omnibus corripiendi sunt, ut omnes timeant. Qui secreto peccavit in te, secreto corripe. Nam si solus nosti, et eum viscoram aliis arguere, non es corrector, sed proditor.*—Aug. De Verb. Domini.² 'If thy brother offend thee,' saith Christ, 'tell him of it between thee and him,' Mat. v. Other crimes are not to be cried at a market. Private reproof is the best grave to bury private faults in.³ The plaster should not be larger than the sore. Our Saviour did not tell the woman of Samaria of her wickedness whilst the disciples were with him, but when he had sent them away, John iv.

For this end it is also fit that reproof be given with as little reflection as may be on the person reproofed.⁴ If there be anything in him worthy of praise, do not pass it by. We take pills the better when they are well gilt; children lick up their medicines the more

¹ Diog. Laert. in Vit. Socrat.

² Quicquid lacerato animo dixeris, punientis est impetus, non charitas corrigentis; dilige, et dic quicquid vales.—Aug. de fin.

³ Ubi malum oritur, ibi moriatur.

⁴ Secrete admone amicos, palam lauda.—Sen. De Benef.

freely when they are sprinkled with a little sugar ; a faithful historian will relate men's virtues as well as their vices. They are of a dunghill brood, that fasten only upon galled backs, and ulcerous sores, and take no notice of the sound flesh. Wise commanders, when their soldiers are making a dishonourable retreat, do not presently upbraid them with cowardice, but often, by mentioning their former heroic courage, or their ancestors' noble carriage, inflame them with a desire to continue their repute and credit. Good nurses, when children fall first, help them up, and speak them fair, and then chide them. This were an excellent art to draw them to God whom thou couldst not drive ; shame will not let such be angry with those that deal so equally the rod and crown. Sometimes indirect reprehension hath wrought much good. A man may, by a parable or a history pertinent to the purpose, convince a sinner's conscience, and not openly injure his credit. Paul, in his sermon to Felix, seemed to shoot at random, not naming any, but his arrow pierced that unrighteous prince to the quick. The sun keeps the world in good temperature by moving in an oblique circle, not directly with the highest heavens, nor directly contrary, but fetching a compass a little over-thwart. The saint may keep the sinner from that heat and rage, which is apt to boil under reproof, by fetching a little compass about. The reproof may sometimes be given in our own persons, and declaring how ill it would have been for us to have run into such riotous courses ; so the apostle Paul reprehended the sect-makers in Corinth, by transferring it to himself and Apollos, 2 Cor. iv. 6. A wise reprover in this is like a good fencer, who, though he strike one part, yet none that stand by could perceive by his eye, or the carriage of his arm, that he aimed at that more than the rest. We esteem it a singular commendation in a chirurgeon, when he can cure a wound in the face, and leave no scar behind. Indeed, some wounds are so great that this cannot be done ; yet a good chirurgeon will always endeavour it, and leave as little a scar as possibly he can. Pliny tells us of one Martia, who had the child in the womb killed by lightning, and yet she herself was unhurt. It is excellent when a Boanerges can so cast forth lightning, as to kill sin in his conscience, and not hurt the sinner in his repute. To avoid this, it was ordained among the Lacedæmonians, that every transgressor should be his own corrector ; for his punishment was to compass the altar, singing an invective made against himself. It is a singular credit to the Christian, if he can open, and so heal men's sores, as not to leave any brand upon their persons. We read that God appointed

snuff-dishes, as well as snuffers, for the lamps of the tabernacle, and both to be of pure gold, Exod. xxxvii. 23. The snuffers noted, that those who check any fault in others, should be free themselves; the snuff-dishes noted, that those crimes which we reprove, we should forgive and remit. The Rabbis say, that those snuff-dishes were filled with sand, to bury the snuffs in. He who snuffs a candle, and throws the snuff about the room, gives offence to more by the ill savour he makes, than content by his care and diligence.

There is hardly any work of Christianity which requires more wisdom than this of admonition. The temper and quality of the persons, the nature and difference of the crimes, the manner and way of delivering the reproof, the fittest season for it, ought all to be seriously and diligently considered. The rebuke of sin is aptly resembled to the fishing for whales; the mark is big enough, one can hardly miss hitting; but if there be not sea-room enough, and line enough, and a dexterity in letting out that line, he that fixeth his harping-iron in the whale, endangers both himself and his boat. Reproof strikes an iron, as it were, into the conscience of the offender, which makes him struggle, and strive to draw the reprover into the sea, to bring him into disgrace and contempt; but if the line be prudently handled, and not pulled too strait, nor too quick, the sinner may be drawn to the reprover, and saved.

I confess this duty of reproofing is a hard and displeasing task, because truth ordinarily begets hatred; but it is far better that men should hate thee for the discharge of thy duty, than that God should hate thee for the neglect of it;¹ it is much easier to endure their rage for a short time, than the Lord's wrath for ever. If the persons reproofed have any true love to themselves, they will love thee; and truly that man's love is little worth, who hath none for his own soul. Therefore, reader, obey God's precept, and leave the event to his providence: 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,' Eph. v. 11. If thou canst advantage and gain their souls, they will give thee thanks; if not, thy God will; and surely his thanks are not to be esteemed at a low rate.² It hath many times been experienced, that faithful reprehensions have procured, though present ill-will, yet respect

¹ *Molestus est medicus furenti phrenetico, et pater indisciplinato filio; ille in ligando, iste cædendo, sed ambo diligendo. Si autem istos negligant et perire permittant, ista potius falsa mansuetudo crudelis est.—Aug. ad Bonif.*

² *Remedia statim mordent vel offendunt, postea conferunt salutem vel voluptatem; Ita salubria monita initio sunt nonnihil amara, postea correcto jucundissima.—Plut. in Moral.*

afterwards. Dean Colet, for delivering his conscience by way of reproof, before Henry the Eighth, at the siege of Tournay, was questioned by the Privy Councillors, but within a short time he got a large interest in the king's heart, by the discharge of his duty. 'He that rebuketh a man, shall afterwards find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue,' Prov. xxviii. 23.¹ The sick patient, who at present wrangleth with his physician for his bitter potions, doth afterwards, when he findeth the happy effect of it in his health and recovery, both thank and reward him. Though thou meetest with an ungrateful return in his passion, yet thou mayest, when that cloud is dispersed, expect a more serene and pleasing requital; however, the best way to lose a friend (if thou canst not keep him and a good conscience too) is by seeking, by thy love and faithfulness, to save him.

Sixthly, Mourn for those sins which thou canst not amend; those sins which thou canst not beat down with a stream of truth, do thou overcome with a flood of tears. When others kindled a fire of lust, David drew water, and poured it out before the Lord: 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because the wicked forsake thy law,' Ps. cxix. 135. Mark the intension of David's passion upon the disobedience of wicked persons. Sighs are an ordinary sign of grief, but tears a far greater. What sorrow was then in David's heart, when not only tears, but rivers of tears, ran down his eyes! Surely the fountain of sorrow was very full and deep, when the streams did run so fast and freely. Others' guilt calleth aloud to thee for grief. Do they wound their souls by sin? do thou wound thy own soul with sorrow. Alas! how is it possible thou canst be amongst them that dishonour the blessed God, grieve his holy Spirit, and break his righteous commands, and not have thine heart broken? Lot vexed his righteous soul with the unclean conversation of the Sodomites, 2 Pet. ii. 8. Unless thou hast lost thy spiritual scent, thou canst not endure the stench of their filthy, unsavoury breath, without much perplexity and trouble. 'I remembered the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy law,' Ps. cxix. 158. He that hath any part of the new man in himself, must needs be offended at the old man in others. It is presumed he is of a dishonest mind, who is not offended at the cheats and thefts of others. Every creature is disturbed at that which is contrary to its own nature. If grace be the object of my

¹ Nihil probat spirituales virum, sicut peccati alieni tractatio; quum liberationem ejus potius quam insultationem, potius auxilia quam convitia meditatur, et quantum facultas tribuitur suscipit.—*Aug., Sup. Epist. ad Gal.*

joy and delight, sin must needs be the object of my grief and sorrow. 'My soul shall weep in secret for your pride,' saith Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 17.

Reader, if thou lovest thy God with all thine heart, thou canst not but mourn that others should hate him, and walk contrary to him. We grieve as truly for wrongs done to those whom we sincerely affect, as for injuries done to ourselves. When one of Darius's eunuchs saw Alexander the Great setting his foot and trampling upon a table that had been highly esteemed by his master, he fell a-weeping; of which, when Alexander asked the reason, he answered, 'I weep to see that which my master esteemed at so high a rate made thy footstool.'¹ A gracious person cannot hear or see the Son of God, the word of God, and the people of God, which his God prizeth at a high rate, vilified, trampled under foot, and slighted by wicked men, but he falls a-weeping. 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they say unto me continually, Where is thy God?' Ps. xlii. 3. The dishonour of his God went nearer to his heart than his own distress, though David's condition was very sad at that season. Because others did eat the bread of violence, and drink the wine of deceit, he did eat his bread with tears, and mingle his drink with weeping. As when they were sick he fasted, so when they sinned he prayed and mourned.

Hasten out of evil company, if thou hast no hopes of doing good. That company may well be to thee as the torrid zone, where wickedness sits in the chair, and religion is made a footstool. Though thou mayest pass through such a climate as thy occasions require, yet it is not safe to dwell in so unwholesome an air. Men that are forced to walk by unsavoury carcases hold their breath, and hasten away as soon as they can. It is ill being an inhabitant in any place where God is an exile. A little before the destruction of Jerusalem, there was a voice heard in the temple very terrible: *Migremus hinc*, Let us go hence. That were a good motto for Christians in ill company, Let us go hence. Let such men know, as Manlius Torquatus told the Romans, that as they cannot bear thy strictness, so thou canst not endure their looseness. Take heed of staying in any place needlessly, out of which thy God is gone before thee: 'Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge,' Prov. xiv. 7. Running away was the means Joseph used against the wicked allurements of his mistress. It is not cowardice, but true courage, to turn the back upon sin and sinners. It doth often reflect upon our credits

¹ Diodor. Sicul., lib. xvii.

to be amongst wicked men, (Æschinus the comedian blushed when he saw his father knock at the door of an infamous woman,¹) but it will reflect upon our consciences to continue amongst them when our business with them is done.

The apostle Peter, with many words, did exhort and testify, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' Acts ii. 40. It appears to be a business of no small concernment and weight, that the apostle should use so many words about it. Wise men will not spend their time or breath in vain; they do not send more messengers about any work than the consequence and worth of it requireth. Besides, as Beza observeth upon the place, he interposeth God's authority, and chargeth them in his name to save or guard themselves from such ill companions. What hast thou to do with them that scorn to have anything to do with God? The king may well frown on those, and deny to converse with them, that converse with traitors in no relation to his service. Rebekah must leave her father's and brother's house if she will be joined to Isaac. 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty,' Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

*A good wish concerning a Christian's carriage in evil company,
wherein the former heads are applied.*

The mighty possessor of heaven and earth, who governeth the world with infinite wisdom, and allotteth to all the children of men their several callings and habitations; having permitted the chaff to continue amongst the corn, and appointed the tares to remain amongst the wheat till the great harvest day; and calling me sometimes, by his providence, to deal with profane and vicious persons; I wish I may be so sensible how difficult it is to be safe amongst such defilers and destroyers of souls, that I may walk with the more caution, whenever I walk in such company, and make them my fear, not my familiars, and rather my care than my companions. I know that I must go out of the world, if I will go away from the wicked. Ill humours will be amongst good in the body; sins will be amongst graces in the soul, and sinners will be amongst saints on this earth. I am but a stranger here; they are

¹ Terent. Adel.

men of the world; I must therefore expect, as Lot in Sodom, to be both vexed with their unclean conversations, and tempted to their violent corruptions. My God calleth them foxes for their craft, lions for their cruelty, and a generation of vipers for their rage and venom. In what danger therefore is my soul of being deceived and devoured by them! How certainly will these ravenous beasts tear me in pieces, unless I stand upon my guard, and the keeper of Israel undertake my protection! Lord, since it is not thy pleasure to free me from their company, grant me such help from thy good Spirit, that I may be free from their contagion. Though I may sit at the same table with them, as my occasions or relations require, let me never eat of their dish, nor feed on their dainties. I pray not that thou shouldst take me out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep me from the evil: 'Keep me from the snares which they lay for me, and from the gins of the workers of iniquity,' Ps. cxli. Let the wicked rather fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

I wish that the sense of my danger may keep me from being secure, and make me the more sedulous in the discharge of my duty. Sound eyes are apt to fall a-watering, by beholding and looking on sore eyes. Dry flax is not more apt to take fire, than my vicious nature to be inflamed; the wet sheet of watchfulness is a good preservative. He had need to have much grace, who would not learn others' vice. It is hard to touch pitch and not be defiled. Ungodly men are Satan's bloodhounds, with which he hunteth my soul. How many hath he drawn into the pit of perdition by such cart-ropes! They are his strongest chains, wherewith he binds men now to his own work, and at last, as their wages, hales them to hell. Fruits of hotter countries, transplanted into colder climates, do not seldom die, through the chilling nips of the air, and the unsuitableness of the soil wherein they are planted; there may be grace in my soul ready to flame heavenward, which may be soon quenched by the putrid fogs of evil companions. I know my God can keep me, (as he did the three children in the fiery furnace,) amongst them that are set on fire of hell, from being singed, or so much as having the scent of the fire on me; but I know also, that then I must keep his way, and be watchful. Oh that I might keep my heart with such diligence, that, as the crystal, I may touch those toads, and not be poisoned; yea, that as a true diamond in a ditch, I may sparkle with holiness, and shine brightly amongst defiled persons! How natural is it to resemble their faults, whose faces I am wholly

unlike ! I am apt, like a snowball, to carry away the dirt I am rolled upon ; and as an ape, to imitate those amongst whom I am, in their folly ; and to sin for company, rather than to be singular. But though the loadstone can draw iron, yet it cannot draw gold ; lightning may smite the dead oak, but not the green and fresh laurel ; though corrupt nature follow a multitude to do evil, yet grace, through the help of the Spirit, is invincible. Why may not my soul, like Moses's bush in the midst of fire, be kept from consuming ; and as Gideon's fleece, be moist, when all the earth about it is dry ? Oh that I might, as fish, retain my freshness in the saltiest waters ; and never savour others' vices, or follow their steps, who depart from the commandments of my God ! Lord, whose promise is to thy disciples, 'They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them,' Mark xvi. 18, is it not thine own handwriting ? and canst thou fail of fulfilling it ? Oh let thy powerful presence accompany me, whithersoever thy providence calleth me ! Let thy preventing grace preserve me from receiving harm, and thy quickening mercy enable me to do good, that whereas thine enemies are apt to speak evil of me as an evil-doer, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 16.

I wish that I may be so far from receiving prejudice, that I may be profited by the worst of those with whom I associate. As my God created nothing in vain, so he permits nothing but to some good purpose. It is true, wicked men are dogs, Mat. vii. 12, prone to fawn on me, that they may defile me ; but even of dogs there may be a good use ; the flock is the more safe from wolves, and the house from thieves, through their watchfulness. They are dust, apt to breed vermin, but some creatures live upon it as their aliment, and in it as their element, and the basest rubbish may be serviceable about the foundation of a building ; the guts and garbage of some beasts are food to others. Doth not experience teach us that many fowls draw nourishment from unclean and filthy carcases ? Why may not my stomach be so good, and my spiritual constitution so strong, as to concoct such unwholesome food ? Lyncurgus taught the Lacedæmonians virtue, not only by the pattern of their sober Ephori, but also of the drunken helots, their slaves. Poisons are as necessary as the best diet, if they be in the hands of him who is able to improve and prepare them. Beer is the better, the more lively and brisk, for the grounds that are in the same vessel with it. Oh that my graces might be the more quick and active for the lees of others' vices, that their sins might increase my sanctity, both in

making me more thankful to him who maketh me to differ, and more watchful over myself, lest I fall from my own steadfastness ! The mariners are directed in their sailings by rocks and shelves, as well as by the northern star ; my God instructeth Jonah by the shadow of a weed. Go to the pismire, thou sluggard ; consider her provident ways, and be wise to follow them. Observe the men of this world ; O my soul, consider their wicked ways, and be wise to avoid them ! Ask these beasts of the earth, and they will teach thee, nay, shame thee. How unwearied are they in the pursuit of the world ! how diligent about their works of darkness ! how often do they lose their sleep to do mischief, and neglect their food and callings to indulge their fleshly lusts ! whilst thou, whose master is the Lord of glory, whose service is the only freedom, and whose recompense will be infinite, art loitering and lazing upon the bed of security ! Oh that thou mayest learn industry about the concerns of heaven and eternity, from others' industry about the affairs of this earth for a few days ; and take shame to thyself, that Satan's servants should be more forward to gratify their soul-destroyer, than thou art to please the blessed Saviour ! Lord, it is thy prerogative to cause light out of darkness, and to bring good out of evil ; teach thy servant to gather figs from these thistles, and to be the better because others are so bad ; because the wicked forsake thy law, therefore let me love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold.

I wish that, though in pursuance of my calling I do afford my company to sinners, I may never bear them company in their sins. True gold will not change its colour or nature for the hottest fire ; the rock keeps its place, and is immovable, notwithstanding the continual dashing of the water ; the earth is not hurt either by the heat of summer or cold of winter ; though much dirt be flung at a post well oiled, it will not stick. My God hath enjoined me, ' Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ; ' whence I learn these three things :—

1. That sin is a work of darkness. The prince of darkness is its father ; it is his natural offspring, therefore called the work of the devil, John viii. 44. A dark heart is its mother ; there it is conceived, thence it is brought forth. In dark holes these vermin breed and swarm, Eph. iv. 18 ; Hosea iv. 1-3 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; its portion is utter darkness, blackness of darkness for ever ; all its inheritance lieth in darkness and the shadow of death.

2. I learn that the works of darkness are unfruitful. The sinner makes a sad market of all his wicked wares ; he soweth vice,

and reapeth vanity ; promiseth himself much pleasure, and findeth it wholly unprofitable. 'What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' Oh what a frightful monster is this miscreant ! It hath fruitlessness in the beginning, shame in the middle, and death in the conclusion.

3. I learn that I ought not to have fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness ; indeed I have little reason, if I consider the two former particulars ; yet how prone am I to it, either by my silence when they sin, or by my secret compliance with them in their sin ! My corrupted heart is like touchwood, ready to take fire by the least spark. When others are bold to blaspheme God, I am apt, through an ungodly bashfulness, to hold my peace, little considering that I must one day answer, as well for my sinful silence as for every idle word. It is my duty to hold the jewel of my faith fast, lest Satan steal it from me ; to hold my profession to the end, lest by leaving my colours, I lose my crown ; but not to hold my peace in the quarrel of truth, lest by suffering sin in others, I wrong my own soul. Where is my love to others, if I stand still whilst they destroy themselves ? It may well break the strings of my tongue, as of the son of Cyrus,¹ when sin, like the Persian, is ready to kill my father, or brother, or neighbour. Evil men are like traitors, with whom if we act, or conceal, we are guilty. Where is my love to myself, if I take others' intolerable burdens on my own back ? Sin is a load too heavy for the stoutest, for the strongest, to carry. Should I by my silence give consent to others' oaths, or lies, or jeers at godliness and godly men, I become a party in their bonds, and liable to make satisfaction for their debts, and may expect every moment when divine justice should arrest me for them. O my soul ! what answer dost thou give to these arguments ? Wouldst thou for all the world be one moment under the guilt of the least sin ? Didst thou never feel its weight, and water thy couch with tears by reason of it ? Hast thou not sighed out mournfully to God, There is no rest in my flesh, because of thine anger, nor quiet in my bones, because of my sin ? And wilt thou, for fear of men's displeasure, incur the infinite God's anger ? and to avoid, at most, a raze in thy flesh, admit a wide gash in thy conscience ? Oh that I might have more love to myself, and more respect for my neighbour, than to suffer sin upon him through my cowardly silence, or to join with him by any inward compliance, lest both be involved in the same vengeance ! Lord, the supplies of thy Spirit is the only preservative against all

¹ Cræsus.—Ed.

infections; be pleased to afford it to me, that I may keep myself pure in the most profane society, and no way be partaker of other men's sin.

I wish that I may always make the choice of Moses, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; yet that I may never, through my rash zeal, or indiscreet meddling with others' matters, or imprudent opening my mind to every seeming friend, bring myself into suffering. I have trials and troubles enough from others; I need not be the procurer of any to myself. I am every way surrounded with foes, and shall I not be my own friend? The world is my professed and dangerous enemy, for his sake who hath chosen me out of the world; because it cannot reach the Master, it wrangleth with, and abuseth his servants. He that is not its child, but born from above, must not expect to be its darling, but rather to be assaulted with its rage and revenge. The devil is my sworn and deadly adversary, always ready to put forth his utmost power and policy for my ruin. His empire is large, his subjects all at his service, and all his forces shall be used to make me suffer. Besides, my God is pleased sometimes, for the trial of my graces, and the purging out my corruptions, to cast me into manifold tribulations; since I have then so many assaults and afflictions from others, I have small cause to afflict myself. I desire that I may try before I trust, and not unlock the cabinet of my heart before all, lest some prove thieves. It is too ordinary for wicked ones, like executioners, with one hand to embrace a man, and with the other to pluck out his bowels. They may creep, and cringe, and fawn, and flatter, and as crows, peck out my eyes with praises, that they may afterwards more securely make a prey of me. They, as the spies sent by the scribes to Christ, feign themselves to be good men, that they might entrap him in his talk, Luke xx. 20. Should I believe all that may pretend love, I may quickly be bereaved of my livelihood and life. Companions of my secrets are like locks that belong to a house: whilst they are strong and close, they preserve me in safety; but weak and open, they expose me to danger, and make me a prey to others. My foolish freedom of declaring my mind, may, like the devil in the possessed person, cast me sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Though many seemed to believe on Christ, he did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men, John ii. 21. Though many seem to affect me, I may not commit myself to them, because I know no man. They who, as Moses's rod, seem at present to be a staff to support and stay me,

may by and by prove serpents to sting me. Oh that I might imitate my Saviour in his politics, as well as in his piety, and not, through my folly, put my outward comforts into the hands of them that hate me, and lay myself at their mercy. I would, as my God calleth me, own my Saviour in every company, and never deny him, who witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession for me; but I desire that the feet of my zeal may always be directed by the eyes of knowledge and discretion, lest the faster and the farther they carry me, the more I wander to my woe. My God tells me, 'He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips, shall be destroyed,' Prov. xiii. 3. Bees, though engaged in hot skirmishes with other insects, use not their stings ordinarily; but when they are transported with rage, and blinded with passion, then they use them, to their own certain ruin and destruction. No less injurious is the fire of zeal to myself and others, where it is not bounded by wisdom. I fear many servants of God have felt the wrath of some men, (in a greater degree than they otherwise would,) through the immoderate heats of some few saints. If, under colour of hatred against sin, I fall foul upon persons, or instead of reproving sin, the work of the devil, revile magistracy, and the ordinance of God, I may expect to suffer, and with little comfort, because as an evil-doer. Zeal is like grenades, and other fireworks, which, if not well looked to and ordered, they do more hurt to them that cast them, than to the enemy. Oh that I might behave myself wisely in a perfect way, and behave myself prudently in the path of piety, that I may never be so foolish, as, with the silly fly, to burn myself in the candle of wicked men's power, nor yet so unfaithful, as to forsake my captain when he calleth me to fight the good fight of faith. Let my ambition be, to be high in my God's favour, and to have a large share in that eternal weight of glory above. Let my care be here below to study peace, and to meddle with my own business, (oh how much lieth upon my hands every day in reference to my everlasting concerns!) to affect rather quietness from the world, than acquaintance with it, and to pass through it as a pilgrim and stranger, with as little noise and notice as I can. Lord, whatsoever tribulation I meet with in the world, give me peace in thy Son; make me as wise as a serpent, as innocent as a dove, that those who watch either to defile me in spirituals, or destroy me in civils, may be disappointed. Let me not trust in man, whose words may be softer than oil, when war is in his heart, but let my whole confidence be fixed on thyself. How freely may I unbosom myself to thee, without the least fear! How

willing art thou to hear ! How able to help ! How true to all that trust thee ! Thy faithfulness never faileth ; thou art good, a stronghold in the day of adversity, and knowest them that trust in thee.

I wish that I may confess Christ, whatsoever it may cost me, and though not thrust myself into danger, yet never betray my cause, or break through any command, to avoid the cruellest death. It is common with the hypocrite, as the snail, to look what weather is abroad, and if that be stormy, to pull in his horns and hide his head. The hedgehog alters his hole according to the wind. The swallow changeth his nest according to the season. The bird *piralis* takes the colour off any cloth on which she sits. There is a tree, say some naturalists, which opens and spreads its leaves when any come to it, and shuts them at their departure from it. The flies will abound in a sunshiny day, but if once it be cloudy, they vanish. When Christ rides to Jerusalem in triumph, many cry Hosanna, who, when he is taken and tried for his life, cry, Crucify, crucify. The jacinth is changed with the air ; in a clear season it is bright, but if the air be overcast, it is darksome. The unsound Christian is often suitable to his company : if they own godliness, it shall have his good word ; if they disrelish it, he can spit in the face of it. But pure coral keeps its native lustre, and will receive no colouring. The upright soul is constant in his profession, and changeth not his behaviour according to his companions. Oh that I might never, through shame or fear, disown him who hath already acknowledged me ! Alas ! I have that in me, which he might well count a disgrace to him. I am his creature, and so infinitely his inferior. The vilest beggar is not near so much below the most potent emperor, as I am in this respect to the great God and my Saviour. The whole creation is to him as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity ; what then am I, poor silly worm, that lie grovelling in this earth ? I am a sinner, and thereby his disparagement and dishonour. If a sober master be ashamed of a deboice, drunken servant, much more may the Holy Jesus be ashamed of me, an unholy wretch, and traitorous rebel against his crown and dignity ; yet for all this distance, for all this difference, he is graciously pleased to acknowledge me, and shall not I own him ?

If I be ashamed of him, I am a shame to him. But why should I be ashamed of Christ ? The object of shame is some evil which hath guilt or filth in it ; but he knew no sin, though he was made sin for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in him. He

was a lamb without spot and blemish. None of his malicious enemies could convince him of sin. He is so far from being the object of shame, that he is infinitely worthy to be my boast and glory. He is the prince of life, the Lord of glory, the King of kings, the fountain of all excellency and perfection. The highest emperors have gloried in being his vassals. Angels count it their honour to serve the meanest of his servants; and shall I think it a disgrace to be one of his attendants? Oh that I might be ashamed of my sins, loathe myself for all my abominations, be often confounded, because I bear the reproach of my youth; but in no company, be it never so great or profane, be ashamed of him who is the blessed and only potentate, and the glory of his people Israel!

Again, why should I out of fear disown my Saviour? Is there any safety but in sanctity? Whilst I travel in the king's highway, I have a promise of protection, but if I leave that upon any pretence, I run myself into peril and perdition. Those that, when called to fight, fly from their colours, die without mercy. What can I expect if I leave the captain of my salvation, but martial law, even eternal death? I may, possibly, by my cowardice, keep my skin whole, but I wound my conscience; I sink my soul to save my body; as Lot, prostitute my daughter, my dearest offspring, that will abide with me for ever, to save my guests, which lodge with me for a night, and will be gone from me in the morning. What is it I fear, that I should be guilty of so heinous a fault? Is it the world's frowns and fury? Why, its kindness is killing, and therefore its cruelty is healing. If my God see it good, he can and will defend me from the world's cruelty, without my denying Christ, and in direct courses; and if it be his will that I suffer for well-doing, I may commit the keeping of my soul to him, as to a faithful Creator. Certainly there is nothing to be gotten by the world's love, and nothing worth ought to be lost by its hatred. Why then should I seek that love which cannot help me, or fear that hate which cannot hurt me? If I should be so foolish as to love it for loving me, my God would hate me for loving it. Do not I know that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? If I loathe it for hating me, it cannot injure me for loathing it. Let it then hate me, I will forgive it; but if it love me, I will not requite it; for since its love is hurtful, and its hate harmless, I may well condemn its fury, and hate its favour. Lord, thou hast commanded me neither to love the world's smiles, nor to fear its frowns. I acknowledge that its allurements have been too preva-

lent in gaining my love, and its affrightments too powerful in causing my fear. Oh that thy exceeding rich and precious promises might make me despise all its glorious proffers, and faith in thy threatenings stablish my heart against all its childish bugbears. The fear of man bringeth a snare, but he that trusteth in thee is sure. Let the dread of thy majesty swallow up, as Moses' rod the Egyptians', all fear of men. And since thy truth hath no need of my lie, thy power hath no need of my sin to preserve me safe, let me never break over the hedge of any of thy precepts, to avoid an afflicting providence, but in a way of well-doing, commit my ways unto the Lord, and my thoughts shall be established. Suffer me never to say, A confederacy, to them, to whom thine enemies say, A confederacy; neither to fear their fear, but to sanctify thee, the Lord of hosts, and to make thee my fear continually.

I wish that, since my God intends, in all his providences, my spiritual and eternal good, I may gain something by those that are most graceless; and though Satan purposeth my defilement in my converses with them, yet they may prove my profit and advantage. That blowing which seems to disperse the flames and trouble the fire, doth make it burn the more clear; the waters of others' opposition may increase my spiritual heat; a dull whetstone may set an edge upon a knife; a mean, vile porter may bring me a considerable present; black coals may scour and make iron vessels bright; ashes cast upon fire put it not out, but are helpful to preserve it all night against the morning, which would otherwise be consumed. Why may not my soul find some pearl in the heads of these toads, and get some spiritual riches by trading with them for temporal? Naturalists tell me it is wholesome for a flock of sheep to have some goats amongst them, their bad scent being physical to preserve the sheep from the shakings. Surely, then, the presence of ungodly men may sometimes be profitable for me, and prevent that lightness and vanity which I am too apt to discover in every company. Though I am loose amongst my friends, and it be my sorrow, I had need to be serious amongst mine enemies, lest I become their scorn. Frankincense put into the fire giveth the greater perfume. Civet doth not lose its savour, but is the sweeter, in a sink. Oh that my soul might draw the nearer to God, because others depart further from him; and do him the more service, and be the more diligent at his work, because they are so unworthy and wicked. Executioners and hangmen are helpful to a country, to free them from those felons and murderers that would destroy the inhabitants. My sins may receive their death's wounds, through

the hands of them who have no true love to me. My pride may well be abated, because of their profaneness. Free grace alone makes me to differ. I had been as bad as the worst of them, if infinite mercy had not preserved me. I shall be as bad, if boundless love do not prevent me: to God alone, therefore, belongs the glory. Possibly they may sometimes twit me with my faults, and herein they may prove my friends. Every man hath need of a monitor. My friends too often are cowardly, and afraid to tell me my errors, lest they should give offence. My enemies will speak their minds freely, if they know anything amiss by me, and so do me a great kindness. Myrrh, though bitter, may heal wounds, and preserve from putrefaction; so may the taunts and gibes of ungodly men cure my inward sores, and make me watchful against future wandering. It was a worthy speech of the Macedonian King Philip, when he was told that Nicanor spake evil of him, I believe he is honest, and I fear I have deserved it.

I may also be the better for wicked men's counsel, as well as their carping, if I have but the wit to follow it so far as it is good. Evil Joab gave good counsel to David, and had he desisted upon it from numbering the people, it might have saved the lives of some thousands. It is ordinary indeed to value the advice by the person, and thereby it becomes unprofitable. But is silk the less precious, because it is spun by vile worms? Are roses the less sweet, because they grow amongst briars and brambles? Silver and gold are not the worse by being taken out of the lowest element, the earth. That wine may strengthen and refresh my nature, which is drawn out of a wooden or worm-eaten cask. Oh that I might take the counsel of the worst in that which is good, and refuse the counsel of the best in that which is evil! Lord, thou canst command that these stones of wicked men be made bread to nourish my soul. Teach me by their falls to walk more humbly with thee, and to cleave more fast to thy Son, through whose strength alone I stand. Blessed be thy justice, which hath made them examples to me; and blessed be thy mercy, that hath not made me an example to them.

I wish that, whilst my God calleth me among them, I may do good to them, as well as receive good from them; that I may, as musk, cast a fragrantcy amongst such coarse and foul linen. Though I hate their sins, yet I am bound to love and pity their souls. It is true, they are vile and vicious, they work iniquity, they walk after the flesh, they walk contrary to God, and bid him depart from them. But may I not say, 'Father, forgive them, they know

not what they do' ? Did they know him, they would not, by their sins, crucify afresh the Lord of glory. It is no wonder that blind men should wander out of the right way, that those who have been kept in dungeons all their days should be contented with the poor rush-candles of creature comforts, and never desire nor inquire after the Sun of righteousness. Alas ! the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. He knoweth that, did they but see the grace they abuse, the love they despise, the excellency and certainty of that salvation which they neglect, and the extremity and endlessness of that misery which they are hastening to, they would quickly turn about, and mind the things which concern their everlasting peace ; therefore he holds his black hand over their eyes, and so they are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. Oh what pity should I have for such ignorant persons as are running hoodwinked to hell ! If to him that is afflicted pity should be shewn, what pity doth he call for who is all over infected with sin, and every moment in danger of everlasting death ! Can I be troubled to behold the blind, or the lame, or the sick, and have I no bowels for those souls that lie weltering in their blood ! Besides, the time was that I had as low thoughts of God and his ways, and as high thoughts of the flesh and the world, as they. I was once in their condition, a servant of sin, an heir of wrath, and therefore I owe them the more compassion. Those that have been sensible of the stone, or gout, or toothache, are the more pitiful towards them that are affected with the same pain. My God bids me to be gentle, shewing all meekness towards all men, Titus iii. 2, 3 ; because I myself was sometimes disobedient, deceived, and serving divers lusts and pleasures. When I was wallowing in my uncleanness, and priding myself in my pollutions, the heart of my God was turned towards me, and the hand of mercy open to me. O my soul, shall not that infinite perdition to which thou wast obnoxious, and that infinite compassion of which thou hast tasted, prevail with thee to pity others ! Oh that thou wert so affected with the misery thou hast deserved, and that rich love and grace which thou hast received, that thou mightest seriously and studiously endeavour, by thy affectionate counsel, pious carriage, and prudent admonition, that others may be partakers of the same mercy and grace ! If my carriage be unblameable, my counsel and reproof will be the more acceptable ; wholesome meat often is distasteful, coming out of nasty hands. A bad liver cannot be a good counsellor or bold reprover ; such a

man must speak softly, for fear of awaking his own guilty conscience. If the bell be cracked, the sound must needs be jarring.

I desire that I may be as bold to reprove, as others are to commit sin; yet that I may be so prudent as never to reproach the sinner when I reprove the sin, lest I break their heads instead of their hearts, and make them fly in my face, instead of falling down at God's feet. Bone-setters must deal very warily, and physic is given with great advice, and in dangerous diseases, not without a consultation. I would distinguish between crimes, and not fall upon any, as the Syrians did on Gilead, Amos i. 3, with a flail of iron, when a small wand may do the work, nor, as Jeroboam¹ threatened Israel, chastise them with scorpions, who may be reformed with whips. It was not the heat, but the cool of the day, when my God came down to reprove Adam. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. It is in vain to undertake to cast out Satan with Satan, or sin with sin. I must turn anger out of my nature, but I must not turn my nature into anger. Yet let me be serious, not light in all my admonitions. It is ill playing or jesting with one that is destroying and damning himself. Would it not stick close to me another day, should I laugh at them at this day that are going into the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? My frothy carriage would, as Hazael's cloth dipped in water, instead of recovering, stifle my brother to death. Physic works best when it is warm. I must love my neighbour as myself. True self-love will throw the first stone at its own sin. I may not suffer sin in myself, therefore not in my neighbour. Lord, thou hast commanded me in any wise to rebuke my neighbour, and not to suffer sin upon him. I confess it is an displeasing work to rake into sores and ulcers. If I lance festered wounds, I make the patients angry by putting them to pain; and oh, how averse is my wicked heart to such a task! I am prone to fear their ill-will more than thine, and rather to let them rot in the honey of flattery, than preserve and save them by faithful admonition. How backward is my cowardly spirit to undertake the work! how many excuses will it plead for its neglect! When through grace I have overcome those lets and hindrances, how flatteringly and unfaithfully do I go about it! rather stroking the sinner than striking the sin. Oh pardon my omissions of this duty, and all my falseness in the performance of it! Let thy Spirit so encourage me, that I may not fear the faces of men; so direct me, that affectionately, prudently, and zealously I may admonish them that go astray; and oh do thou

¹ Rehoboam.—ED.

so prosper and bless, that I may bring them home to thy flock and fold.

I wish that I may unfeignedly bewail others' wickedness, and lament that dishonour to my God, which I cannot hinder. It is an ill sign of my sonship, for others to blaspheme the name of my father, and me to be insensible. Adoption is ever accompanied with filial affection. If I expect the privileges, I must ensure the properties of a child. Nature will teach me to be troubled for affronts that are offered to the father of my flesh, and will not grace enable me to be grieved at the dirt which wicked men throw in the face of the Father of spirits. Again, I must not look for freedom from others' sufferings, unless I lay to heart their sins. The mourners in Zion are those that in a common calamity are marked for safety, Ezek. ix. The destroying angel will take me to be as guilty as others, if it find me without grief, and so wrap me up in their punishments. My God himself judgeth me infected with those sins for which I am not afflicted; and can I then think to escape? Oh that my head were water, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the iniquity and misery of dying, gasping sinners! Lord, thou canst fetch water out of this rocky heart, and open the sluices of my eyes; break my heart, because others break thy commands. When others kindle the fire of thine anger, help thy servant to draw water, and pour it out before thee. Let me be so far from seeing others provoke the eyes of thy glory without sorrow, that whenever I remember the transgressors I may be grieved, because they forsake thy statutes; let rivers of tears run down mine eyes, when the wicked forsake thy law.

I cannot for my life so carry myself, but I shall sometimes fall amongst wicked men. Whilst I am amongst them I endanger my soul, either by complying with, or conniving at, them in their evil actions. There is no safety in evil society. Such pitch is apt to defile my conscience. Who can expect to come off without loss from such cheats and jugglers? It is the peevish industry of wickedness to find or make a fellow. Besides, they are children of the world, whose friendship is enmity against my God; they are children of disobedience, therefore contrary to my new nature, and so must needs be uncomfortable to me; children of the devil, therefore traitors against Christ, and so abominable to my God. I cannot be certain not to meet with evil companions, but I will be careful not to be their consorts. I would willingly sort myself with such as should either teach me virtue, or learn of me to avoid vice. And if my companion cannot make me better, nor I him good, let me

rather leave him ill, than he should make me worse. Though, if I depart from them, the world will judge me proud, yet, should I stay with them needlessly, my God would count me profane; and is it not better that men accuse me falsely, than God condemn me justly? What need I care what men think, so God approve? It is to his judgment that I must stand or fall for ever. It is likely that those who cannot defile my conscience will injure my credit, and publish to their fellows that I am a precise fool. But this is my comfort, there is a time coming when innocency will cause the greatest boldness, and freedom from sin will do me more service, and be infinitely more worth, than the highest renown that ever mortal acquired. Lord, thy people in this world are as lilies among thorns; the Canaanites of the land are thorns in the eyes, and pricks in the sides of thy true Israelites. 'Woe is me, that I dwell in Mesech, and my habitation is in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace.' They like not me, because I am not like them, and count my company not good, because it is not bad, and I dare not sin with them. They are mine enemies, because I follow the thing that good is. Oh how black are their tongues with railing, and their hearts with rage, against them who dare not provoke thee as much as themselves! I am ready to say now, upon the view of their abominations, and the hearing their oaths, and curses, and blasphemies, Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their rage, for it is cruel. O my soul, enter not thou into their secrets; mine honour, be not thou united unto them, for in their anger they seek to destroy souls, and in their self-will they dig pits to cause others to fall. Because they cannot defile the brethren, they defame the brotherhood, and disgrace them whom they cannot deceive. Let the heat of their lust increase my longing after that place where there is no Judas among thine apostles, no Demas among thy disciples; where all the society will be of one mouth and mind, of one heart and way; where all the company will join in concert, and the whole celestial choir tune their strings, and raise their voices to the highest pitch in sounding thine excellencies, and singing thy praises without sin or ceasing. There will be no Tobias to indict thy children of treason against men for their faithfulness to thee; there will be no Ahab to accuse thy best servants as troublers of the state, for reproving the idolatries and enormities of the church; there will be no Balaam trying his hellish tricks, to make thy people a prey to their bodily foes, and a provocation by their sins to thy Majesty; there will be no tares in that field, no straw in that barn, no vessels of dishonour in that house; into it

can in nowise enter anything that defileth or is unclean. The company there will be, not tempting me to wickedness, or taxing me with preciseness, but part of my felicity. Oh what a happy day will it be, when all profane Esaus, and scoffing Ishmaels, shall be cast out of the house, and I shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with none but the holy of the Lord, in the kingdom of heaven ! Holy Father, let the skirt of thy mercy cover all my iniquities and failings in evil company ; and grant that my carriage amongst such persons (whilst I am, through thy providence, forced to be amongst them) may be so pious and gracious, that at that great harvest-day, when thou wilt separate the chaff from the good corn, and burn it up with unquenchable fire, I may be wholly free from their vicious infections, and vexatious presence, and associate with the spirits of just men made perfect, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and enjoy them all in, and with, thy blessed self, for ever and ever ! Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in good company, with a good wish about that particular.

Having despatched the Christian's carriage in *evil*, I proceed to his behaviour in *good* company.

The communion of saints is the most desirable and delectable society that the whole creation affordeth. God himself is pleased to delight in the assemblies of his people : ' He loveth the gates of Zion (where they met together) above all the dwellings of Jacob,' Ps. lxxxvii. 2. The evil spirit is for solitariness ; he walketh in solitary places, seeking rest, Matt. xii. But God is for society ; he dwelleth among his children, and bestoweth his choicest comforts upon the congregations of his poor. The Father provideth the greatest cheer, and maketh the best feast, when many of his children come together to wait upon him, though each coming singly is welcome to his table. The Spirit of God fell down in an extraordinary measure upon the primitive Christians, when they were gathered together in one place, and with one consent, Acts ii. 1, 2. Naturalists tell us that strife and quarrelling among the bees, is a sign that the queen-bee is about to leave the hive and be gone. It is plain that, when the disciples were scattered every man to his own home, the Lord Jesus was leaving them ; but when they were

met together with one accord, then he came unto them, and said, 'Peace be unto you; receive ye the Holy Ghost,' John xx.

God cannot affect contentious spirits; he would not appear in a blustering wind, or in an earthquake, but in a still, low voice. When the difference between Abraham and Lot was over, then God appeared to Abraham, Gen. xiii. 14.

As God delights in the company of his children—Isa. lxii. 4, 'Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah,' *i.e.*, My delight is in her—so the saints delight in communion with one another. Things of like nature desire to be joined together. Love, the consequent of likeness, hath an attractive power, and covets the presence of the party beloved. Balm put into the bee-hives, causeth the bees to come together, and others to come to them. Grace, like fire, solders together those that before differed; hence saints are like doves, they fly in troops to their windows, Isa. lx. 8. Though the pelican be a melancholy bird, and naturally inclineth to deserts, yet when they remove their places, they go in companies, and the first stay for the last, as they fly over the mountains, Isa. xxxiv. 11; Eph. ii. 14. Though saints love sometimes to be solitary, as having secret business with their God, yet they do not forsake the assembling themselves together. That verse, Ps. lxxxiv. 7, which we read, 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appearing before God,' Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, 'They go from company to company.' As they went up to Jerusalem, they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength, because much of our safety consisteth in good society. He that travels alone is easily made a prey, εἰς ἀνὴρ οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ, One man is no man. Even counties that have been large, have drawn themselves into associations for mutual and common defence.

Hebron, which was a type of the church, takes its name from *cabar*, to accompany, and thence Chebron or Hebron, a pleasant or delectable society. The saints are all one family, one household, Gal. vi. 10; one body, Eph. iii. 6; one sheepfold, John x. 4, 16; one brotherhood, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5; one building, one vineyard, one army, one spouse, Eph. i. 20-22; to shew that oneness which ought to be in affection among them. Christ tells us of his spouse: Cant. vi. 9, 'My dove is one, the only one of her mother;' hence the primitive Christians, though some thousands, are said to be of one heart and of one soul—of one heart in unity of affection, and of one soul in unity of judgment, Acts iv. 32. In Tertullian's time the heathen admired the Christians for their love, saying, Look how the Christians love one another. Jerusalem is a city compact together, at unity

within itself, Ps. cxxii. 3; Phil. ii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 10. Babel was confounded by diversity of tongues; and the citizens of Zion are confirmed by being of the same mind and mouth, by speaking all the same thing. Oh how many arguments doth the Spirit of God use to persuade them to oneness and unity! He tells them they have one Father, Rom. viii. 14; one mother, Gal. iv. 26; that they are begotten by the same immortal seed, 1 Pet. i. 23; and nourished by the same milk, 1 Pet. ii. 2. He calls them co-workers in the same labours, co-heirs of the same life, Rom. xvi. 3, and viii. 17; stones of the same building, than which there cannot be a more firm connexion; and branches of the same vine, than which there cannot be a more inherent inoculation. How pathetically doth the loving Redeemer exhort his disciples to love and oneness! He giveth them his precept: 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another;' not but that it was an old duty, but because envy and malice had prevailed so much among the Jews, that to love was a new thing. Again, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another,' as if there were nothing else that he required but this, or as if this, of all the commandments, was that which Jesus loved best. He sets before them his own pattern: 'As I have loved you, so ought ye to love one another.' The love of Christ should prevail with Christians to lay down their lives for him, and shall it not prevail to lay down their strifes among themselves? Further, how affectionately doth he pray to his Father to bestow this blessing upon them: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me,' *i.e.*, Father, did we ever fall out? Was there ever any discord between us? Why, then, should they that are thine and mine disagree? John xvii. 21-23.

Mark these three particulars about this prayer:

1. The petitioner, that is, Christ, who was the wisdom of the Father, in him dwelt the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He fully understood what request would be most advantageous for his people. Besides, he was the head and husband of his church, naturally caring for her welfare as his own, and so his love would prompt him to desire what his wisdom saw most conducing to her happiness.

2. The repetition of his petition. He begs the same boon of his Father four times in three verses. He had the Spirit without mea-

sure, and so could not be guilty of vain tautologies. Surely then that which Christ, whose wisdom was unsearchable, and whose love to his beyond all compare, doth press with so much earnestness and instance, must needs be of very great weight and consequence.

3. The particular season of this petition, for unity, or the subject of it. He had in the former part of his prayer confined himself within the narrow compass of the apostles; but in the 20th verse, having made a perfect transition from them to all believers, to all that should believe on him through their word, he is importunate with his Father for their union and unity. When the dearest Redeemer puts the whole company of believers together, both Jews and Gentiles, that were at that present, or ever should be in the world, he pitcheth upon this as the most eminent petition he could put up for them. It is not that they all may be enriched, or honoured upon earth; nay, it is not that they all may be adopted, sanctified, and saved; but that they all may be one as we are one; as if the whole kingdom of grace and glory did consist in this, and as if this once obtained, all were done that was needful for them. Besides, he makes this the visible character of their Christianity, that badge which would publish to all they met their relation to Christ: 'By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' This is the livery which will speak to what master ye belong. By this, not by casting out devils, but by casting out discord; not by relieving one another occasionally, but by loving each other fervently, shall all men know ye are my disciples.

The differences amongst Christians can never be sufficiently lamented. That they who are all near to God should behold one another afar off, and they who are all acquainted with Christ should be unacquainted among themselves. Job laments this fault in his three friends: 'These ten times have ye reproached me; are ye not ashamed that ye have made yourselves strange unto me?' Job xix. 3. That they who are brethren, begotten of the same father, born of the same mother, fed at the same table, educated under the same tutor, attended with the same servants, arrayed with the same garments, and heirs of the same inheritance, should be strange to one another, is a great, a gross shame. Many hundred devils can agree together in one man, and yet in some parts not ten Christians can agree together in one house. One of the fathers was so much affected with the divisions of Christians, that he professed himself ready to let out his heart blood to cement them together. Both the honour of religion and our own interest do both command us to unite. It was no small reflection on Christians that Mohammed's

great champion should have cause to say, I shall sooner see my fingers all of a length, than Christians all of a mind. It is true, till we have all one eye, we shall never in all things be of one judgment. But must a small difference in opinion cause such a distance in affection? Must we make the devils and enemies of Christ music by our discords? When the foes of God and our own souls are in sight of us, shall we be fighting to make them sport, and to give them an opportunity to destroy us? The wicked of the world warm themselves by that fire of division which the heats of some weak Christians kindle. It is observable that the Spirit of God, mentioning the contention between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle, and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, immediately subjoins, in the same verse, 'And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land,' Gen. xiii. 7; some think to shew the occasion of the difference betwixt them, their cattle increasing so much, and those nations dwelling among them, they had not sufficient room, and therefore wrangled; others think that latter clause is inserted to shew the heinous aggravation of their sin. It had been bad enough to have quarrelled where none but saints had been in company, and spectators of their strife; but it is much worse to fall out in the midst of their enemies; hereby they expose their profession to derision, and their persons to destruction. Plutarch observes, that Dion calmed the boisterous spirits of his mutinous soldiers, by saying, Your enemies yonder, pointing to the castle of Syracuse, which he then besieged, behold your mutinous behaviour. And shall neither the eyes of men nor angels, nor of God himself, which always observes the strifes and contentions amongst his children, prevail with them to put away envying, and variance, and emulation, and wrath, and persuade them to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? The foolish cranes, by fighting, beat down one another, and so are taken. Civil dissensions make Christians a prey. Neither men nor devils, which God hath used as his officers and constables to punish them, had ever had such power over them, had they but kept the King of heaven's peace. Surely, for the divisions of Zion there ought to be great searchings of heart. Oh, when shall we see the day that those glorious gospel promises and prophecies shall be accomplished! 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw with the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned

child shall put his hand to the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord,' Isa. xi. 6-9, and lxxv. 25. One would think that heart-sprung pathological exhortation of the apostle should sound a retreat, and call Christians off from their violent and virulent pursuit of each other: 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,' Phil. ii. 1, 2.

Reader, I shall give thee two or three motives to quicken thee to mind and frequent the company of good men, then acquaint thee wherein the exercising thyself to godliness in such company consisteth.

SECTION I.

First, Consider the extraordinary good of Christian society. The children of God are like ambergris, sweetest in composition. When flower is added to flower, and many tied together, the posy is the more pleasant.

Company is in itself eligible; banishment is esteemed a civil death, and counted a punishment but one remove from a natural death. Hence, how much hath it been bewailed, not only by a Cain, 'Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth,' Gen. iv. 14, but even by a David: 'I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am like an owl of the desert; I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top,' Ps. cii. 6, 7. But how much worth is the society of the saints! Christian society is like an arch building, wherein every stone upholds its fellow, which, if it should not, the whole would suddenly fall. One hand, saith Euripides, can make but weak defence; but, as our Latin proverb is, *Multorum manibus grande levatur onus*,—Many hands make light work. Several horses may draw that weight with ease which one is not able to stir. Saints help each other, as the several parts of the building. The foundation bears up the walls, the walls bear up the roof, the rafters bear up the laths, the laths bear up the tiles. Hence it is esteemed a privilege to a town or city to be made a corporation. And merchants manage their callings, not only more orderly, but also more successfully, when they are once made a company. Surely Paul would never have sent some hundred miles for Timothy, if his company had not been of great value. Dr Taylor blessed God that ever he came into prison, to

be acquainted with that angel of God John Bradford. One sinner is a devil to another, tempting and provoking each other to wickedness. Therefore the philosopher, seeing two vicious persons together, cried out, See how the viper is borrowing poison of the asp! But one saint is an angel to another, persuading and encouraging one another to holiness. They take sweet counsel together, and go to the house of God in company. The patriarchs removed their habitations for the benefit of water-springs. Every saint is in some sense a well of living water; and did men but know their worth, they would delight more to be with them. Sure I am, he that hath such a good neighbour shall never want a good-morrow. As a pomander ball cast into a censer will fill the whole house with its pleasant savour, so a Christian will endeavour to perfume all that come near him. How pleasant, then, is the savour arising from many Christians in company together!

The society of the prophets is able to make even a Saul to prophesy. The Pleiades, which are the seven stars joined in one constellation, ('Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?' Job xxxviii. 31,) help one another in their work, which is to bring on the spring, the best season of the year. Christians in consort are an abridgment of heaven, shining like a firmament of bright stars, not one malevolent aspect among them; and they all conspire together to further a spring and new shoot of grace, the best of blessings, in each others' hearts. As sincerity is the heart of religion, so society is the breath of religion; it helps to preserve it alive. The spiritual life of the Philippians did, upon their first quickening, appear by this, and it was also very helpful for their continuance and increase, Phil. i. 5.

No Christians are so full but they stand in need of their fellows. He that had as large a stock of grace as any since Christ, yet could not live without commerce with others, Rom. xv. 24. The goodliest house may want a shore. The Shunammite, though she told the prophet she dwelt among her own people, and therefore needed not any to speak for her to the king, was glad to receive that kindness by the hands of the servant, which she denied to accept from his master.

I shall mention the advantage of good company in five particulars:

First, By good company sinful souls have been converted. A crooked bough, joined to a straight one, groweth straight. Latimer was converted from popery by the good company and conference of Master Bilney. The daughters of Jerusalem came to be in love

with the bridegroom by being in company with his bride; by being acquainted with the church, they became enamoured with Christ. At first they wondered at her fondness of him, that she was so impatient till she had found him, Cant. v. 8, 9; but they had not been long with her, before the heat of her love had warmed them with the same earnest desire and longings: 'Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?' Cant. vi. 1. They that come where ointments and sweet spices are stirring, carry away some of the savour. One live coal may set a whole stack on fire. Evil company, like the river Melas in Bœotia, makes all the sheep that drink of it black;¹ but good company, rather like Clitumnus in Italy, makes them that drink of it white. Saul, by being in company with a wise servant, was brought to hear of a kingdom: 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise,' Prov. xiii. 20. This made Algerius, the Italian martyr, say, I had rather be in prison with Cato, a wise man, of whom I might learn some good, than in the senate-house with Cæsar.

As one circle caused by a stone thrown into the water begets a second, and that a third; and as one rainbow begets another, and they two together beget a third; so one Christian helps to beget another to Christ, and they two joining, turn more from the errors of their ways. Holiness, like an elixir, by contraction, if any disposition in the metal, will render it of the same property. The Indians were brought to embrace the Christian faith, by the holy conference and company of Edesius and Frumentius, two private Christians.

Secondly, By good company, pious souls have been confirmed. Whilst Latimer and Ridley lived, they kept up Cranmer by intercourse of letters. Christian conference is a great help to perseverance. The staff of bonds was the Jews' beauty and safety, Zech. xi. 14. Company causeth courage: the beams of joy are the hotter for reflection. *Ipsæ aspectus viri boni delectat*, saith the moralist, The very countenance of a good man makes us cheerful; our sight of him is reviving to us. When Paul saw the brethren he blessed God, and took courage, Acts xxviii. 15. When many mariners pull at a rope together, they strive with the more alacrity; therefore Christ sent his disciples by two and two, Mark vi. 7. When Jonathan went against the Philistines, he would take his armour-bearer along with him. The blessed Jesus, going into the garden to his bitter, bloody agony, chose Peter, James, and John

¹ Fulk, *Meteor.*, lib. iv.

to accompany him. The great apostle expected comfort from the Romans' company, and hoped to confirm them by his. 'For I long to see you, that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.' The closer the stones of the edifice are joined together, the stronger is the building: 'That I might be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' Grace is the oil of gladness; and the more of this oil, the more of gladness. When Paul's faith and the Romans' met in one channel, such a river of oil would be a river of pleasure. The union of such flames could not but become a good fire, to refresh and rejoice their hearts. As it is said of leviathan, Job xli. 16, that his scales are his pride—*i.e.*, his strength in which he boasteth; and the reason of it is rendered, one is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. So it may be said of the people of God, their unity will be their security. When one is so near to another that no enemy can come between them, when they are joined one to another, and stick together that they cannot be sundered, then it may be said of them as of him, 'In their neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before them,' ver. 21.

Thirdly, By good company, erring saints have been recovered. Holy David lay sleeping in his sin till his good friend Nathan jogged and awakened him. Many a one hath been roused out of his spiritual lethargy by private admonition. Hence, saith Solomon, 'Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up,' Eccles. iv. 9, 10. Men that are troubled with the falling sickness, are sometimes carried away and die with their distemper, it seizing upon them when none is with them; but when they fall amongst company, by rubbing and chafing them, they often come to themselves again. Every scandalous sin especially is a kind of falling sickness, very dangerous to the soul. It is ill, therefore, for them that are overtaken with it, and have none with them, by serious admonition to recover them out of it.

I have read of a minister, that in the night had a sudden motion to go visit a certain neighbour, and though he argued with himself the unseasonableness of the time, and his ignorance of any cause for such an action, yet the impulse upon him was so strong that he could not withstand it; so going to that friend's house late in the night, he found none at home save the master of the house. Truly, saith the minister to him, I am come to your house thus late, but

I know not to what end, nor for what purpose. Yea, saith the man of the house, but God knoweth; for I have made away, through my profaneness, so many children's portions, and here is the rope in my pocket with which I was going to hang myself. But what, replied the minister, if I can tell you of one that made away with more portions, and yet was saved? Who was that? said the neighbour. Adam, saith the minister; who, as a public person, was entrusted with the stock of all his posterity, and prodigally wasted them, yet was saved. Thus, by his serious and seasonable counsel, he stayed the man from his purpose, and was, probably, instrumental for much spiritual good to him.

Fourthly, By good company, dull Christians have been quickened. Two cold things, steel and flint, smitten together, send forth fire. When two lie together, they have warmth, but how can one be warm alone? Eccles. iv. 11. When David was old, and his natural heat decayed, they got a young damsel to lie near him, and to put some warmth in him. Cold Christians have been heated by being near others that have been glowing coals. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in spirit; before, he was warm, but then in a light flame, Acts xviii. 5. Some men of weak stomachs have fed the more for seeing others fall so heartily to their meat: 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,' Prov. xxvii. 17. Some interpret the words thus: Rub iron against iron, and it giveth an edge unto it; so if a man lie often grating upon his friend, by unkind usage, it will sharpen his countenance to discontent, and make his spirit keen and angry. And to make good this exposition, they observe that the wise man doth not say, so a friend sharpeneth, &c., but, so a man; because by his unworthy carriage he puts off the nature of a friend, and therefore doth not deserve the name. But I rather incline to the other interpretation: 'As iron sharpeneth iron.' Rub one file against another, and though before they were dull and blunt, they both become thereby bright and sharp. So friends that are heavy and backward, and overrun with rust for want of use, by mutual conference and communion, they become lively, quick, and keen about spiritual things. Christian society, like rubbing iron against iron, takes away that rust which made them so dull and inactive, and sets a spiritual edge upon them. Urbanus Regius, an eminent Dutch divine, meeting with Luther about Coburg, he spent a whole day in conference with him, of which himself writeth,¹ that he never had a more quickening, comforting day all his lifetime.

¹ In Vit.

Fifthly, By good company, much sin hath been prevented. Christian society is like the pulse, which ariseth from the heart, and hath a double motion of contraction and dilatation, both for the expelling of noxious fumes, through the insensible pores of the flesh, and for the drawing in of cool air to refresh the heart and vital parts. It is useful to increase grace: southernwood groweth best in gardens where it is first planted; grace shoots up most in God's vineyard, amongst his plants; the outlying deer, that leave the herd, seldom thrive; those parts die that are severed from the body. It is useful to prevent vice: that deformed harlot hath been ashamed to appear in such honest company; the Romans durst not call for their obscene plays in Cato's presence.

When David was like to be slain, Abishai came and rescued him. Good company hath prevented the Christian's falling from Christ. Peter confessed Christ among the holy apostles, though he denied him among the ungodly servants of the high priest. 'If one prevail against a man, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken,' Eccles. iv. 12. Two streams united into one channel may bear up a vessel of some burden. Junius being much tempted to atheism, professed himself very much helped against it by discoursing with a plain countryman near Florence.

Naturally, saith Chrysostom, a man hath but one head to advise him, one tongue to speak for him, two hands to work, two feet to walk, and two eyes to see for him. Now, saith he, had a man that skill and cunning to make that one head many, and that one tongue many, and so his eyes, and feet, and hands many, he would hardly be circumvented by any carnal policy. Good company doth this: it makes that one head many, that one tongue many, those two hands, eyes, feet, many; for saints study for others' good as well as their own; their eyes, their tongues, their hands, and feet, are always employed for the benefit of their companions. Now, in many counsellors there is much safety. He that hath many eyes to watch for him, is likeliest to be kept from falling. No vessels are in such hope of security, and to be defended from pirates, as those that sail with so strong a convoy. As God hath set conscience to watch over the inner man, and by reason of that help we avoid much unholiness, so God hath set Christians to watch over one another's outward man; and truly these eyes being over us may prevent the commission of much evil.

The society of saints is sometimes in Scripture compared to a garden. It hath fruits and drugs in it of all sorts—some for food, some for physic, some for corrosives, some for cordials, some to

warm the frozen saints, some to cool the fiery sinner; some are profitable for one purpose, some for another. 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and we all members one of another,' Rom. xii. 5, 6. A company of Christians is a great fair, where all sorts of provision, both for necessity and delight, is to be had. Hence Satan is so busy and diligent, if it be possible, to prevent Christian communion: 'I was coming once and again, but Satan hindered me,' 1 Thes. ii. 18. And his servants have learned this of their hellish master. Julian the apostate, and the heathen emperors, banished Christians into islands where they could not have access one to another, being suspicious that their mutual communion would tend much to their mutual comfort and confirmation. Bradford was accused to do more hurt in prison by his letters and speeches than in the pulpit by his preaching. One Christian cometh to another, as Paul to his Romans, with the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, as Cato would often make division amongst his servants, judging their union to tend to his disadvantage, so Satan soweth discord amongst Christians, knowing their concord would tend to the throwing down his kingdom.

Surely, of all fellowships, this is the only good fellowship. Next to communion with God, there is no communion like the communion of saints. The world doth but catachrestically name their rabble of drunken, swearing, and riotous wretches, good fellows;¹ no otherwise than the atheistical popes are termed Pii, the greedy cormorants called Innocents, and the earthly muckworms Cælestines. The conjunction of sinners is a combination with devils. The prince of darkness is the head of their league, and they all wear his black colours; but the communion of saints is a fellowship with God; he is the foundation of their union. 'These things write I unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son,' 1 John i. 3. What fellowship can in any respect compare with theirs who have fellowship, not only with Christians, the highest and most excellent of men, or with angels, the noblest and most honourable of creatures, but even with God himself, the fountain and ocean of all honour and perfection! Oh how happy is that company which hath his presence! how amiable is that council which hath such a president! and how desirable is their amity, who are united under this blessed and glorious potentate! May it not be said of such com-

¹ In the same sense that the poet speaks, *Auri sacra fames*; or as *mous* is so called, *a non movendo*.

panions, what Zebah and Zalmunna spake of Gideon's brethren, 'Each one resembled the child of a king?' Judges viii. 18. Their parentage is so great, their society is so gracious, and their privileges are so glorious, that if a man purchase his freedom of a company in one of our cities at so dear a rate, what should he not give or do to be free of this corporation! He that hath but an eye of faith to see the glory and magnificence of this society, may well express himself, as Titus the emperor when he saw the remainder of the *Sanctum sanctorum*, Now I well perceive that this is none other than the house of God, and the dwelling of the God of heaven. Neither was it for nought that the Jews stood so earnestly in the defence thereof; for great is the glory of the temple; the splendour thereof is without compare.

SECTION II.

Secondly, Consider, wicked men join together to advance the kingdom of Satan, and to provoke one another to lewdness and wickedness; and shall not saints unite to exalt the interest of Christ, and to provoke one another to love and to good works? There is so much monstrous enmity in the hearts of carnal ones against God and holiness, that when the tide of their own lusts, and the stream of their headstrong passions, would carry them swiftly towards hell, yet, as if this were too little, they hoist up sail, and help one another forward with the strong winds of provocation: 'They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying wait privily,' Ps. lxiv. 5. As Samson's foxes, they join tail to tail with their firebrands to burn up the good corn; as Simeon and Levi, they are brethren in iniquity, the instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Shall they, as Ananias and Sapphira, agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and shall not saints agree together to please the Spirit of the Lord? Surely if sinners have their 'Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us all have one purse,' saints may well have their 'Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord; come, let us walk in the light of the Lord,' Isa. ii. 5; come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a covenant not to be forgotten.

It is considerable, that though sinners differ never so much amongst themselves, yet they can unite against the Lord and his chosen. Herod and Pilate, before at odds, can comply as friends, and join together against the Lord Christ. As dogs of differing colours, disagreeing bigness, and of several kinds, that sometimes for bones and scraps fight, and mangle, and tear one another, can with one

voice, and cry, and consent pursue the poor innocent hare ; so the kennel of Satan's hell-hounds, though sometimes they quarrel among themselves about the honours and riches of this world, and are ready to rent one another in pieces, yet can, with open mouth and full cry, all join to persecute the harmless lambs of Christ.

We read of such different metal, such a speckled rabble gathered together against Israel, that one would think the diversity of their countries, constitutions, customs, languages, lusts, should have kept them from melting and running into one piece ; yet, lo, they all unite against God's people. ' They take crafty counsel against thy people ; they consult against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation ; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent : they are confederate against thee : the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites ; of Moab, and the Hagarenes ; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek ; the Philistines, and the inhabitants of Tyre ; Assur also is joined with them ; and they have holpen the children of Lot,' Ps. lxxxiii. 3-9.

Shall such a cursed crew agree together to pull down Zion, and not the blessed company of God's children unite to build it up ? Oh, how shameful is it, that Satan's black regiment should with one consent watch for us, as the dragon for the man-child, to devour us ; and as Herod for the babes of Bethlehem, to destroy us ; and that we should not watch over one another for our safety and defence ! It may well be our grief that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

It is true, the combination of wicked men is no true union ; but rather a conspiracy against God, and against their own souls. Satan serving them by drawing them into this league, and making them to be of one hellish heart, infinitely worse than Scyron and Procrustes, famous robbers in Attica, served the poor travellers, who, by cutting short the taller, and stretching out the lesser, brought all to an even length with their bed of brass ; yet such a confederacy may well move us to pity such distracted ones, and doth too much reflect upon us for our dissensions.

Thirdly, Consider the backwardness of our own hearts to any good, and the need we have of all helps to quicken them towards heaven. How averse are our souls to anything that is spiritual ! How many excuses, pretences, delays will they make ! To sin man needs no tutor ; he can ride post to hell without a spur ; but how backward to do that work which he must do, or be undone for ever ! The stone is not more untoward to fly, nor lead to swim, than our

carnal hearts to exercise any grace, or perform any duty incumbent on us. Our headstrong passions hurry us, our worldly interests bias us, and our desperately wicked hearts draw us from God and heaven. If the wood be green, there is need of constant blowing, or the fire will go out; when the iron is so dull, it must go often to the whetstone, or little work can be done with it. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God useth precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little, when man is like the wild ass's colt, so blockish and dull to understand God's way, and so backward and heavy to walk in it.

How much are we in the dark about the ways, and word, and truths of God! and how apt, through mistakes, to stumble and fall, calling evil good, and good evil! and do we not want their company who carry a light, a lantern, with them? How often do we flatter ourselves that we are rich in grace and in the favour of God, when it is little so, looking on ourselves through the false spectacles of self-love! And doth it not behove us to be much in their society who will set before us a true looking-glass, wherein we may behold the native countenance of our souls without any fraud or falsehood? We are full of doubts, and want counsel; and physicians that are able themselves, will in their own cases ask advice of others. We are liable to many sorrows, and want comfort; and who can give it us better than those who fetch all their cordial waters out of Scripture? We are apt to slumber, and nod, and neglect our spiritual watch; the flesh is drowsy, and the cares of the world fume up into our heads, and incline us to sleep; what then will become of us, if we have none to jog and awaken us? It will go but ill with the new man, if, whilst he hath so many enemies to hurt him, he hath never a friend to help him. 'Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Heb. iii. 13.

I have somewhere read of a king, that having many servants, some wise, some indiscreet, some profitable, some unprofitable, was asked why he would keep those foolish, unprofitable fellows. To which he answered, I need the other, and these need me, and so I will have them all about me. I am sure weak Christians need the strong; it is ill for a tottering house to have no prop; and strong Christians may need the weak. That knife which is best metal, may sometimes need a dull whetstone. The smallest wheel, nay, pin, in a watch is necessary; and so each needing the other, there is great need they should hold together. While there is flesh and spirit combating within us, and the worse so potent and likely to

conquer, we shall want all manner of auxiliaries to relieve the better part.

Fourthly, Consider the evil of neglecting Christian communion. I know the children of God must sometimes be solitary ; there are some duties which cannot otherwise be performed, and some callings which cannot otherwise be followed ; but as there are seasons for solitariness, so also for society. To forbear the society of saints without a necessary cause is a sin, and bringeth great disadvantage both upon ourselves and others.

1. Upon ourselves. We lose those helps which God hath afforded for the edification of our souls. Fire laid abroad, quickly abateth, nay, goeth out ; when, if it be raked up together, it continueth and increaseth. I suppose the Spirit of God is so exact in registering the absence of Thomas from the apostles' company, when Christ vouchsafed them his personal and gracious presence, and the sad fit of unbelief which he fell into upon it, partly as a warning to all Christians that they lose not such seasons, as they love their immortal souls : John xx. 24, 25, ' But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not there when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' Had Thomas been present when the Lord appeared, how strongly might he have withstood Satan's assaults against his faith ! His senses had been sufficient to have confuted the father of lies, and helpful to have quenched his fiery darts ; but by his absence, how dangerously was he shaken in that fundamental truth !

Satan hath a wonderful advantage of that person whom he meets, without any warrant from God, alone. If I travel alone between sun and sun, I have the law for my protection, that if I be robbed, I may recover my loss of the country ; but if at other times, it is at my own peril. If I be alone at the call of my God, either when secret duties or my particular calling require it, and my grand enemy set upon me, I may expect help from him whose work I am about ; but if, when he commandeth me to associate with his people, I needlessly wander from them, and any hurt befall me, I must thank myself, and look for no reparation at his hands. It is observable that the house of Job's eldest son, which was the grave wherein all his children were buried, stood alone, otherwise the wind from the wilderness could not have smote the four corners thereof. Oh, it is dangerous to be solitary, when God requires thy company amongst his chosen !

There is a woe to him that is alone : such a man shall be sure to have Satan for his companion. He is ever ready to assault when none is near to assist. Eve was tempted with too much success when she was alone, without her husband ; Dinah, gadding from her father's house, was defiled ; Joseph was then assaulted, when the whole family was gone, save the instrument of the assault. How soon are stragglers snapped up, when those that march with the body of the army are safe ! Pirates lie skulking to find a vessel sailing alone, when those that sail in company are a convoy to each other. They who separate are soon seduced. The cormorant, or sea-eagle, hath this property, that she will not seize upon the fish in the water when they are in shoals ; but when single, she makes them her prey. Solitude is not more hurtful to the body than to the soul, and to nature than to grace. When David was an exile from the society of the Israelites, and wandered abroad, he fell into diffidence and distrust, nay, into hard and blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he had forgotten to be gracious, as if he himself had cleansed his heart in vain. He then said, in his haste, that all men, even Samuel, who had anointed him to the kingdom, and promised him from God that he should be king, were liars.

It is a disadvantage to others. When saints do not meet together, their love cooleth, nay, contentions frequently follow, to the hardening of the wicked, and the discouraging of the weak. The temple or body of Christ is not built up with blows and schisms. The parts of the temple were framed and squared in Lebanon ; at the rearing of it up in Zion, there was no noise either of axe or hammer. Babel itself could not be built by divided tongues, much less Zion by divided hearts. When Christians divide and separate, weak beginners know not what to do, whom to follow, but are ready to say with Cicero, when Caesar and Pompey were at odds, *Quem fugiam scio, quem sequar nescio* ; I know whom to fly, but I know not whom to follow. Oh, how dreadful are the consequents of such civil wars ! Discord is not without cause described by the great Italian to be clothed with a garment of divers colours, made up of patches, and they rent, cut, and torn, her lap full of writs, citations, processes, and arrests, attended only with clerks, scriveners, attorneys, and lawyers ; but she was followed with bitter clamours and dismal howlings.

Melanchthon, persuading the Protestants in his time to peace, tells them a parabolical story of the dogs and wolves, who were meeting to fight one against another. The wolves sent out their scout, to know the strength of their adversaries. The scout returns,

and tells the wolves that indeed the dogs exceeded them in number, but they need not fear them, for he had observed they were not like one another; besides, they marched as if they were offended rather with themselves than their enemies, grinning and snarling, yea, biting and tearing one another; therefore, let us not be discouraged, but march on resolutely. Dissension amongst men, brings destruction on men: 'A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.' They who embodied together may be able to overcome thousands, divided and taken singly, may be overthrown by a very few. The hardest adamant, if once broken, flieth into such small dust that it is scarce discernible, and so cometh to nothing. The people of God have not seldom made themselves a prey to persecutors by their heart-burnings and divisions. When the town is once set on fire by the grenades shot in from them that besiege it the enemies hope to take it with the more ease.

Naturalists tell us that a pumice stone, cast into the waters, though it be never so big, whilst it remains entire, and the parts hold together, it will swim above the water; but break it once in pieces, and every part sinks to the bottom. Truly, such oftentimes is the state of the faithful. They who, holding together, are safe, and as a bundle of staves, not to be bowed, when parted and taken singly are easily broken. It is the shepherd's observation, that when sheep butt one against another, it is a sign of foul weather, and of an approaching storm. We have too much cause to fear that the schisms and contentions in the church of God at this day do portend some heavy judgment to hang over our heads.

SECTION III.

I shall now direct thee, reader, how to exercise thyself to godliness in Christian company.

First I must give thee a word of caution. Take heed of those sins which Christians, when they accompany together, are most prone to. Saints are apt to be secure, as thinking themselves safe, when they are, as they imagine, among none but themselves. But, truly, seeming honest men may deceive us sooner than known cheats, because we are apt to confide in the former, when we fear and take heed of the latter. The plague may soonest be conveyed through perfumed linen. Satan tempted Eve in the form of a serpent; but when he sets upon Christ, whom he knew hard to be conquered, he sets upon him in the shape of a dove. None so fit as a Peter to persuade him to pity himself. As God can send us

a pearl in a toad's head, bring light out of darkness, and enable us to get good by polluted persons; so Satan, like Hannibal, can convey poison through a gold ring, bring darkness out of light, and make us the worse for the company of the best Christians. The society of the godly is like the shop of an apothecary, in which there are many cordial juleps, purging potions, and wholesome drugs, but also some poisonous, which need strong correctives, and therefore they must be the object of our caution as well as of our choice.

There are two or three things which Christians, when they meet together, too frequently err in, against which I would advise thee—in misspending time, censuring the good, and backbiting the bad.

1. Take heed of misspending that season. Time is in itself of great price, and ought to be redeemed; but opportunity is of greater value, and it is infinite pity to cut such a precious commodity to waste. It is ordinary, even with good men when they meet, though it relate nothing to their callings or concernments, to be talking chiefly of corn, and cattle, and markets, and fairs, and foreign transactions, as if they had not a God, a Christ, a soul, an eternal estate to be minding each other of. Our words are the servants of our reason, and to send more than will perform our business, or to send them upon unnecessary and trifling errands, argueth vanity and folly. Have we not the country to which we are all travelling, the purity and pleasantness of the way thither, the excellency and certainty of our reward there, to talk about? St Bernard complained that in his time Christians were faulty in this particular, *Nihil de Scripturis, nihil de salute agitur animarum, sed nugæ et risus, et verba proferuntur in ventum*; Not a word of the Scriptures, nothing of your eternal salvation, but trifles and laughter, and words as light as the wind, take up the time.

Some spend their time in nice questions, as what Christ disputed of amongst the doctors? where paradise stood? in what part of the world is local hell? what became of Moses' body? how many orders and degrees of elect spirits? These curious persons, the further they go, the nearer they approach a sun that blinds them. Others in circumstantial controversies, when, in the interim, the essentials of religion are laid by. Such talk is but a wasting time, and those that sweat at it are but laborious loiterers, like those that take great pains to crack or cleave a date-stone, which, when they have done, affords them no kernel. Would it not be counted a piece of great folly for a man that had a wound near some vital part, to be very busy in laying a plaster upon his scratched finger, while the other lay unregarded? Were it not a piece of strange

madness, when the enemy is at the walls, and the town every moment in danger of being stormed, the bullets flying thick about the streets, for the people within to be sitting still, and consulting whether a musket would carry further than a trunk, or whether more are killed with bullets or arrows? Truly, such folly, such madness is it to employ ourselves about needless discourse about the world, or superficial circumstantial things, when our inestimable souls are continually in danger of being surprised and slain. The apostle reproveth such as spent their time about fables and endless genealogies, (that is, things frivolous, and besides our work of Christianity, though not false or directly opposite to it,) which minister questions rather than godly edifying, 1 Tim. i. 5.

To prevent this, reader, offer some serious discourse, either by way of position or question. Thy profit by good company doth very much depend upon thyself. Thy question or position is the fire, which draweth out either the quintessence or dregs of things. It may be there is one in thy company rich in grace, in gifts—these are the treasure of the soul; but if ever thou wouldst be the better for it, thou must open it by the key of some savoury question or sentence. An ordinary person, by some practical question, may lay the foundation for a goodly fabric of rich and excellent discourse. A little water poured into a pump, may fetch up many buckets full. A small lackey may call us to a costly banquet.

Ferus on Matthew affirmeth, that it was the practice of the monks to meet together once in a week, and to acquaint each other with their temptations, the means of resistance, and the issue thereof. I believe, if Christians were more open-hearted in declaring to one another the state of their souls, their experiences in point of loss or gain in spirituals, and sense of God's favour or anger, &c., it would much tend, not only to the honour of God, but also to the defeating of our great enemy, and our own mutual advantage. Satan hath many wiles wherewith to wrong and destroy souls; he proceedeth many times in the same method with several Christians. Now, when one acquainteth another with the snares he laid to catch him, and the way he took to avoid it, hereby the other is forewarned and forearmed; forewarned to expect that such a trap should be laid for him, and forearmed how to avoid it. An almanac calculated for London, without any sensible error may serve the whole kingdom. That which hath been one saint's condition or temptation, may be any saint's; and that way which one hath taken to escape a peril, or improve a providence, may be useful and helpful to any of the saints.

Some tell us the art of medicines was thus perfected: When any one met with an herb, and discovered the virtue of it by any accident, he did post it up in some public place, and if any were sick or diseased, he was laid in some common passage, that every passenger might communicate the best receipt he knew for that distemper; and so the physician's skill was completed, by a collection of those posted experiences and receipts. I cannot but think that our souls would be more safe, and our spiritual sicknesses less dangerous, if Christians were more free in revealing what means have, through the assistance of the Spirit, been instrumental for their recovery out of their inward distempers, and the preservation of their health.

2. Take heed of censuring the good. This is another sin, that even good men are guilty of when they meet together. Some no sooner creep into the cradle of profession, but immediately they leap out of it into the chair of censure. If a Christian do stumble, he saith he falls, and so carrieth it up and down; he always greatens others' and lessens his own sins. Things in a mist seem bigger to us than in a fair day, by reason of the indisposedness of the air or medium. He looks on the sins of others through the mist of envy, and so makes them bigger than they are; he beholds his own sins, as God doth himself, afar off, or as things on a steeple, which seem small and little. Because some persons are not of his party, therefore they are in the bond of iniquity, saith the censorious man. Thus the Romans judged others not saints, because they were not exactly of their own size, Rom. xiv. 3. If good men are brought to the fire of affliction, it is, saith he, because they bear not good fruit, and are fit for nothing but fuel. Thus Job's friends judged him a hypocrite, and without armour of proof, because he was the mark at which the arrows of the Almighty were levelled, Job iv. 5-7. If a good man step awry, he tells others positively that his whole way and course is wrong. From his failing in one action, the censurer condemneth his whole conversation as feigned and fraudulent; as if the best gold did not need some grains of allowance, and the brightest burning taper had not some smoke with it. He judgeth according to appearance, and doth not judge righteous judgment. When an action is doubtful, and admits of a good or bad construction, to be sure he will take it in the worst sense. He never meets with an ambiguous text, but he makes a bad comment on it. If Christ associate with Zaccheus, though not for communion with him in his sins, but for the conversion of his soul, he will presently cry him up for a winebibber, a glutton, and

a friend of publicans and sinners. In this, and in all the rest, he judgeth without judgment; for indeed, it is from want of judgment that the heaviest judgment comes. Oh, how sad is it, that those who believe in a day of judgment, should walk so contrary to the rule of their judge! Mat. vii. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 5; James iii. 1. The dogs were kinder than such men, for they licked the sores of honest Lazarus; but these rub and fret the sores of godly men, by publishing them to others. It is our duty to mourn for the sins of good men: 'Lest, when I come, my God will humble me,' saith Paul, 'for them that have sinned.' How contrary are they to Christianity, that are glad they have somewhat to talk of! I cannot esteem them Christians, that think their feast wanteth music, unless the Baptist's head be brought in a charger at the first course. A desire to disgrace others never sprang from grace. It is ill to inquire into others' actions, that we might have matter to draw up a bill of indictment against them; like those who, in reading books, mark only the faults, or such as take more pleasure in beholding a monster than a perfect man, such is a censorious person. But it is a swinish property to feed upon excrements; they have too much affinity to the old serpent that can pick nourishment out of poison. Have not all men business enough of their own, without raking into others' graves? but as the fish sepia darken the waters, that they may escape the net, so they darken the credit of others, that they may escape the net of censure which is due to themselves.

These men are usually eagle-eyed abroad, but as blind as moles at home; the most vicious are ever the most suspicious. As Galileus looked through his prospective-glass to find mountains in the moon, so these examine others' lives, and search their actions as narrowly as Laban did Jacob's stuff, to find matter of accusation.¹ But as it is fabled of old Lamia, that she had eyes like unto spectacles, which she might take out and put in at her pleasure, and that as soon as she came into her house, she always locked them up in her coffer, and sat down to spinning as blind as a beetle, and that when she went abroad, she put them into her head, and would very curiously behold what other men did; so the censorer is so quick-sighted abroad, that he can see the motes in others' eyes, but so blind within-doors, that he cannot see the beam in his own.²

¹ Qui judicat fratrem, tantum crimen elationis incurrit, ut Christi tribunal sibi videatur assumere, et ejus judicium prævenire.—*Ans. in Rom.* xiv.

² Luther gives the character of wicked men: Tanquam famelici porci immergunt se in stercora nostra, et ex iis delicias faciunt, cum infirmitatem nostram exemplo maledicti Ham aperiant et traducunt.—*Lut. in Gen.* ix.

Some of these men have a fine way of censuring and condemning others, by commending them, that you will not easily discern their envy or ill-will, because of the throng and press of their subtle praises. They will set forth a Christian, eminent for grace, with many and large flourishes of commendation; but after all, in two or three words, dash out all they had spoken, and leave a blot in the room. As the Holy Ghost saith truly of Naaman, 'He was a mighty man, captain of the Syrian host, but a leper.' So they of a saint, whose worth they cannot for shame deny, He hath great parts, many excellent gifts, large abilities, but I wish the root of the matter were in him; or, But he knoweth them too well; or, But he is covetous or proud. As the smith that shoeth a horse, and pretendeth therein to do him a kindness, but pricks him in shoeing him, and therefore had better have let him alone. This one fly of *but*, &c., mars the whole pot of ointment. The censorer with that short knife stabs his neighbour's fame to the heart.

Reader, I beseech thee, both for thy own sake and the gospel's, to be tender of the repute and credit of saints. A good man's name is like a milk-white ball, which exceedingly gathers soil by tossing, and therefore is to be sparingly talked of. Words reported again have another sound, and many times another sense; besides, one dog sets many others a-barking. Talk of his failings as low as thou wilt, the world is quick of hearing, and they take the size of all Christians' clothes by the measure of the weakest. Thy charity should clap a plaster, supposing there to be a real wound, and cover it with the hand of privacy, to keep it from the open air. The Egyptian, who carried something wound up in a napkin, answered discreetly to him that asked what it was: It is covered, to the end that no man might see. Truly, if we know of others' failings and infirmities, we should hide them with the mantle of love, and not shew them to any but in relation to the offender's good and recovery; for why should a fallen brother have cause to complain, I am wounded in the house of my friends; had it been an enemy I could have borne it, but it was thou, O man, my friend, mine equal, and my acquaintance! Apelles drew Antigonus, who had but one eye, half-faced, whereby that blemish was hid, so should Christians their brethren.

The wise man tells us, the worth of a good name is above all wealth: Ecces. vii. 1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' What a great thief is he, then, that robs his neighbour of it! Our rash judging others, like the ram's horns before Jericho, may blow down that with a blast, which we cannot build up again while

we live. An ill report is soon raised, but not so soon laid; it usually, like the crocodile, groweth whilst it continueth. Our tears should be the grave to bury our neighbours' failings in, and not our mouths a grave to bury their names in. That one act of Alexander merits eternal memory, who, having read a letter with his favourite, Hephæstion, wherein his mother calumniated Antipater, he presently took his signet from his finger and oppressed Hephæstion's lips with it, conjuring him, as it were, to seal up his lips, and not once to open them in revealing another's disgrace. Suppose the person I censure be really evil, yet my duty is to do what I can to amend, not to divulge his errors; but if he be good, I dishonour God by disgracing his friend, and shall be sure to pay for it, either in tears or torment. How shall I be able to stand in that day, when men shall give an account of all their hard speeches? and what shall I answer, when God shall ask me, as once he did Aaron and Miriam, 'Wast thou not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?'

3. Take heed of backbiting the bad. When men speak evil of others that are absent, before many, purposely to defame and disgrace them, this is backbiting, and condemned by God, though what we speak of them be true. Doeg spake nothing but truth of David and Ahimelech; yet the Scripture calls him a lying and deceitful tongue, Ps. lii. Sometimes it may be a duty to reveal others' deeds of darkness, as when these two things concur:

1. That we have cause for it. When what we mention is naked truth, and the sin not any ways rendered more ugly and deformed by misconstruction or aggravations; and,

2. When we have a call to it, as when we are desired to mention what we know of others by them that have good ground to inquire after them; or when, through ignorance of such things, others may be deceived in them; or when we are lawfully required before a magistrate to testify our knowledge of such persons or actions. I may add a third, and that is,

When our desires and ends are purely to get our hearts affected with the dishonour that is done to God by their wickedness, and the danger and misery of their own souls. This is supposed to be the subject-matter of the saints' discourse, Mal. iii. 16, when in evil days they spake often one to another. But for men to make it their business to publish others' profaneness, this is profane: 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people,' Lev. xix. 16. The word for tale-bearer in the Hebrew is *Bakel*, and signifieth a pedlar, which fitly sets forth the property of a back-

biter. The pedlar goeth up and down the country offering his wares at every door, very willing to put them off; he takes them up at one place, and never ceaseth travelling till he hath sold them at another. So the backbiter catcheth up an evil report of a man at one house, and cannot rest till he is at some other house to tell it again, offering to vend it at a very low rate to any man that will take it off his hands. Nay, he is so full that he is ready to burst, if none will allow him vent. He is big with child, and can find no ease, till another's ears be the midwife to deliver him of such a deformed monster. But this is opposite to the rule by which we should walk, Titus ii. 3. Our God commandeth us, 'Speak evil of no man.' Not of good men, for they are God's portion; not of bad men, for so is God's precept. This unchristian course of some professors hath procured them many a mischief, and brought up an ill report upon them all. The sinner is apt to say of such, as Ahab of Micaiah, 'I hate him, for he never speaks well of me.' And thus, instead of saving their neighbours' souls, which ought to be the work of every Christian, they harden them in their sins, and help to deepen their condemnations. Without doubt, that time which men spend in reporting others' wickednesses would be far better employed in confessing and bewailing their own. It will prove at last but an evil means to raise our own names higher, by pulling down others, and building on their ruins; and to relate their vices as a foil to render our virtues more beautiful and glorious. 'Let not the evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him,' Ps. cxl. 11. He that plotteth to pluck up others' names, doth it with an intent to plant his own the surer; but he shall not be established in the earth, saith God. He judgeth himself safe, because others cannot stand before him, or are disabled, by reason of the disgrace he hath brought on them, to oppose him. But evil, like a pack of ravenous hounds, shall, with open mouth, hunt this butting stag, and sooner or later overthrow him.

It was wise counsel which Diogenes gave the emperor. Take heed, saith he, of two sorts of beasts in thy court, both which bite dangerously—the tame beast, the flatterer; and the wild beast, the backbiter. Well might he call them beasts, for a man-like spirit scorns to be so brutish, as to claw the itching ears of others with flatteries, and hates to be so curreish and cowardly, as to bite them behind their backs; David would have no such to be his servants, Ps. ci. 6, 7. The backbiter hath this sad unhappiness, that he wounds three with one arrow of his viperous tongue—himself, his hearer, and his neighbour he speaks of.

1. Himself; for such weapons recoil and fly upon him that dischargeth them. The Holy Ghost compareth a backbiting tongue to a sharp sword; and, indeed, like Saul's sword, it may be the death of the owner. God joins this sin with murder, Lev. xix. 16, to note, saith one, that the backbiter is a man-slayer; and surely such a one shall not escape vengeance.

2. His hearer; the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were no tale-hearer, there would be no tale-bearer; some are fitly compared to brass pots, though they are great, you may carry them by the ears, which way you please. It is an excellent expression of Solomon, 'As the north wind drives away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue,' Prov. xxv. 23. It is a memorable saying of Bernard, The detractor, and willing hearer of it, do both carry the devil about them; the one carrieth him in his tongue, the other in his ear.¹ It was the wish of Plautus, that there were a law for the hanging of tale-bearers by the tongue, and tale-hearers by the ears.

3. The person he speaketh of; he that takes away a man's name, leaves him little for this world worth keeping. This evil tongue is fitly compared to an arrow, for it wounds a man even afar off. As secret poison works incurable effects many times before it is discerned, so doth a backbiting tongue. A man were better, like him one of the ancients mentions, carry a stone in his mouth three years, to prevent much babbling, than be guilty one hour of backbiting.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, If Christians would exercise themselves to godliness, they must be serviceable to the good of each other. The temple was built in Solomon's time by men of all sorts; there is not the meanest Christian, but may do somewhat in his place towards the building of the spiritual temple. The communion of saints consisteth in three things.

1. In a mutual communication of their graces and gifts. Grace is given us, not only for ourselves, but also for the good of the saints: 1 Cor. xii. 5, 6, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administration, but the same Lord; diversities of operation, but the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' The water of life is like a common stream, for the benefit of many.

¹ Detractor et lubens auditor uterque diabolum portat; alter in ore, alter in aure.
—Bern.

2. In a mutual joining in the ordinances of God, Acts ii. 43. The servants of the same Lord wait upon him, sometimes singly, sometimes in company. There are set seasons, wherein they all meet together to attend him, though when they are parted they are all about his business: 'And the same day there were added to the church three thousand souls; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer.'

3. In mutual serviceableness each to other. Every man is a steward to manage his abilities for others' good, and to improve his talents for his Master's glory. Now, if our stock were our own, that we were the proprietors, to let it lie still would argue us guilty of much folly; but when it is altogether another's, and we are but factors for him, to neglect the improvement of it, speaks us arrant thieves, and guilty of unfaithfulness: 'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,' 1 Pet. iv. 10. It is but an ill property of the swan, that she cannot endure the goose should come near her, to take part of her food. Though it might be a fault in the church of Syracuse, what Hilary mentions, that by a law there was a community of outward goods; yet I am sure it is none, that there should be a community of spiritual gifts. Wicked men are said to be of the night, but saints of the day; now as the day enlightens and warms all it shines on, calls them to their work, to their walk, and helpeth to prevent their falls and wandering, even so should the saints in love serve one another, Gal. v. 13. Such a man is of the earth (is right earth, that standeth on its own centre) who is wholly for himself. All things that have affinity with the heavens, move upon the centre of another which they benefit. The bramble, which receiveth all good, and keepeth it to itself, piercing instead of pleasuring those who come near it, will be cast ere long into the fire. It is said of one, as all the encomium could justly be given, *Sibi natus, sibi vivit, sibi mortuus, sibi damnatus*; He was born to himself, he lived to himself, he died to himself, and he was damned to himself. We have a common saying, He that is not good to himself, is good to nobody; and it is as true again, He that is good only to himself, is as good as nobody. It was the voice of a cursed Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The voice of the blessed apostle, 'Consider one another, to provoke to love; exhort one another whilst it is called to-day; let no man seek his own, but every one his brother's good to edification,' Phil. ii. 4; Heb. x. 34.

A company of Christians, like the plants in paradise, should impart an aromatical savour each to other: 'A friend must shew himself friendly,' saith Solomon, Prov. xviii. But how? by endeavouring to make his friends better. It was a commendable property which some mention in Soerates, that he always studied how he might better the minds of his familiars. And Seneca, when the scholars of Theophrastus had shewed him two men that were intimate friends, whereof the one was very rich, and the other very poor, he said to them, If they be friends, how comes it to pass that the one is so poor and the other so rich?¹—intimating that, had there been any true friendship, the rich man would have imparted of his goods to the poor man. As true love cannot stand without communicating of our temporal riches, so neither without imparting of our spiritual for the supply of others' necessities. If there be love in feasting one another's bodies, there is much more in feeding each other's souls; and if to distribute and communicate of our earthly treasures we must not forget, for with such sacrifice God is well pleased, then to distribute and communicate of our heavenly treasures we must be more forward, because with such sacrifice God is better pleased.

Besides, it is an encouragement to Christians, that they do not diminish, but increase their spiritual stocks by trading. He were not a man that would not do another a courtesy, when by doing it he should do himself no injury. How bad is he then that will not benefit his neighbour, when thereby he doth a real kindness to himself?² Money laid up, rather wasteth with rust than increaseth; but money laid out, brings in considerable profit: 'To him that hath shall be given.' When the servant that had received five talents, traded and gained five more, 'Take the talent,' saith Christ, 'from the unprofitable servant, and give it to him that hath gained five;' our communication to others is no diminution, but an addition to ourselves. Live coals are made the hotter for those near them, which they enlivened. The truth is, there is no usury so lawful as of spiritual riches, nor is there any so profitable. Our use upon use, which almost doubleth the principal in seven years, is nothing to this. O Christians, therefore lose not a tide, a market, an oppor-

¹ Si amici sunt, quorsum alter ita dives, alter ita pauper?—*Sen.*, Epist. 8.

² Quanto plus profundimus fluentorum bonorum spiritualium, tanto nobis et fluenta sunt auctiora. Non enim in hac causa contingit, sicut in pecuniis. Illic enim quanto plus expendit, tanto plus* possidet pecunie, hic autem plane secus agitur.—*Chrys.*, Hom. 8 in *Gen.*, p. 37.

* Qu., "minus" ?—Ed.

tunity, if possible ; hereby, though your beginnings be small, your latter end shall wonderfully increase. Many that have begun with very little, have by trading thus, come to die worth thousands.

Before I come to shew wherein Christians should be serviceable each to other, I must a little explain myself, lest I should seem to allow that which the word of God forbids—namely, that every private Christian ought to be a preacher ; such a tenet would cut asunder the nerves and ligaments of this society, which is order. Every star must give light in its own and proper sphere.

1. There is an authoritative, public counselling, admonishing, &c., which belongeth only to pastors lawfully called. Observe what the Holy Ghost saith, ‘Are all apostles ? are all prophets ? are all pastors ? are all teachers ?’ No, all are not gifted for it. It would much reflect upon the King of heaven to send servants upon such weighty errands that were unfit for them, and did rather render their business ridiculous. It is no easy thing for a person to be qualified for a public preacher. The great apostle crieth out, ‘Who is sufficient for these things ?’ though the voice of ignorant men is, Who is not sufficient for these things ? Besides, all are not called to it. It is not gifts and parts that will make a subject an officer at home, or an ambassador abroad, but a commission from his prince : ‘Let no man take this honour upon him, unless he be called of God, as was Aaron.’ There be many works which private Christians may not meddle with, as to consecrate things, to constitute ecclesiastical laws, to excommunicate, to receive in those that are cast out, to administer the sacraments, &c. But those works which they may and ought to do, as to exhort, advise, admonish, comfort, &c., they must do them as private members, not as public officers in the name or stead of Christ, and to private members, not to the church.

2. There is a private charitable counselling, comforting, admonishing others : this may belong to any Christian, so he keep within his own place, and carry himself therein according to divine commands ; for God hath made no man a treasurer, but every man a steward, of those talents with which he is intrusted. Hence the apostle frequently commandeth believers to mind these duties, Gal. vi. 1 ; Heb. iii. 13 ; 1 Peter iv. 11. But in these Christians must keep within their bounds, as fixed stars give light to others, continuing still in their own orbs, and not as planets, according to some, wander up and down out of their places. The members of the body do not intrude into each other's office. Uzzah's upholding the ark when shaken, though questionless out of a good design,

yet was the cause of his death, and instead of furthering it, hindered its march towards the place of its rest.

Private Christians ought to be serviceable to each other in these particulars:

1. In instructing the ignorant. Among Christians there are many who have but ignorant heads, though they have holy hearts; though for the time they have enjoyed the means, they might have been teachers of others, yet themselves had need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. Now the work of knowing men must be to instruct such; though they be dull and heavy, we should bear with them, and condescend to them. St Augustine said he would speak false Latin, if his hearers understood it better than true. By many blows we make a nail enter into a hard board; by precept upon precept, and line upon line, we may beat truths into the heads of them that are very dull. Job's friend tells him, 'Behold, thou hast instructed many,' Job iv. 3. In this sense Job was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; eyes to prevent their wandering in a wrong way, and feet to prevent their stumbling in the right way. David was no priest, yet he would teach others God's precepts. When he had once tasted God's love, others should taste some honey dropping from his lips: 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee,' Ps. li.

It is a noble work for Christians that have abilities and understanding to take some pains to teach and instruct them that are ignorant. They cannot worship God as they ought, because they are unacquainted with his word and will. How can a servant please his master, that doth not know his pleasure? They cannot do the good they should, because they know not their duty. They who are almost quite blind will do but little work; they are more open to temptation, both from evil men and the evil one, because of their ignorance. It is as easy to give a child poison as wholesome milk, because it hath not wisdom to discern the difference. It is not hard to put the poison of error into their mouths, who are but babes in understanding. When the quick-sighted walk steadily, these dark-sighted persons walk stumblingly in the way of God's commandments. Oh do what thou canst, reader, to inform such poor creatures in the truths of God; for as the eunuch said to Philip, 'How should they understand, unless some one guide them?' We count it worthy and honourable to teach others some curious art or high calling; sure I am there is a day coming, when to have taught one poor Christian how to serve God better, and to honour him more, will

cause more comfort and bring more credit than the instructing thousands in the greatest and deepest mysteries of nature or art.

2. By quickening the slothful. The eagle loveth her young, yet when they are ready for flight, and lie lazing in their nest, she will pierce and prick them with her claws, to make them fly abroad. Love to others' souls should stir us up to rouse drowsy Christians out of their spiritual slumbers and lethargies. One bellman that is stirring at midnight, by crying fire, fire, awakens hundreds that were fast asleep in a short time; one lively active believer, acquainting men with the jealousy and justice of God, and his severe proceedings against secure persons who neglect their spiritual watch, may quickly call them from their beds to their watch and work. 'Consider one another,' saith the apostle, 'to provoke one another to love and to good works,' Heb. x. 24. The Greek word *εἰς παροξυσμὸν*, is, consider one another into a paroxysm, a violent heat of an ague or fever, to make each other fervent and fiery in love and good works. Consider one another's backwardness and dulness, and provoke one another to your duties, and that with diligence. Consider one another's states and conditions, and provoke one another to a suitable seriousness in working out your salvations. Consider one another's hindrances, and temptations, and weaknesses, and provoke one another to love and to good works. Christians should say to one another, as Judah to Simeon his brother, 'Come up with me into my lot, that I may fight against the Canaanites, and I will go up with thee into thy lot:' help me by jogging and awakening me if I sleep, and I will do as much for thee, Judges i. 3. And encourage one another, as Joab his brother Abishai: 2 Sam. x. 11, 12, 'And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.' Thus the children of God should bespeak each other: If the world be too hard for thee, I will endeavour to assist thee, by discovering the vanity of its shallow allurements, and the foolery of its skin-deep affrightments; if the devil or flesh be too hard for me, thou shalt do thy utmost to succour me in withstanding their batteries, and repelling their poisonous and fiery darts. Only let us be of good courage, let us watch, stand fast in the faith, quit ourselves like men for our God, and our Redeemer, and our souls, and our eternal salvations, and the Lord will be found faithful, who hath assured us that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.

3. By comforting the sorrowful. Christians should have a cordial in store for them that are fainting ; a cup of wine for the heavy in heart, and be able to speak a word in season to him that is weary : ' Comfort the feeble '—*i.e.*, the sick at heart, such as are ready to sink under the weight of sin, and are frightened with the apprehension of the eternal fire, 1 Thes. v. 14. Amalek is branded with a mark of infamy, and was followed with a curse and slaughter from God, for falling upon the faint and feeble ones of Israel, Deut. xxv. 18. God cannot endure it, he cannot bear it, that his weak, sickly ones should be wronged. He is tender of them himself ; he carrieth his lambs in his arms, Isa. xl. 11 ; and others must do so too, or he will make them rue it. The world doth as the herd, push the wounded deer out of their company ; but saints endeavour to bind up the broken in heart, to comfort them, as Paul commands his Corinthians, lest they be swallowed up of too much sorrow, 2 Cor. ii. 7.

The husbandman doth mind his young tender trees in a special manner above them that are grown up and strong, because such are in more danger of breaking, and bruising, and other hurt, than grown trees ; so that, besides the wall or common fence about the orchard, he makes a special fence with bushes and stakes about these, and gives them more choice nourishment, and more frequent watering. God is most choice of his little ones, his weak children. ' When Israel was a child, I loved him : I drew him with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man,' Hosea xi. 1-3. Christians must imitate God in this, and be followers of him as dear children : ' Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,' Heb. xii. 12. The martyrs in prison, by discoursing on the promises, shook off their carnal fetters. Holy Bradford made his dark dungeon by this means lightsome to his fellow-prisoners. Luther professed Melanchthon very helpful to him against his inward doubts, as he was to Melanchthon against his frights about the public state of the church. A friend is born for the day of adversity, Prov. xvii. 17 : and it is pity he was ever born, that denieth to do that for which he was born. It appertains especially to the office of a friend, saith Seneca, to assuage his friend's grief by speech ; to drive away his sadness by cheerfulness ; and to refresh him with his very presence. When women travel, they carry frequently with them strong waters, and if one fainteth or is sick, she that hath those cordial waters prayeth her to take some for her ease and comfort. The apostle prepareth for the Christian choice and rare cordials in 1 Thes. iv., about the last six verses, and then wisheth them to make use of them for their mutual good : ' Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

4. By admonishing the sinful. Saints, like clocks, made up of curious wheels and engines, are soon discomposed, and therefore often want some workman to set them in order again. A good man, if his friend follow virtue, will be a father to encourage him; if he be full of doubts, will be a minister to direct him; but if he follow vice, will be a magistrate to correct him. Christians must allow one another for their infirmities, but not allow one another in their infirmities: 'If a brother be overtaken with a fault, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness,' Gal. vi. 1. Which words are very emphatical, and point to us;—

1. The nature of his fall. He is overtaken with a fault, he doth not overtake the fault; he is rather passive of it, than active in it. A sinner, like Ahab, sells himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord; but a brother, like Paul, is sold under sin. It is proper to the wicked to be volunteers in this unholy war against God; saints fight not except they be pressed. The Christian is drawn to iniquity by cords of vanity, the other draweth iniquity with cords of vanity.

2. The duty of his friend: 'restore such a one.' It is *καταρτίζετε*, an allusion to surgeons, who set bones out of joint, though they put their patients to pain, and make them angry at present; so must Christians endeavour the jointing of their brethren, whose souls are out of order, though at present they have little thanks for their labour. This courtesy we owe to our brother's ox or ass, much more to his soul, Exod. xxii. 4. It is a strict command, 'Warn the unruly,' 1 Thes. v. 14, though most men draw back, when they are called to this burden, that fallen brethren lie under the same misery that travellers do, to find many hosts but few friends, and may cry out, as Louis the Eleventh of France, I have plenty of all things, but such as will tell me my faults.

3. The manner how this friendly part must be performed: 'with the spirit of meekness.' The bitterness of reprehension is much sweetened, by the pleasingness of our expressions; gentle sores are but anguished with too hard a pressure. Though swine are driven with violence, yet children that wander are gently led home. According to the wound must the plaster be more or less searching. Christ reproves Martha mildly: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things;' but he rebuked Peter sharply, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

The apostle, writing to the Romans, commendeth them highly, that they were able to admonish one another, Rom. xv. 14. They had piety and grace enough to perform the duty, notwithstanding

the arguments of ill will, or loss in estate, or other evils which the flesh suggested to the contrary; and they had prudence and discretion enough to perform the duty, so as it might most probably be profitable. But how unlike are Christians in our days to those in the primitive times! Admonition is a lion which few dare come near, for fear it will tear them in pieces. We carry ourselves rather like Machiavel's scholars, who taught his followers, if their friend were up to the knees in water, to lend him their hand to help him out; and so if he were up to the waist; but if he were up to the chin, then to lay their hand on his head, and duck him under, that he rise no more. How many, that should reprove others, have their mouths stopped, as the dog's by the thief, with a piece of bread—some kindness or other!¹ Or else, as Erasmus saith of Harpocrates, They hold their finger in their mouths, and are afraid of giving offence; they are rather like the reflection of a looking-glass, ready to imitate others' sinful gestures and actions, than rebuke them for them: 'There is no reprover in the gate.'

Nay, heathen exceed in this many of us. The great philosopher tells us, that is true love which, to profit and do good to us, feareth not to offend us; and that it is one of the chiefest offices of friendship to admonish.² Euripides exhorts men to get such friends as would not spare to displease them, saying, Friends are like new wines—those that are harsh and sour keep best, the sweet are not lasting. Phocion told Antipater, Thou shalt not have me for thy friend and flatterer too. Diogenes, when men called him dog, for his severe kind of reproving, would answer, Dogs bite their enemies, but I my friends, for their good; and are we so hardly drawn to this duty? Oh how justly might the Lord reprove us cuttingly, and set our sins in order before our eyes, to our condemnation, for our backwardness to reprove others to their humiliation! We have most of us cause, with Reverend Mr Robert Bolton,³ to confess and bewail our neglect herein.

SECTION V.

Fifthly, By bearing each other's infirmities. Christians, like the clearest fire, will have some smoke, whereby they are apt to offend each other's eyes, and to cause anger. The best and most pious may sometimes be peevish; those brethren that love sincerely, may

¹ *Perrigit panem ut sileat.*

² *Ut malus sermo inducit in peccatum, sic malum silentium relinquit in peccato.*
—August.

³ *In Quat. Noviss.*

too often quarrel; true members of the same body may, by some accident, be disjointed; though contentions argue them to have flesh, yet they may arise where there is spirit. Therefore the Holy Ghost commandeth, 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Here is the commandment enjoined, and the argument whereby it is enforced, Gal. vi. 2.

First, The precept: 'bear one another's burdens.'

There is a threefold burden that Christians must bear for each other.

1. The civil burdens of their miseries and sufferings; have a fellow-feeling with them in their afflictions. 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is afflicted, and I burn not?' saith holy Paul, Rom. xii. 15. Herod and his men of war will set a persecuted Christ at nought; the chief priests and elders will mock him when he hangs upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 11; Mat. xxvii. 4. Edom rejoiced in the day of Jerusalem's trouble; they cried, 'Aha, so would we have it;' but the true seed of Jacob sigh for others' sorrows—they weep with them that weep. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity,' Heb. iii. 3. If one part of the natural body be in pain, the other parts are sensible of it; when one branch of a tree is torn and mangled in summer, the other branches are affected with it, and out of sympathy, as it were, will not thrive so well as formerly. If one person of a family be sick, how much do his relations, from a principle of nature, lay to heart his pain and illness! Christians are all members of the same body, branches of the same vine, children of the same family; and it would be monstrous and unnatural for them not to feel each other's miseries, and suffer in each other's sufferings.

2. The spiritual burden of their iniquities and sins, whether more immediately against God. Though we must not bear with them in their sins, yet we must help to bear their sins with them. We ought to sit on the same floor with them that are fallen down, and to mourn with them, and for them, and to bear some of the weight. This temper was so eminent in Ambrose, he would so plentifully weep with the sinning party, that a great commander under Theodosius, beholding it, cried out, This man is only worthy the name of a bishop.

As stags, when they swim over a river to feed in some meadow, they swim in a row, and lay their heads over one another's backs, bearing the weight of one another's horns, and when the first is weary, another taketh his room, and so they do it by course; so Christians must be willing to bear each other's weight, whilst they

are passing through those boisterous waters, till they land at their glorious eternal harbour.

Or whether their sins are immediately against ourselves. If the teeth bite the tongue, that seeketh no revenge; when the feet, through their slipping, throw the body upon the ground, it riseth up, and all is well. Some Christians are of such weak stomachs, that they can digest nothing that looks like an unkindness or injury; but it is the glory of a man to pass by offences. Cyprian saith, to bear with affronts is a ray of divinity.¹ A noble-spirited man will disdain to take notice of petty disrespects; he will overcome contempt by contempt; but a heaven-born Christian hath higher principles, and more sublime motives to forgive his offending brother. 'I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love,' Eph. iv. 1, 2. 'And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' ver. 32. It is reported of Cosroes, the Persian king, that he caused a throne to be made for him like heaven, with the sun, moon, and stars artificially placed above it, and under his feet thick and black clouds, and high winds and tempests. He that would have a heaven here—I mean, enjoy God and himself—must of necessity trample these under his feet.

It is good advice which Bernard gives in such a case: Dost thou hear that a brother hath said or done somewhat that reflecteth upon thee, or is injurious to thee? then, saith he,

(1.) Be hard to believe it. He should have a loud tongue that can make thee to hear such a report. I would give him little thanks, in case the honour of God were not concerned, that were the messenger to bring me such a sour present; his pains would deserve but a poor reward, that brought me tidings of a discourtesy to rob me of my charity. The evidence shall be very clear, or I will write Ignoramus upon his bill of indictment. But if the thing be so plain that it cannot be denied, then, saith he,

(2.) Excuse his intent and purpose. Think with thyself, Possibly he had a good end in it; he spake as he heard, or he did what he did upon some good ground and account. Though the action seem to savour of injury, yet certainly, in his intention, there was no evil; had I his eyes, I should see his end was right and honest. But if there should be no reason for hope that his purpose was good, then, saith he,

¹ Cyprian, De Patient.

(3.) Think he did it ignorantly; that had he known the consequence, he would not have been guilty of such a crime. Surely the man thought no hurt, he spake on a sudden; such words came out of his mouth before he was aware, or he would never have spoken them; I myself, in a heat, might have been as harsh. When high winds blow, storms will follow.

(4.) If thou canst not be persuaded but the injury was wittingly offered, then think, He was overcome with some great temptation; there were extraordinary fumes at that instant flying up into his head, which made him talk idly, and of which now he may be repenting before the Lord. The strong man was too hard for the weak Christian; flesh and blood was easily conquered by principalities and powers. I may well forgive him; his sin will cost him sorrow enough before his Father smile on him.

3. The natural burden—as I may call it, though it hath a relation to spiritual, but not fully in the former sense—of their infirmities. Some, by reason of bad instruments, are but bunglers at their work; they have naturally understandings very dull to receive, and memories very slow to retain spiritual things; they have ill constitutions of body, and thereby the worse frames of soul, and the more apt to be peevish and fretful. ‘Now we exhort you, brethren, that ye support the weak, and be patient towards all men,’ 1 Thes. v. 14. All the persons in God’s family are not of the same height and strength; though some are old men and fathers, and others are young and strong, yet some are little children, babes in Christ; some can go alone, or with a little help, if you hold them but by their leading-strings; but others must be carried in arms, and will require much love and patience to overcome their childish frowardness. Christ winks at their weaknesses, who hath most reason to be moved with them; though his disciples were raw, and dull, and slow to believe and understand, yet he bears with them; nay, though when he was watching for them, and in his bloody sweat, his whole body being in a gore-blood, under the weight of their and others’ sins on his back, and they lay sleeping and snoring, and could not watch with him one hour, he doth not fall fiercely upon them, but calmly asketh them, ‘Could ye not watch with me one hour?’ and afterwards excuseth it for them.

First, From the natural cause. Their heads were full at that time of fumes; their eyes were heavy with sorrow. They were full of grief for their dear Master, and their sorrow hindering the digestion of their food, filled them with vapours, which, ascending to their brains, inclined them to sleep.

Secondly, From the moral cause: they would, but they could not. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Their better part would move more swiftly, and do anything at my call and command, but their flesh draweth back, and makes them drive heavily. It is no wonder that their pace is so slow, when, like the snail, they have such a house, such a hindrance upon their backs; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Who can think of this infinite grace of the blessed Redeemer in making such an apology for them whom he had such cause to be full of fury against, and not be incited to imitate so admirable a pattern?

There is another famous instance, in the Old Testament, and that is God's patience towards peevish Jonah, by which all may see how much he bears with his froward children.

First, Jonah runs from his business; God sends him to Nineveh, he will go to Tarshish. Here was plain rebellion against his sovereign. One would have expected that the jealous God should have given him a traitor's wages, and when he was at sea, have suffered the ocean of waters to have swallowed up his body, and the ocean of fire and wrath his soul. But lo, he cannot permit his Jonah to perish; he will rather whip him to his work, than let him wander to his ruin. But how gentle is the rod! God cannot forget the love of a father, though Jonah forget the duty of a child, but will rather work a miracle, and make the devourer his saviour, than Jonah shall miscarry. It is true he was tossed with a violent tempest, and thrown overboard, but God provided him a shelter before the storm, and prepared a whale to swallow him down, not for his destruction, but his deliverance: 'And the Lord spake to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land.'

Well, now the child is brought home, you will look that he should make some recompense for his former disobedience, by his faithfulness and diligence for the future; that the danger he had been in, the death he had so narrowly escaped, the miracle which had been wrought for him, and the extraordinary mercy he had so lately received, should have melted him wholly into God's mould, and have made him, like Abraham, to have come up wholly to God's foot. But, alas! he addeth sin to sin, and neither mercy nor misery prevail with him to know himself. Indeed, he undertakes the journey and message he was called to upon a second command, but as unwillingly as the bear goeth to the stake. After he had pronounced a sentence of death upon the Ninevites, and shewed them a warrant under the high God's hand and seal for

their speedy execution, how ill doth he take it that, upon their humble petition, a reprieve should be granted them ! He frets inwardly against God, and, through the exceeding heat of his heart, his tongue blisters with casting God's mercy in his teeth. He was wroth for that in which he had cause to rejoice. His love to his brethren might have made him glad of their escape, and his love to his God should have quieted him in all his wise and holy proceedings: 'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry, and he prayed unto the Lord, O Lord, was not this my saying in my country? for I knew that thou art a gracious God, &c. Therefore, O Lord, take away my life.' He quarrels with God's providence, and he doth, as it were, twit God with (that which is the glory of all his attributes and actions, and the best friend the poor children of men have) his grace and pity, desiring rather the destruction of above six score thousand persons, than that himself, by the blind ignorant world, should be reckoned a false prophet. Behold impatience in its largest dimensions ! Jonah will die, because so many thousands are allowed, out of infinite kindness, to live. Oh what a nest of vermin was in the womb of this disobedience ! Here is pride, both in preferring his own will before God's, and in his unwillingness to suffer a little in his repute in the eye of the people. Here was passion to the height, and that against God himself. Here was murmuring against sparing mercy and the divine pleasure. Here was unbelief, as if God could not repair his name, and repay him for the loss of his credit. Here was uncharitableness and want of love towards the poor Ninevites, whose condition called for the deepest compassion. What answer can be judged tart enough to such a passionate prayer ? What language can be too harsh, what carriage can be too heavy, towards such a cross-grained child ? It is abominable for any man to contend with his Maker. It is bad for servants to strive with their master, or children to resist their father, though both these are their fellow-creatures ; but for any to contend with God, whose dominion over us is unquestionable, and their dependence on him indispensable, between whom and them there is an infinite distance, is infinitely worse. But for Jonah—not only a man, but a new man, a child of God, a prophet of the Lord, that should have taught others, by his precepts and by his pattern, to submit to the severest divine pleasure, one that had been signalled, above others, with eminent and distinguishing favours both for this and the other world—to fly thus in God's face, is worst of all. Surely no punishment can exceed the desert of such peevishness, such passion. Some

dreadful thunder cannot but be expected as the consequent of such hot weather. But hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth, and be astonished at the calm mild voice of the great God : ' And the Lord said unto Jonah, Jonah, dost thou well to be angry ? ' Mark what love sounds in this language. Such an affectionate voice, after such gross disobedience, might make even marble to weep ; and, as that voice from heaven, turn a Saul into a Paul. Could the fondest and most indulgent father in the world be more meek, more mild in his expression ? He appeals to Jonah's conscience whether such behaviour was answerable to his oath of allegiance : Dost thou well to be angry ? Is this passion suitable to that submission which thou owest to me and my providence ? Eli said as much to his wicked sons : It is not a good report which I hear of you, my sons, &c., when God was so incensed against him for his mildness, that he sends him an ear-tickling and a heart-trembling message. And yet God himself is so favourable and compassionate to one whose sin admitted of greater aggravations in some respects than those of Eli's sons, (Jonah sinned after such a miraculous salvation, and that against choosing, calling, pardoning, saving love, which Eli's sons did not ;) nay, and when the malefactor, upon the reading of this gentle indictment to him, instead of pleading guilty, and begging a psalm of mercy, had stubbornly and obstinately justified himself, God, who might have awarded judgment against him, according to law, still forbeareth him ; and when his pathetical words would not reclaim him, he trieth if a miraculous work will reduce him to his allegiance. Oh the tenderness of God towards his froward children ! I have sometimes wondered at his infinite patience towards so disobedient a prophet ; but, alas ! I experience it daily in his superabundant grace and goodness towards my own soul, notwithstanding my greater provocations.

Reader, by all this thou mayest see what cause thou hast to bear with thy fellow-Christians, when God beareth with his creatures, notwithstanding those multiplied affronts and disrespects, which they offer to his glorious, holy, and infinite Majesty.

Secondly, We may observe in the foregoing text, the prevailing argument to this precept : ' And so fulfil the law of Christ.' This was the great law which Christ commanded so frequently, so affectionately, and the apostle mentioneth it here, as if it were the only law, or all the law, because this love is the fulfilling of the whole law. As if he had said, ' O my Galatians, if ye have any love to Christ, and would evidence it to yourselves and others, let there be no bitterness, nor envyings, nor heart-burnings amongst you, but love

your neighbours as yourselves, suffer with them in their sufferings ; let their sore eyes and tears for sin, set your eyes a-watering ; pardon them, though they may offend and provoke you ; bear with them, notwithstanding their passion and peevishness, for hereby ye will obey that great law, which is indeed the whole law containing your duty toward your brother, or that law which the heart of Christ was so infinitely set upon, that he will have it called his law, the law of Christ. This is my commandment, that ye love one another. Though he was the church's only lawgiver—and so all the commandments enjoined her were his—yet as amongst all the disciples there was one that had most of his heart, and was called the disciple whom Jesus loved ; so possibly amongst all the commandments, that of love had most of his heart, and may fitly be called the commandment which Jesus loved. ‘ My commandment, the law of Christ.’

Oh, how sweet is the music, when saints join thus in concert ! and how harsh is the sound of jarring strings ! A mutual yielding and forbearance is no small help to our peace and safety. There is a story of two goats, which may excellently illustrate the benefit of this duty. They both met on a narrow bridge, under which a very deep and fierce stream did glide ; there was no going blindly back, neither could they pass forward for the narrowness of the bridge. Now had they fought for their passage, they had been certain both to perish ; this therefore they did, they agreed that the one should lie down, and the other go over him, and by this means both their lives were preserved. Whilst Christians are fighting, like some small chickens, they are a prey to kites and other ravenous creatures : ‘ In quietness shall be their strength,’ Isa. xxx. 15, is true in this, as well as other senses.

SECTION VI.

Thirdly, Christians ought in good company, not only to do what good they can to each other, but also to receive what good they may from each other. God sets up such candles, not for us to play, but to work by. The strongest Christian may gain by the weakest. A small brimstone match may help to light a great torch. A servant may sometimes think of a way to enlarge his imprisoned master, when his master dreams not of it. Every loop or pin was helpful to the tabernacle. A homely digger that is poor, doth sometimes discover rich mines, which wealthy merchants took no notice of. Apollos, one mighty in the Scriptures, is content to learn of a

handicraft man. Cordials are not to be refused, because brought to us in a wooden spoon. Who ever sent away silver or gold, because brought to him in a bag of leather? The moon, though she be but small, and seated in a lower orb than the stars of the first magnitude, and though she hath her spots and imperfections, yet she lends a useful light to men, prevents their stumbling and wandering out of their way, and produceth here and there a motion subordinate and obedient to a heavenly influence; when those luminaries that are above her in place, are below her in use and service. Proud men disdain to take poor saints' advice, as if wisdom had forsaken all commerce with inferior persons, and taken up her abode only in stately palaces. Upon this score Darius, instead of the thanks which he owed, paid Charidemus with no less than death for his good counsel.¹ But it is the folly as well as the arrogance of some, rather to ascend to a dangerous height, than descend at the call of one below them, Prov. xxix. 1. Oh, how mad is he that will rather run on in hazardous paths to his ruin, than turn back and retreat at the desire of one that is his inferior! And such proud Christians have this usually for their reward of God, that when the humble that will stoop to take up jewels at the feet of the meanest are enriched, they get nothing by godly conference. We give no relief to them that go gorgeously attired, and brag of their own large revenues.

There lieth a great deal of wealth and worth in some obscure and neglected Christians; men do not more usually trample upon the golden veins of earth in America, than conceited persons trample on the spiritual riches in poor Christians; but a wise man will better himself by his enemies, much more by his godly friends, both in taking their counsel and receiving their admonition, if occasion be.

1. In taking counsel. It was said of Demosthenes, that he was better at praising virtue, than practising it. We must write by that copy which we set others. It was the speech of a philosopher, that it is the easiest thing in the world to give good counsel, and the hardest thing to take it. Job's friends, though falsely, taxed him as guilty of this crime: Job iv. 3-5, 'Behold, thou hast instructed many, and strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.' Dr Preston confessed on his death-bed, that he found it difficult to take that physic which

¹ Sir W. Ral. Hist. World, lib. iv. cap. 4.

he had often administered to others. But all Christians must and will endeavour it; Solomon makes it the mark of a prudent man: 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise,' Prov. xi. 15. When out of self-conceit we refuse others' advice, we bewray our own pride and folly. Quintilian said of some, they might have proved excellent scholars, if they had not thought themselves so already; this is true of too many in our days. They might have proved excellent Christians, if they had not thought themselves too good to learn. He that every day layeth up something, though but little, will in time have a good stock.

2. In receiving admonition. The stomach of man naturally riseth against this bitter physic, though it conduceth so much to his health. Faithful reproof is the awakening of man out of sleep, and such are very apt to be angry. The hedgehog bristleth up her prickles, and will pierce, if it be possible, those that come to take hold of her.

There are two things that cause men to rage against reproof.

1. Guilt of the sin objected. Guilt makes men angry when they are searched, and, like horses that are galled, to kick, if they be but touched. They hate, saith the Holy Ghost, him that reproveth in the gate. The easiest medicines and mildest waters are troublesome to sore eyes. Praxaspes having reproved Cambyses for his drunkenness, did so exasperate him, that he shot the son of the reprover through the heart, to confute the father by shewing the steadiness of his hand. Though you stir one that hath a boil never so gently, yet he will fret and fume. Ahab, conscious of his own filth and wickedness, hates Micaiah for telling him the truth. There is scarce a more probable sign that the crime objected is true, than wrath and bitterness against the person that chargeth us with it. Children that have cankers will not suffer honey to come near their mouths, as sweet as it is. Though men are bold to sin, even to the face of God, yet they are so proud, that they would not have it visible to the eye of a man; therefore, when by their admonitions they find that they are discovered, they wrangle and quarrel.

2. Love to sin makes men impatient under reproof. It was David's fondness of Absalom that made him so strict in his charge to his captains concerning him, 'Deal gently with the young man Absalom for my sake.' It is love of lust that makes us so desirous it should be spared, and so passionate when it is pierced by a reproof. A man may gather that sin to be his Delilah, which he will suffer none to hurt. Eglebert, king of West Saxons, slew

Earl Cambra for telling him of his faults, but it was because his sin was dearer to him than his soul. When a person's sin is to him as the apple of his eye, no wonder if he be offended at any that shall touch it. Solomon calls reproofs ear-rings. I am sure they are ill bestowed on such uncircumcised ears, Prov. xxv. 12.

But grace will teach a Christian contentedly to take those potions that are wholesome, though they be not toothsome. It is holy David's expression, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, it shall not break my head,' Ps. cxli. 5. Faithful reproof is a token of love, and therefore may well be esteemed a kindness. Such wounding of a friend is healing, and so David might well call it an excellent oil. And he did not only say so, which is easy and ordinary, but acted accordingly. He did not as the papists, who highly commend holy water, but turn away their faces when it comes to be sprinkled on them. When he had by sin, and continuance in it, so gangrened his flesh, and corrupted himself, that he was in danger of death, he suffered his sores to be thoroughly searched without regret. Nathan was the chirurgeon whom God employed to search that wound which had divers months been festering in his soul; and truly he did not dally with his patient, though he were a prince, but thrust his instrument to the bottom; yet whatever pain it put him to, he took it patiently, and was so far from being angry with the prophet, that he made him one of his privy council. It is a sign of a polluted nature for a man, like a serpent, if he be but touched, to gather poison, and vomit it up at the party. 'Rebuke a scorner, and he will hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee,' Prov. xxi. 24.

Pride scorns a corrector, and thinks it a disgrace to amend upon another's desire; hence it hates him that endeavours it. Amos, for reproving the golden calves, was accused by Amaziah, the chief priest of the idols of Bethel, and struck by Uriah, the son of that Amaziah, with a spear on the head, whereof he died, saith Buntingus, *Itinerar. Sacr.* But reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.

Austin notes it as a sign of grace in his friend Alipius, that he received his reproof so well. Paul rebuked Peter sharply, and that before a considerable company of Peter's friends, yet he loved not Paul the less for it; for in his Epistle, which was written some time after that contest, and after the Epistle to the Galatians, which records it, he makes honourable mention of Paul's writings, and of

that very epistle among the rest, 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16, and calleth him his beloved brother. As they who love their sins hate the reprovcr, so they that hate their sins love him. When Isaiah had declared from God a dreadful threatening against Hezekiah for his pride, he doth not fly out into a passion against the prophet, but submits with 'Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken.' It is said of Gerson, the great chancellor of France, that he rejoiced in nothing more than a friendly reprehension. And it is storied of our Richard the First, that he would be admonished by a poor hermit. Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked what company he liked best, answered, 'Books, for they (saith he) without fear and flattery, will tell me my faults faithfully.' 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. xxvii. 6. A loving reproof is a wound in love, the wound of a friend; and therefore we must bestow our anger upon our faults that deserve the reproof, not upon our friends that give the reproof. How foolish is he that breaks his own head, and then rageth at his friend for endeavouring to cure it. Ahab quarrels with Elijah, as the incendiary of Israel, for reproving their idolatries; when alas, like Etna, that flame arose out of their own bowels, which threatened to reduce them to ashes. Some of the heathen were so sensible of their proneness to err, and to be partial in their own cases when they had erred, that they both kindly accepted reproofs, and earnestly desired a reprovcr. It is reported of Alexander, that, having had a philosopher a long time with him, he should say to him, *Recede a me, prorsus consortium tuum nolo, quod cum tanto tempore mecum degeris, nunquam me de vitio aliquo increpasti*, Be gone from me, I will have none of thy company, for thou hast lived long with me, and couldst not but observe some failings in me, yet thou hast not reprovcd me of any. And Augustus Cæsar for this cause did much lament the death of Varro, because thereby he was deprived of one that would deal faithfully with him when he offended.

Yet, as they say, some roses are too tender to endure the strength of the smell of wormwood; so some Christians that it is hoped are sound, cannot, without wry mouths and angry faces, drink down this bitter liquor. Asa was a good man, yet time was when he imprisoned a prophet for bringing him an admonition from God. One would have thought that the king would have bid the servant welcome for his Master's sake; but, truly, a prison was all the reward he had for his pains. It was the speech of a wise and experienced Christian, that he never was acquainted thoroughly with

any one, but first he displeased him by admonishing him of his faults. But as light stuff and rubbish kindleth sooner than solid and more substantial wood, so they are the weaker and less wise Christians that are so soon fired into a pet and passion, if but told of their errors. It is childishness to be unwilling to take bitter medicines. A prudent person will rather permit cupping-glasses and corrosives to be applied to his body, than suffer his distemper to reign and kill him. The sharpest fruit is most profitable and wholesome. The lemon is more tart, yet is more excellent than the orange, which delighteth the taste.

Reader, is it not better to be awakened by a rousing reproof, than to sleep the sleep of death? and wilt thou be angry with thy friend for doing thee that courtesy? Is it not better for thy familiar companion to tell thee meekly of thy miscarriages, and call thee to repentance, than for God to reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes? When God uttered his voice the heavens thundered, the mountains smoked, and Moses himself trembled. 'The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea, the cedars of Lebanon; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, yea, it shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.' How wilt thou then endure the thundering of such a cannon, a reproof for thy sins from the Almighty God, at whose rebuke the earth quakes, the rocks are rent in pieces, and the foundations of the world are moved? The Israelites said unto Moses, 'Speak thou to us and we will hear; but let not God speak lest we die,' *Exod. xx. 19.* Truly, so mayest thou say to thy companion, 'Speak thou to me of my offences, deal plainly with me about anything that thou seest amiss in me, and I will hear thee; but let not God speak to me lest I die, lest his voice strike me down, strike me dead. There is an absolute necessity of thy sense of, and sorrow for thy sins. This ordinarily must be wrought in thee, either by admonition from man, or by some severe rebuke from God. Consider seriously, therefore, whether it be not easier to take a faithful check from thy fellow-creature, than to be called to repentance by some dreadful judgment from the jealous God. Oh, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire.

One thing more, reader, is considerable; it is not enough to take a reproof with patience, but also to be awakened by reproof to repentance. It is a dreadful aggravation of sin, to continue in it after thou art convinced of it. Such impudence is followed with fearful vengeance. 'He that being often reproved, hardeneth his heart,

shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy,' Prov. xxix. 1.

Fourthly, Christians, if they would exercise themselves to godliness in good company, must rejoice in each other's grace and good. True love will rejoice in the welfare of another, as its own; Peter beholding those eminent graces in Paul, did not repine that a brighter star was risen which would eclipse his splendour, but glorified God in Paul, and gave him the right hand of fellowship. It is a profane Esau that hates a Jacob for having obtained his father's blessing beyond himself. Envy is from the evil one. Saul who was without God, eyed and hated David for slaying more of God's enemies, and obtaining thereby greater renown than himself could. Yet, alas! the spirit which dwelleth in the best, lusteth to envy: corrupt nature will shew itself, if it be possible, at this window. There are some countries, as Candia, that have, naturalists tell us, no poison; but there is not any Christian without a spice of this sin. Joshua is ready to envy them that seemed by their light to darken his master.

Cantharides, a venomous worm, usually breedeth in wheat when it is ripe; the highest Christians, as the greatest favourites at court, are usually the greatest objects of envy. But oh, it is a sign of a weak eye, not to behold the sunshine of others' holiness without pain. The holy apostle is enlarged in thanksgiving to God for the faith, and love, and patience of the Thessalonians, and their grace was a strong cordial to revive him in his sorrows and distress. We give thanks to God for you all; remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. We were comforted over you, in all our afflictions and distress, by your faith. Nay, he was so far from grieving at others' graces, that he professeth the joy of his life did very much depend upon their perseverance in piety: 'For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;' as if he had said, 'Our life will be but a death in regard of sorrow and grief, it will be so doleful a being, that it will not deserve the name of a life, if ye should once be loose and wandering from the Lord,' 1 Thes. i. 2-4; 2 Thes. iii. 6-8; 1 Col. xii. Grace cannot but desire and delight in its like. He that truly loves his God will rejoice in his brother's graces, because they tend to his Father's glory; and he that truly loves his brother will be glad at his grace, because it tends so exceedingly to his brother's good. Pedareus, when he could not be admitted to be one of the three hundred among the Spartans, went home rejoicing that his country had three hundred better men than him-

self.¹ Surely, then, Christians, when they behold others sparkling with grace, and shining as lights in the world, should rejoice that the blessed God hath some that can do him more service, and bring him more glory than themselves.

A good wish about a Christian's carriage in good company, wherein the former heads are applied.

The Father of mercies, and only wise God, who hath appointed the way in which I should walk during the time of my pilgrimage, and understandeth the multitudes of rubs and hindrances that I shall encounter with, the power and policy of those enemies which will beset me therein, as also how weak I am, and unable to hold out; how weary I shall soon be, and ready to give over if I should travel alone; having out of his boundless grace and goodness called me to the communion of saints, that I might be directed by their counsel and encouraged by their company, notwithstanding all opposition, to run the ways of his commandments; I wish that I may esteem his precept herein as my glorious privilege, improve their society to the greatest advantage, both for my own welfare and my God's honour and delight, to converse with those brethren here, with whom I hope to dwell in my Father's house for ever. What an inestimable dignity doth my God invest me with, in imposing on me so sweet a duty! How wretchedly ungrateful should I be if his paths should not be the more pleasant to me for such companions! The worth and riches of this society may well invite me to trade with them, and give me hopes of profiting by them. All the companions on earth of the highest callings, are but a rabble of kennel-rakers to this noble society. The prince of this senate is the heir of all things, the blessed and glorious potentate; such a sovereign whose dominion is universal from sea to sea, whose kingdom is eternal throughout all generations, and even the highest have gloried in being his subjects. The charter and privileges of this society are the inestimable covenant of grace, exceeding great and precious promises, wherein pardon of sin, peace of conscience, new natures, adoption, justification, the love of the blessed God, and eternal life are granted to them, and entailed on them for ever. The servants of this corporation are all the creatures in their several places, striving which shall do them the greatest

¹ Plutarch.

kindness. They are in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field, though never so ravenous by nature, are at peace with them. The glorious angels pitch their tents about them, and count it their honour to wait upon them, both living and dying. The livery in which this company is attired is the royal robes of Christ's righteousness, which renders them without spot or wrinkle, and far more beautiful and amiable than Adam in his estate of unspotted innocency. Their garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and for their richness infinitely surpass that clothing which is of wrought gold. Their food is hidden manna, such meat as endureth to eternal life, the bread that came down from heaven, the flesh of the Son of God, which is meat indeed, and the blood of the Son of God, which is drink indeed. Their inheritance is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a crown of life, rivers of pleasures, an eternal weight of glory. Some societies have boasted that kings and lords have been free of their company; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is both free and head of this society; they are his Hephzibah, his delight; his Segullah, his peculiar treasure. Ah! who would not have communion with them whose communion is with the Father and Jesus Christ his Son! Lord, let my ambition be to be enrolled a citizen of Zion, and to walk amongst them, worthy of that vocation wherewith thou hast called me, since the communion of thy saints here is some weak resemblance of heaven, where all thy chosen shall glorify and worship thee without fault and faintness; teach me to hallow thy name by doing thy will on earth as it is in heaven.

I wish that the gain which I am sure to reap by joining with Christians in their common stock, may make me more diligent at this spiritual trade. The greatest privileges are granted to corporations, not to particular persons; the greatest victories are obtained by regiments and brigades, not by soldiers engaged singly against their enemies. That ointment which yielded so grateful a savour as to delight God himself, was compounded of several spices, *Exod.* xxx. 23-25. My God hath ordained the communion of the faithful, for the building up one another in their most holy faith; and if I expect his blessing, it must be in his own way. The body thrives best when all the members concur to perform their distinct and proper offices, for the good of the whole. Men make the most ravishing music, when many join in concert. The two disciples travelling together found the blessed Jesus to make a third, and to warm their hearts with the fire of his heavenly doctrine. How many vessels going in company have returned in safety, richly laden with

the unsearchable riches in Christ ! If I am in doubts, good companions will advise and direct my feet in the ways of peace. If I sit in darkness, and see no light, by their counsel and comfort I may learn the way out of the mist. If I am perplexed in any labyrinths, they may help me to untie that knot of which I have been labouring long in vain to find an end ; if I be falling, they will be props to support me ; if I wander, they will be guides to reduce me ; if I be dull, they will be whet-stones to quicken me ; if I do well, they will be fathers to encourage me ; whatever my want be, they will endeavour to supply me ; and whatever my condition be, they will be like-minded, both weeping with me in my sorrows, and rejoicing with me in my joys ; besides, if I expect the presence of my God, who is rich in mercy, and the God of all consolations, where can I find him sooner than in his temple ? They are the temple of God, and I will dwell in them. His saints on earth are his lesser heaven, wherein he takes up his abode. O my soul, what an argument is here, to persuade thee to fellowship with the saints ! Theirs is the only good fellowship ; their communion is a conjunction in the service of thy God, and tendeth abundantly to thy spiritual advantage and edification ; thy Redeemer calls them the light of the world, and they will guide thee in the way which he hath cast up ; the salt of the earth, and they will preserve thee from corruption ; their conversations are living commentaries upon that word which is thy rule, and so will both plainly teach thee thy duty and powerfully provoke thee to do it. Their expressions will be savoury, and help thee to learn the language of Canaan. The tongue of the just is a tree of life, and beareth excellent fruit. The lips of the righteous feed many ; besides, amongst these children, thou mayest be sure to meet with the everlasting Father. ‘ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them.’ Though but two or three, that the wicked despise them for their paucity ; though two or three, never so low and mean, that the world scorns them for their poverty ; yet if gathered together in his name, they shall not fail of his presence. Surely nothing will prevail more with a faithful spouse to join with any company than this, she shall meet with her beloved husband amongst them. Oh, of what great price is this one promise, I will be in the midst of them ! His presence, like the nearer approaches of the sun in the spring, will refresh their hearts with the warm beams of his love when they are chill, and almost dead with the cold of frights and fears, and cause in their souls a new shooting of grace, that notwithstanding any fore-

going winter of barrenness, they shall now abound in the fruits of righteousness. What can they, or thou, O my soul, want, which his presence will not supply? Art thou laden with sin? he can give thee rest. Art thou full of sorrows? he is the consolation of Israel. Art thou poor in grace? with him is durable riches and righteousness. Art thou dull and dead in spirituals? he is the Lord of life, and can quicken thee; he hath power enough to subdue all thy lusts, he hath wisdom enough to resolve all thy doubts, he hath grace enough to pity all thy weaknesses, and mercy enough to pardon all thy unworthiness; he is able to save to the uttermost; nay, thou hast not only his promise to meet thee in his garden, amongst his people, but thou hast also his performance of it, for thine encouragement: 'Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side, then were the disciples glad when they had seen the Lord. Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, so send I you; and he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Oh the value of those jewels which are locked up in this cabinet! All the crowns and sceptres of the world, had they been thrown in amongst the disciples, could not have caused the thousandth part of that comfort, nor have brought any degree of that profit, which the disciples had by the presence of the holy Jesus. Consider his words, Peace be unto you, peace be unto you. Never did sweeter words, or more melodious music, ever sound in human ears. What tidings could be more welcome to them that had known the terrors of an angry God, and felt the curses of his righteous law? Didst thou never see a poor debtor arrested by severe serjeants, and haled to the jail, (in which nasty miserable place he was like to continue whilst he lived,) with wringing of hands, and watering of cheeks, and doleful screeches, and afterwards upon the payment of his debts by some loving surety, with what clapping of hands and gladness of heart he was enlarged! If so, thou hadst some poor resemblance of that exuberancy of joy which the disciples felt when they saw the Lord, and heard those blessed words, 'Peace be unto you.' They were all liable every moment to the arrest of divine justice for those vast sums which they owed to the holy and jealous God, and in continual danger to be hurried by devils, his officers, to the prison of hell, whence they could never have come out. Now, his appearance to them did evidence that the law was

satisfied, that all their debts were discharged, in that the surety, who took upon him the payment of them, was by order of the judge released. What news could find more acceptance with those that dreaded the fury of the Lord more than death, and esteemed his favour far before life, than that which did speak him reconciled to them ! And further, observe the work of the blessed Redeemer, and he breathed on them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost,' as if he had said, I know your unbelieving hearts will think the news of a reconciled God, and of peace with him, too good to be true ; behold, therefore, his love token, receive the earnest of his favour, his Holy Spirit, who knoweth his mind fully, and was at the council table of heaven when all your names were engrossed in the book of life, and all the methods of grace and good-will towards poor sinners were debated and concluded, and is sent to you on purpose to reveal them to you, and assure you of them, and, therefore, is an unquestionable evidence that he is at one with you. This, O my soul, was the blessed heavenly banquet which the Redeemer entertained his disciples with when they met together, and wouldst thou miss such a feast for all the world ? Lord, thou lovest the assemblies of thy saints. They are the habitations of thy glorious majesty, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. There thou makest the largest discoveries of thyself, and grantest the fullest communications of thy grace. Oh let me take sweet counsel with thy people, and go to serve and honour thee in their company.

I wish that the confederacy of the wicked in sin may provoke me to a league with the Israel of God, for a free trade and commerce in holiness. Shall they, whose lusts are often contrary, and set them at variance, unite against God and his holy ways ; and shall not we, whose graces are ever alike, and of a cementing nature, not join together for God and his worship ? Do they conspire to defile and destroy each others' souls, as if vitiated nature did not lead them fast enough to sin, or as if they could not run singly quick enough to hell ; and shall not we encourage one another in the worship of the living God, and provoke one another to love and to good works ? Oh, how much do the servants of Satan, by their conjunctions in evil, shame the children of God for their backwardness in good ! Their master is the prince of darkness, a cruel tyrant, a roaring lion, that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Their work is far worse than any Turkish slavery ; it is bondage to corruption, the service of unrighteousness, the diversity and contrariety of their lords, their lusts tearing them as it were in pieces, for the promoting of their particular interests. Their wages

is the vengeance of the eternal fire, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out. After all their vassalage to their barbarous masters, and hardships which they have been put to in making provision for, and gratifying such opposite furies, they are recompensed with extremity and eternity of torments; yet they can unite their hearts, and hands, and heads, for the advancement of so hellish a lord, about the prosecution of so base and devilish a work, and to earn so miserable a reward, when the soldiers of Christ, whose captain is the Lord of hosts, the most courteous and compassionate general, whose combats and contests, which they are called to, are noble and heroic, and whose crown and garland will be beyond all comparison and apprehension blessed and glorious, do rather fight against themselves than against their enemies, or for their endless happiness! Ah, foolish Christians, who hath bewitched us! May we not well blush that Satan should even outboast the living God in the unity of his subjects, that the children of this world should be wiser in their generation than the children of light! Alas, is it a time for mariners to be quarrelling, when their enemies are joined in discharging their cannons against them, and the bullets fly thick amongst them? Is it a time for Christians to be wrangling, when their adversaries are united in a confederacy to destroy them all? Lord, thou hast promised that thy people, in the days of the gospel, shall no more envy one another, that the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat, that they shall not hurt nor destroy in all thy holy mountain. Thy dear son, when leaving an ungrateful world, left peace as one legacy to his children, not only peace with thee, but also among themselves; thou knowest how much his heart was set upon it, when he begged so hard, so earnestly, so affectionately of thee this blessing, a little before he went to lay down the price of it. Let it please thee for thy promise' sake to make all thine of one heart, and one way; for, because thou hast spoken it, therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer before thee this day. Let it please thee, for thy Son's sake, whom thou hearest always, to take away all envyings, and wrath, and emulation, and strife out of the hearts of thy people, and heal thy Zion in its breaches, for thou seest it shaketh.

I wish that the injury I do myself by unnecessary solitariness may make me the more in love with good society. My God hath told me, Woe to him that is alone. David was alone, when Satan drew him to defile his neighbour's wife. Whilst the sheep flock together they are safe, as being under the shepherd's eye; but if one

straggle from the rest, it is quickly a prey to the ravenous wolf. It is no hard matter to rob that house that stands far from neighbours. The cruel pirate Satan watcheth for those vessels that sail without a convoy. The order is observable in the narration of Demas apostasy: 'Demas hath left us, and hath embraced this present world.' He first left the company of the faithful, and then openly denied the faith. Christian conference is a good help to perseverance; but they that forsake the communion of saints will quickly disown the profession of sanctity. If rabbits keep within the pales amongst their fellows, there is law to secure them against the violence of strangers; but if any wander from the warren, they are a lawful prize for any man, and prey to any dog. What an ill case is he in, that, travelling in a dark night, falls, and hath none to help him up; that wanders, and hath none to shew him the right way; that is set upon by thieves and murderers, and hath none near him to defend and secure him! Such is the condition of those that neglect the communion of saints. Hence it is that our great and sworn enemy raiseth the dust of dissension and strife amongst Christians, to make them keep aloof from each other, knowing that much of their welfare and safety doth depend upon their keeping together. He knoweth it is best fishing in troubled waters. O my soul! now thou beholdest in these wicked days the high winds of divisions and passions amongst the children of God, how ready they are to martyr one another's names, and it is to be feared to murder one another's bodies, if infinite power did not overrule and prevent it, thou mayest gather assuredly that Satan was the conjurer to raise them. I have read of a tree, that if some of the boughs of it be cast into a ship, they cause a mutiny betwixt the passengers and mariners, to the ruin of both. Dost thou not think that Satan hath cast some such branches into the vessel of the church at this day, that instead of uniting their strength against him and his kingdom, and instead of joining their power to improve every gale for their furtherance towards their blissful haven, they might fall together by the ears, destroy one another, and save their enemies a labour? Oh that for the divisions of Zion I could have great searchings, great sorrows of heart! Lord, thy saints in the primitive times were famous for their love to each other. Their very enemies would with admiration cry out, See how the Christians love one another! Thy Jerusalem heretofore was a city compact together, at unity within itself. Why is it now divided, and the walls broken down, and the inhabitants all in all in an uproar, that all that go by waste it, and laugh at it, saying, Is this the

beautiful city ! Is this the church of Christ ! Aha ! so would we have it. Oh look down from heaven, and pity mount Zion, where thou wast wont to dwell. Should thy children fall out by the way, to the gratifying thine enemies, dishonouring thy name, and wounding their own souls ? Should the members of the same body cut, and lance, and tear each other ? Though dogs and wolves, the wicked of the world, tear out one another's bowels, yet the sheep of Christ should live together in love. How long shall it be before thou biddest, with a word of power, thy people return from pursuing their brethren ? Shall the sword devour for ever ? Thou knowest it will be bitterness in the end. For thy name's sake unite the hearts of all thy chosen, not only by faith to thy dear Son, but also by unfeigned and forbearing love, each to other.

I wish that my great coldness and backwardness to what is good, may invite me to associate with them who will warm and quicken me. How averse is my flesh to every work of Christianity ! how weak is my spirit in their performance ! how untowardly doth it enter upon them ! how formally doth it go through with them ! my carriage in them is wholly unsuitable to their weight and worth, and what need then do I stand in of help from others ! As in a material house the walls need support from the strong timber, and the timber needs even the nails and spikes to fasten it together ; so in the spiritual temple, the weak Christians need the strong to support and uphold them, and the strong need the weak, if for nothing else, yet to call forth those gifts of counselling, and that grace of pity and compassion which they owe to them. If the strongest want each other, that the eye, the most knowing Christian, cannot say to the hand, the most active, I have no need of thee ; much more do those that are weak want supply and support from others. Nature teacheth me this lesson. The weakest creatures amongst fish, or fowls, or beasts, go usually in flocks and companies. The ivy, and vine, and hop, not being able to bear up themselves, will, by a natural instinct, cling about the tree, or pole, or hedge, or wall that is near them. Were I but as sensible of my own weakness as I ought to be, I should both earnestly desire, and heartily accept, the assistance of others. It is the wisdom of my God to let none of his children have all things about them, or a sufficiency to live of themselves, without being beholden to their neighbours ; to invite and necessitate them to mutual commerce. Those that are very able to advise others, do yet in their own cases take advice from others. The lawyer will not trust himself in a case of his own estate, nor the physician in a distemper in his own

body, but will both desire counsel and direction from their friends. A stander-by doth many times see more than an actor, and is more fit to judge the action than the agent. We are too near ourselves to see our own doings, and to be right in our judgments of ourselves ; those that stand at a due distance from us see more clearly, and judge more truly. Self-love so blinds us, that we judge those diseases not displeasing in ourselves, which we loathe in others. Oh that I might be so affected, both with my ignorance of the right way, and my proneness to allow myself in my wanderings, that I may make use of those guides which free grace affordeth me ! Lord, give me such sense of my unskilfulness in the wiles and devices of Satan, of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my own heart, and of my inability to steer the vessel of my soul aright amongst those shelves, and sands, and storms which I am sure to encounter, that I may take up those pilots which thou providest for me at every port, and so at last arrive in safety at thy glorious city.

I wish that I may watch myself amongst the godly, as well as amongst the wicked, lest Satan do me that injury by a friend, which he could not by an enemy. David's familiar friend conspired his ruin ; the Son of David was betrayed with a kiss from his friend ; and though my charity to my friends forbids me to think them as bad as either, yet my charity to myself commands me to stand upon my guard. Anglers for fish do frequently catch one fish with another, as the greater with the smaller. Sure I am, Satan is subtle enough to bait his hook with that which is most likely to take, and hath too often caught one Christian with another. The best friends are but men, and have flesh in them as well as spirit ; and what know I but the wicked one may tempt them to tempt me, as not ignorant of their prevalency over me ? None was so likely to deceive the prophet of the Lord as the old prophet, that pretended a commission from the same power, and himself a servant of the same Master. Who can so probably persuade me to a work of darkness, as he that is, or at least transforms himself into, an angel of light ? Besides, I am apt to be the more careless, when I am amongst them that I judge true Christians. In a crowd, where cheats usually resort, and execute their hellish trade, I look to my money ; but when I am amongst them whom I suppose to be honest, I think that care needless, and so may the easier be deceived. Lord, thou hast commanded me to keep my heart with all diligence ; I acknowledge I have been too secure when amongst thy saints, as believing their work to be only to advance thine, not Satan's,

interest in the world. Oh give me to consider, that when the sons of God gather together, Satan is also amongst them, and he is both politic and active to defile me that he may destroy me ; that I may even amongst them, ' watch and pray, and so not enter into temptation.'

I wish that I may never spend my precious time amongst Christians, as the Athenians, who never understood the worth of that commodity, used to waste it, only in telling and hearing of news ; but as Christ amongst his disciples, in discoursing of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Oh what pity is it, that a thing of such infinite value should be spoiled and laid out to little purpose ! I should befooled him that should throw down pails of Bezer-water to wash common sinks or gutters, which would serve for such excellent use as to comfort our vitals, and to refresh and revive drooping and fainting spirits. Who would not abhor that vanity of Nero, in shoeing his horses with precious gold, and causing that costly metal to be trampled under foot in the dirt, which was worthy to be the materials of a crown for the highest head on earth ! Am not I a greater fool than the former, and more vain than the latter, if I spend that time—which is infinitely more costly than gold or Bezer, as having relation to eternity—wholly in worldly talk, which might be employed in declaring and admiring the boundless perfections of the blessed God, in furthering that curious work of grace in my own and others' souls, and in preparing us for our unchangeable bliss in the other world ? My God hath not only a book of remembrance for every good word, but also a book of observance and account for every idle word. Lord, within a few days I shall go the way that I shall not return ; thine angel may say concerning me, that time shall be no more ; thou wilt never trust me with another life, nor afford me another day of grace ; this is the only time that I shall have to provide against the coming of my Lord. Nay, whilst I live, thou mayest part me from thy people, and deny me that happy privilege of their society that I now enjoy. For the Lord's sake, help me to ' work whilst it is day, and to walk whilst it is light, because the night is coming wherein I can neither work nor walk.'

I wish that my tongue may never be so set on fire of hell, as to speak evil of those that are the heirs of heaven. It were better for me to be sick and solitary in my bed, than to be censuring or reflecting upon the Lord's servants. The devils themselves, though for their own ends, could sometimes speak of righteous ones with a seeming awe and reverence. ' These men are the ser-

vants of the most high God, and shew unto us the way of salvation ;' and shall I at any time be worse than a devil at some times ? Such impotency in my tongue would be too great a sign of impurity in my heart. Those that have a blemish in their eyes, judge the sky to be ever cloudy. Caligula, who was a monster of obscenity and uncleanness, thought there was never a chaste person in the world. It is usual with the wicked, measuring others by themselves, to judge all to be ungodly ; they render others to be deformed, that their own faces might be esteemed the more fair. Or as the lapwing, they hope, by their false cries against the godly, to divert strangers from finding the nest of their own filthiness. They would have all good men thought to be evil, that themselves, who are fullest of evil, might be thought good ; but though the seed of the serpent spit their poison against the seed of the woman, should I do so, who am one of their brethren ? How bad is that bird that defileth its own nest ! How foolish, as well as sinful, is that child that disgraceth and defameth his own family ! If I speak evil of any of the saints, I speak evil of myself, and of the Master whom they serve. Though Christ was not upon earth in Enoch's days, yet he tells me that he will judge the slanderers of the saints as blasphemers of himself : ' Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince them of their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,' Jude 15. It is Satan's title to be the accuser of the brethren ; and my God calleth such men as are guilty of it by no better name than devils, 2 Tim. iii. 3 ; Tit. iii. 2. Would I be willing to resemble the prince of darkness ? or can I do it, and escape punishment ? Oh, it is dangerous to abuse the King of heaven's favourites. Such arrows of slander and censure, shot out of Satan's bow by my hand against the saints, would, as a shaft shot against a stone, rebound upon me, and hurt not the stone or saint, but him that shot it. He that snuffeth a candle with his bare fingers doth foul, if not burn, his fingers, but makes the candle to burn the more brightly. If I censure the children of God, I defile my own conscience, but do not make them the less glorious. O my soul ! consider what thy God hath said, ' Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly ; and all the people shall say, Amen.' Thou mayest smite thy neighbour as really and as dangerously with thy tongue as with thy hand. The wages of both is a curse from God, from all the people ; surely the breath of so many would blow down the strongest person, the strongest dwelling. Though the causeless curse shall not come, yet when God and men both see

cause for it, and say amen to it, there is no way to avoid it. I may build upon my profession, as if that would secure me against such a stormy wind; but it will prove a rotten foundation. My God hath told me, 'What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit; thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thine own mother's son.' No pretence whatsoever can prevent my punishment; but 'I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.' If God once undertake to reprove, it will be cutting, it will be killing. Oh, let me tremble to think of tearing the names of any of God's people, lest my God tear me in pieces, when there is none to deliver me, Ps. l. 16, 17, 21, 22. How irrational, as well as irreligious, is it for me to spend my time in censuring others. If they be guilty of erring, they do but shew themselves to be men, not angels. Am I so foolish as to expect heaven upon earth, perfection in a polluted and polluting world? If I myself were without sin, then I might throw the first stone. The actions of the best are but a miscellany of good and evil. Moses himself, like the pillar that conducted him, had his dark side. The cleanest corn, even after threshing and winnowing, will have some soil in it. There is a tincture of corruption that stains all mankind, otherwise there are some graces that would rust for want of use, and be given in vain. What wise man will despise or deny a mine to be gold, because it hath some dross or bad earth with it? or will throw away a beast, and say it is not good meat, because it hath guts and garbage in it? The vermin of sin may sometimes crawl in a cleanly, holy person, though they be not allowed there. One act will not prove a habit, nor a few bad actions a bad person. If every sin unsaint a man, Satan will challenge the whole race of mankind as his own peculiar. When I see the course rather good than evil, my charity commandeth me not to think the man other than a Christian. Besides, how frequent is it for the malicious world to lay down false reports of the saints, and shall I be their peddler to take them up, and cry their rotten, deceitful wares up and down the country? The priest under the law was not to judge presently of the plague of leprosy, but to shut the person suspected up seven days, and then to view him; and if the case were not clear, to shut him up seven days more; and after that, seven days more, before he was condemned; and what is the gospel of this, but to condemn rash censuring of any, much more of the godly? Hath not my God told me, 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame to him'? Prov. xviii. 13 Lord, thou

understandest what an unruly member my tongue is, how hard to be kept within the bounds of sobriety towards myself, or charity towards others. Oh, be pleased to undertake for me, and keep thou the door of my lips. It is not good to speak evil of those whom I know bad; but it is much worse to speak evil of those who may prove good. Should I declare others' failings upon certain knowledge, it sheweth some want of charity; but should I publish their faults upon a bare supposition, it would argue a want of honesty. Oh, let me rather err on the right hand, in my charitable thoughts of those that are bad, than on the left, in my censorious opinion of those that are good; for though he may be evil that speaks good of others upon knowledge, yet he can never be good himself that speaks evil of others upon suspicion.

I wish that I may be so far from speaking ill of them that are good, that I may rather be silent than, without a just cause and call, speak ill of them that are evil. Though the wicked, like dogs, fall upon the sheep of Christ with open mouth, and strive to bury their good names in the open sepulchre of their wide throats, yet the sheep of Christ do rather suffer their rage with patience, than render reviling for reviling. My God hath commanded me to bless them that curse me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me; and how contrary am I to his precept if I pay them in their own coin, and open my mouth in backbiting them, because they are forward to slander me! It is enough for them that have not a God to undertake their cause, and revenge their quarrels, to do it themselves. If I be one of Christ's members, he reckoneth all the wrongs offered to me as done to himself, and he will one day vindicate his own honour and mine to the full, when the sinner shall answer for all his treasonable expressions, with hell-flames about his ears. The tongue that now is blistered with blasphemies against God and his people, at that day will be in a light flame, and beg in vain, with Dives, for a little water to cool it. I may therefore be quiet in all such cases, and commit my cause to him that judgeth righteously. He that is robbed may not seek for reparation from the country, if the felon at the assizes be convicted and executed. I need not fear but the judge of the whole earth will, at the general assize, do justice upon those thieves that steal away my credit and good name, and so in the meantime may well be contented. He that is sure of double interest hereafter, may with the more comfort forbear his money at present. Besides, by declaring his faults, only to fill up a void space of time, I injure both him and myself, whether my report be true or false; if my report

be false I wrong him, by slandering and murdering his name undeservedly, and I wrong myself by contracting the guilt of so great a sin. If the report be true, I walk contrary to God's command, 'Speak evil of no man,' and so defile my own soul, and set him at a further distance from religion—hardening his heart against any future reproof, as judging it to proceed from malice; and so I do what lieth in my power to destroy his soul. Besides all this, I may injure my hearers, and make them accessory to my sin. Lord, thou hast given me my tongue that it might be a trumpet to sound thine honour, and that therewith I might speak good of thy name, and not to speak evil of others. 'Oh let my glory sing of thee, and not be silent; open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise;' but let me prefer an unprofitable silence before sinful speaking. 'Help me to take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue, and to keep my mouth with a bridle, that I may not wander from thy commandments.'

I wish that I may, to the utmost of my power, be serviceable to the souls of my fellow-members. The members of the natural body are not idle or unprofitable, but give and receive nourishment for the increase of the whole body. They do not seek themselves, or their particular interests apart, but the good of the whole, and their own profit in relation thereunto; nay, the eye watcheth for all the members, and helpeth to adorn them, and not itself. The hands work to maintain and cover the whole, remaining themselves naked. Why should it not be thus in my Saviour's mystical body? My God hath given me and others graces and gifts for that purpose, and commanded me, 'Occupy till I come.' And should I suffer them to rust, for want of use, I should be found at last but an unprofitable servant. The several creatures, whether superior or inferior, do all instruct me by their patterns in this lesson of improving my talents, and forbid me to bury them in the grave of idleness. If I look up to the highest heavens, I may see, with an eye of faith, those sons of God, angels, his diligent servants, and putting forth those abilities which they have received, both for the glory of their Creator, and the good of their fellow-creatures. Though they are the eldest house, and, compared with us, the firstborn of the creation, yet they do not, as the eldest sons of some men, plead that privilege to patronage and cloak sloth and idleness; but as they have higher and more noble natures, so they are more active and industrious than others, as appears both by bearing their parts in the celestial choir, and in being ministering spirits for the good of them that are heirs of salvation. If I look to the natural heavens,

there, with an eye of sense, I may see the great candle and luminary of the world, not folding up those rays and cherishing virtues which he hath received, but communicating them freely for the warming and refreshing terrestrial bodies, though he gains nothing by it, but is many times requited with the darkening his glory by earthly vapours. If I look lower, I may observe the earth even wasting and wearing out herself to nourish and enrich others. She hath received a power of fructifying, and giving sap to that which groweth upon her; and lo, like a tender nurse, how liberally doth she give that milk to all that hang on her breasts, though it tend to her own weakening! The various inanimate and irrational creatures that are upon the earth, are serviceable one to another in their places, and are in continual and regular motion to those ends for which they were designed. The most venomous creatures are useful, not only to their fellows of the same rank, but to man, their master. Nay, if I descend lower, and look into hell, I may believe the devils not to be idle and unprofitable to each other, but to conspire together in one, and to be at all times busy and stirring for the propagating of their poison; they go to and fro in the earth, seeking how they may dishonour the name of the glorious God, and destroy immortal souls. O my soul, what sayest thou to these patterns, to these precedents? Shall irrational creatures advantage others, and wilt thou monopolise all to thyself? Dost thou not see how they are all in their stations profitable to man, even to the worst of men? The fish and fowls, and some beasts feed him; the sheep, and worms, and beaver clothe him; the horse and mule carry him; and wilt thou be worse than the horse and mule, which have no understanding? Shall inanimate creatures be helpful to others, and wilt thou live only to thyself? The fire consumes itself to warm others; the candle destroyeth itself to enlighten others; salt wasteth itself to season others; the fountain sendeth forth its streams to refresh others; the sun, moon, and stars exercise those powers with which they are endowed, to direct and enliven others; and shall these creatures, which have neither reason nor sense, rise up in judgment to condemn thee? Do the best and highest of the creation count it no disparagement, but an honour and preferment, to serve the spouse of Christ, and wilt thou shrink back, and not wait on her in thy place? Surely thou art dull indeed, if so many masters cannot teach thee this lesson. Thou art blind to purpose, if thou dost not see thy duty, when it is printed in so large a letter, in so many volumes. Thou canst not open thine eyes, but thou beholdest this precept, and that in the

likeliest way of learning it, examples. Look upwards, the heavens are thy tutors: they are unwearied in their motion for the good of the universe; look downwards, and the devils will teach thee not to jar with thy fellows, but to unite with them, and endeavour their comfort; look inwards, and the parts of the body may be thy masters: they conjoin for the good of each other. The eye seeth, the ear heareth, the mouth eateth, the stomach digesteth, the hands work, the feet walk, for the welfare of the whole. Look outwards, and the earth may be thy monitor—that is fruitful, not for its own, but others' benefit; and art thou not ashamed to be barren? Lord, it is thy will, that as I have received the gift, even so I should minister to others, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God, 1 Pet. iv. 10. Keep thy servant from ingrossing those spiritual riches to himself, which thou hast given him for the relief of thy poor. Oh, let me never eat my morsels alone, but, according to my estate, clothe thy naked ones, and feed the hungry with good things. When I was blind, thou didst send an Ananias to me, saying, Brother, the Lord Jesus, that great physician, hath sent me unto thee, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost; and immediately the scales fell from mine eyes, and I saw the things that concerned my peace: and shall not I pity others' ignorance, and with meekness instruct them in the way of life? How dull was I of understanding! how slow to conceive and believe spiritual things! yet thou didst bear with me patiently, and didst give me precept upon precept, and line upon line. Why should not I bear with my fellows, since thou didst bear with one infinitely thine inferior? Thou hast enlivened me when I was dead; enlightened me when I sat in darkness, and saw no light; supported me in my weaknesses, and supplied me in all my wants and necessities. Oh strengthen me, that since I am acquainted with the sweetness of thy love, and the greatness of thy power, I may communicate my experiences, and improve my gifts for the counselling, quickening, and comforting of others.

I wish that my God would so strengthen my back, that I may bear with patience the burdens of my brethren. I know unkindnesses will happen between the nearest relations, and between the dearest friends. Whilst there is flesh in us, there will be failings and fallings out among us; till we come to that place where there is perfect purity, there can be no hope of perfect peace. But how contrary am I to my God, if I do not forbear and forgive them that offend me! Am I better than God? Is unkindness to me, in any measure, so heinous as unkindness to God? Their engagements to

me are nothing comparable to their engagements to God; and therefore the least wrong to God is infinitely greater and more heinous than the greatest that can be done to me. Yet my God winketh at the weaknesses, and passeth by the peevishness, of his people. He seeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor transgression in Israel; though they offer daily affronts and disrespects to him, and that after their sorrow for former miscarriages, and promises of amendment, yet he doth not destroy, but is patient towards them; and shall not I be merciful, as my heavenly Father is merciful? Besides, I have offended God much more than my brother can offend me. I need not say, according to the worldling's vain pleas and pretences, The injury is great, therefore I cannot pass it by. My offences against my God are of a higher nature, and a more bloody colour, yet I hope he forgiveth me. Or, This is not the first time; he hath often abused me thus. How often have I sinned against my God! My sins are more than the hairs of my head, they are more than can be numbered, yet he forgiveth me freely and frequently; he multiplieth pardons, as I multiply transgressions. Or, But this is expressly contrary to his duty. And is not my disobedience against God contrary to that which I ought to do? is it not expressly against his dominion over me, and that allegiance which I owe to him? Or, I am his superior. Surely God is mine much more; oh the infinite distance that is between the boundless Majesty of heaven, and a poor slimy worm! If the whole creation be nothing to him, what, then, am I to him? Or, But I will have nothing to do with him; I value not his favour; I live by him, not upon him. Doth thy God live upon thee? hath he any need of thee? is he any debtor to thee? wouldst thou be glad he should, upon this reason, say he will have nothing to do with thee, to protect, or preserve, or pardon, or save thee, because he can live without thee? When for all thy iniquities and offences against him, and his sovereignty over thee, and independence on thee, he beareth with thee, and forbeareth thee, oughtest thou not to forbear and forgive others? Again, thou mayest put this question to thyself, Have not I wronged others? Doth not the righteous God now pay me in my own coin? May I not say, as Adonibezek, 'As I have done to others, so God hath requited me?' Nay, possibly, others offend me ignorantly, unawares, or through some violent temptation; but I have offended others knowingly, wilfully, and upon weaker inducements. Oh what cause have I to forgive, who am so prone to offend! Lord, teach me to obey thy precept, in forbearing my brethren that offend me, and so to imitate that blessed

pattern of thy Majesty, who art pleased daily to requite evil with good, that I may be able comfortably to pray, 'Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me.'

I wish that I may, according to my poor ability, be helpful to the weak and tender members of Christ, by administering cordials suitable to their conditions. My duty is, not only to counsel the doubtful, but also to comfort the sorrowful. If I saw a body fainting and drooping, I were bound to afford it what assistance I could, and not to hide mine eyes from mine own flesh; doth not my neighbour's soul, as far more precious, call for more pity, and command my help to my power? If one sheep be sick, many others will flock about him, and in a hot day, after their manner, refresh him, by keeping the scorching sun from him. The sheep of Christ should have more sense of others' misery, and more knowledge of the means relating to their recovery; and shall they be less diligent for others' health? To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewn; if I deny this, I forsake the fear of the Almighty. How tender was my Redeemer of broken bones and sorrowful saints! When he arose from the dead, he appeared first to mournful Mary, and then takes special care that penitent Peter have speedy notice of that blessed news; 'Go, tell my disciples and Peter that I am risen.' They that have smarted with inward wounds themselves, have the more reason to compassionate others in their sorrows. Lord, the time hath been that thou didst cast me into the deep, into the midst of the seas; thy floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; I roared by reason of the anguish of my spirit, under the sense of thy wrath, and the curse of thy law. The weight of my sins lay heavy upon my conscience, and I was even sinking under them into the bottomless pit. The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell gat hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. I knew not which way to turn, nor whither to go for any ease or relief. If I said, My friends should help me, or my possessions abate my grief, I soon found them all miserable comforters, and physicians of no value. If I said, My bed should comfort me, and my couch ease my complaint, then thou didst scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions. All the creatures were unable to afford me any succour; when I lay thus half dead, they all, as the priest and Levite, passed by on the other side; they had neither pity enough for such dreadful wounds, nor power enough to work their cure. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul out of the belly of hell, cried I unto thee, and thou didst hear my voice;

for thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Thou wast the good Samaritan that hadst compassion on me, that didst bind up my wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and undertake my cure. Thou didst send a Barnabas, a son of consolation, to me, to proclaim liberty to me, a poor captive, and the opening of the prison to me that was bound. How beautiful were his feet that brought the glad tidings of peace to my poor soul ! Oh that I might be able to support the weak, and comfort the feeble-minded, with the same comforts wherewith I myself have been comforted of God !

I wish that I may be both faithful and wise to recover a fallen brother out of his sin and error. Jonathan, a true friend to David, promised to tell him if there were any danger, and accordingly warned him, whereby he saved his life. I profess myself a lover of my Christian companions, but I am false in my profession if I suffer sin to lie upon them ; yet I confess it is a difficult work to perform this duty in a right manner. The best plaster may be ineffectual if it be not fitly applied. I can seldom, with Moses, seek to unite quarrelling Christians, but one of them, with the Hebrew, is ready to quarrel with me, and say, ‘ Who made thee a ruler or a judge over us ? ’ Men are seldom more touchy than when their sores are searched ; and therefore he that would not have their wounds to bring them into a fever or fury, must handle them with much wariness. I desire that wisdom, courage, and love may be the ingredients of which all my medicines may be compounded ;—wisdom, that I may observe the quality and temper of the offender, the nature of his offence, and the fittest season and manner of administering the reproof ; the quality of the person, if he be my superior, that I may do it with reverence, rather exhorting and beseeching, than plainly rebuking ; the temper of the offender, if he be of a fierce nature, that I may so manage my work with meekness, as, when I am endeavouring to heal his distemper, I may not increase it ; the nature of the offence, if the sin be small, that I may not make it great by giving stronger medicines than the disease requires ; the season of reproving, that I may not give open rebuke for private offences, but observe my Saviour’s rule, ‘ If thy brother offend thee, tell him his fault between him and thee.’ The presence of many may make him take up an unjust defence, who in private would have taken upon him a just shame. The open air makes sores to rankle ; the more public rebukes are for magistrates and courts of justice to give. Possibly it may be my suspicion more than any real fault, as in the case of the blessed

Virgin and Joseph, and then what wrong should I do him to accuse innocency before a multitude ! The manner of delivering it, that I may give him his due praise, as well as his deserved reproof. This will somewhat allay his passion, and make my reproof the more prevalent. The iron, when heated red hot in the fire, is bent and beaten afterwards, without breaking, which way the smith pleaseth. When I have heated him hot with the fire of commendation, I may then beat upon him with reproof in greater hopes of success. I would desire courage also, that I may deal faithfully, and not skin over a wound that hath dead flesh at the bottom. Should I dally, I destroy the patient. If the offender be so bold as to dare God, why should I be so bashful as to fear him ? Love, that he may discern my affection to his soul in my detestation of his sin. If he suspect me to bear ill-will in my heart, he will throw my potion in my face : what man will take physic from an enemy ? Lord, shouldst thou suffer me to go on in sin, and not call me back, though by a severe admonition, it were a sign thou didst hate me. Thou didst never strike Ephraim worse than when thou didst forbear to strike at all, but saidst, ‘ Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone.’ Should I not seek to pluck my brother out of the fire of sin into which he is fallen, but suffer him to lie there, I hate him, and am in thine esteem a murderer. Oh, deliver me from such blood-guiltiness, thou God of my salvation ! Let thy good Spirit so strengthen and direct me whenever thou callest me to this duty, that I may do it with zeal to thine honour, not daring to jest with such an edged tool as sin is, and with love and wisdom, that if by any means I may bring back a wandering sheep to thy fold.

I wish that I may receive as well as do good by all my converses with those that are good. Christians are trees of righteousness, planted in God’s vineyard, and it is my own fault if I gather not some good fruit from them. My God tells me, ‘ The lips of the righteous feed many.’ If, then, I rise hungry from the table, it is a sign I am sullen, and will not eat. My Father delights to see his children distributing their spiritual food (as the disciples the loaves and fish to the multitude) amongst their brethren, till they all are filled. He hath acquainted me that it is an argument of wisdom to receive, and folly to refuse counsel : ‘ Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser ; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning,’ Prov. ix. 9. The holy apostle, though high in the school of Christ, and in the uppermost form, yet hoped to learn somewhat from those that were far meaner scholars. He

writes to the Romans that he hopes to be filled with their company. They that are dwarfs in religion may do service to the tallest, if they be willing to accept it. A rush candle may give me some light, if I do not wilfully shut mine eyes; a brazen bell may call me to prayer as well as one of silver, if I do not stop mine ears. The smallest and meanest creatures were serviceable to the great God against the Egyptians; and shall my proud heart refuse the help of mean Christians against the enemies of my salvation? Did a damsel possessed with a devil bring her master much temporal gain, and may not a poor servant, filled with the Holy Spirit, bring me much spiritual gain? What, or who am I, that none must teach me but those that are eminent in grace and gifts? I am sure I have nothing that good is, but what I have received, and this pride of my heart is too great an evidence that I am but poor in holiness. Those branches that are fullest laden bend most downward. Those trees that abound in clusters of fruit, do not disclaim to receive sap from the mean earth which every beast trampleth on. It is no wonder if a soul decline in strength, that refuseth its food because it is not brought by the steward, but by some inferior person of the family. If Satan can keep me in this proud humour, he doth not doubt but to keep me in a starving condition, and to hinder the efficacy of all means for my growth in grace. When this dropsy once seizeth upon my vitals, I may expect a consumption of my whole body. Lord, it were my duty to hear thy voice, though it were through the mouth of a Balaam; thou hast sometimes conveyed the water of life through these pipes of lead, and sent considerable presents to thy chosen by contemptible messengers. Oh, suffer me not to be wise in mine own eyes, and thereby to turn away mine ears from the words of them that are indued with spiritual wisdom; but cause me to hear counsel, and receive instruction, that I may be wise for my latter end.

I wish that I may be so much my own friend, as to esteem a bitter admonition better than the sweetest flattery, and never quarrel at any for waking me out of my spiritual lethargy. The world indeed is full of them that rage at such as would prevent their ruin, choosing rather to have their wounds fester, though they kill them, than be searched thoroughly to recover them. Their words to their neighbours are like the Jews' to the prophets, 'Prophecy not unto us right things, prophecy unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits,' Isa. xxx. 10. And their works are like theirs too; if a Stephen deal but faithfully with them, and tell them of their faults, they are presently cut to the heart, and gnash at him with their teeth; their bones are so out

of order, that the smallest disturbance makes them fret and fume. Like owls, if any offer to lay hold on them, they soon make him feel their claws; rebuke a scorner and he will hate thee. But I have not so learned Christ. Though toads are no sooner touched but they swell, and are ready to spit out their poison in the face of him that handleth them, yet sheep will be felt and shorn, and suffer their sores to be dressed with patience. Though fools hate him that reproveth in the gate; yet, 'rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee,' saith God, Prov. ix. 8. Oh that I might never be so void of love to my fallen brother, as not to give him a serious reproof, nor so void of love to myself, as not to receive a serious reproof! The nipping frosts, though not so pleasant, are as profitable as the summer sunshine. I deceive myself if I judge no liquor wholesome but what is toothsome. There is no probable way of curing some diseases, but by blisters, and cupping-glasses, and painful medicines. Is it not better for me to accept an admonition and amend, than to walk on in a wicked way to my destruction? Will it not be much easier for me to bear a rebuke given in love, and with meekness, from my fellow-creature, than to provoke the jealous God, with eyes full of fury, to take me by the throat, and ask me what I am doing; how I dare thus slight his laws, and contradict his will? Oh, how can my heart endure, or my hands be strong, in the day that he shall deal with me! Well might my God say, 'He that hateth reproof is brutish.' Lord, let me never be so much a beast, as to lie snoring in a nasty kennel of filth, and when any come to wake me, fly in their faces; but let me prefer a sharp admonition, before the smoothest deceits. When any praise me for the good in me, cause me to suspect myself; when any reprove me for the evil in me, let me accept it with thanks. Make me able to say, with that sweet singer of Israel, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil, it shall not break my head.'

I wish that I may by no means repine, but always rejoice at the gifts and graces of others. If the other members of the body thrive, the heart doth not grieve, but is glad at it. It is ordinary for younger brothers to boast and glory in the large estate and great possessions which their elder brothers have left them by their fathers. Why should not my soul be joyful at the great share of spiritual riches which the only wise God hath given some of my brethren? If a man love sweet smells, the greater degree of them he observeth in any place, the more he is refreshed with them. He that delights in pictures, if he see one in a room, exactly and exquisitely drawn above all the rest, that shall have more of his eye and his heart. Is

not grace compared to sweet ointments, and shall not I be comforted the more for the greatness of its savour? Is not the image of my God amiable in mine eye, and ought I not to delight most in that copy which is nearest the original? Surely, if I envy any their spiritual excellencies, I shew myself too like a child of the devil. There is hardly any worm that gnaweth that unclean spirit more painfully than the grace which God gives his children; their sins are his utmost joy, their graces are his extreme grief. Would I be found in Satan's livery at the last? Oh that I might be so far from murmuring at that double portion of the Spirit which my God bestoweth upon some of his people, that I might bless God heartily for it, and beg of God to add to it a hundredfold, how great soever it is! The pretty birds sing the more merrily, the higher the sun mounteth in the heavens. I have cause to be the more cheerful, the nearer any ascend to heaven, and the higher they mount in holiness. My love to my God, to my brother, nay, to myself, all command me to it. My love to my God; he that loves his sovereign will rejoice that he hath any subjects eminent above others for duty and loyalty. They that have much spiritual strength will do my God much spiritual service. The more grace they have, the more glory they bring to God. It is an honour to the Father of spirits when his children keep open house, according to their estates, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry soul, and relieving liberally such as are in want; I am no Christian if I be not tender of my God's honour, and joyful when that is exalted in the world. Besides, love to my brother should quicken me to this duty. If I love him as myself, I shall both grieve at his soul-losses, and rejoice at his spiritual gains. Love delighteth in the welfare of the party loved; the hotter the beams of grace are in the party beloved, the more they rejoice the heart of the lover. Why should any man's eye be evil towards his brother, because God's is good to him? Have others the less because some have so much? Or is it not my own fault, that I am not as holy and gracious as he? God is a fountain of grace, always running over, but he derives it to us according to our capacities; if I go to the well of salvation, and receive but little of the water of life, I may know the cause—my vessel was no bigger. Nay, love to myself may make me glad at others' gifts and graces. The greater the saint's estate is, the more he will relieve others; as the earth, though it sucketh in so much water as will give herself a competent refreshment, conveyeth many springs through her veins for the cherishing and refreshment of others; so the saints do not only advantage their own, but also others' souls.

Lord, though in hell there be little else but murmuring and repining at the good of thy chosen, yet in heaven there is no emptiness in themselves, no envying at others; every saint there hath his joy doubled for another's joy, and is glorified in another's glory. Suffer not thy servant to make his heart a little hell, by filling it with grief at the good of thy chosen, but oh make it thy lesser heaven; be thou pleased to dwell in it, and then I shall begin the work of eternity in time, magnify and bless thee for thy love to them, and praise and bless them for their likeness to thee.

Finally, I wish that I may so carry myself in all my converses with the children of God here, that I may meet them in the Father's house, and sit down with them at the supper of the Lamb. Lord, if communion with thy saints be so pleasant and delightful on earth, how pleasant and delightful will it be in heaven! Here my communion with them is imperfect; my flesh will not suffer me to receive the good I might from them, nor their flesh allow them to do the good they might to me. But there shall be no evil, no occasion of evil, no appearance of evil; no sin shall clog the chariots of our souls, no flesh shall fetter us from running to embrace and delight in each other; but all shall be free to rejoice and refresh one another. Every saint shall be, as it were, a fountain of communion in the sweetest manner and fullest measure; from every one shall flow rivers of water of life, and every one enlarged to relish and receive. If Jonathan, beholding a little grace in David on earth, loved him as his own soul, how doth he love him in heaven! Here our communion is much lamed by the defects in our bodily organs; we cannot impart our minds without our members, which, being defective, make our communion so. But there we shall be as angels, seeing each other without eyes, hearing each other without ears, and embracing each other without hands. Here our communion is interrupted; our particular calling, our eating, our drinking, our sleeping, our many occasions, call us from it. But there is no calling but our general calling of worshipping and enjoying our God; no feeding but on the tree of life, that groweth in the midst of paradise; no drinking, but of the rivers of God's own pleasures; and no night, no sleeping, but that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Oh, what darkness, what night can be there, where all the righteous shall shine infinitely brighter than the sun in his noonday lustre? Here our communion is hindered by the differences that frequently arise; like children of the same father, we quarrel and wrangle; but they will all be like-minded, having the same love, being of one

accord, and one judgment. There indeed Jerusalem is a city compact together, and at unity within itself. There Paul's desire is granted—that they all speak the same thing; they are one in affection, one in opinion, and one in expression. There Christ's prayer is granted—Father, that they may be one as we are one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us. If it be so good and pleasant a thing for brethren here to dwell together in unity, and it be as a precious ointment, and as the dew which descended upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for ever; how good and pleasant will it be for those to dwell together in perfect unity there, where the consolation of Christ is perfect, the fellowship of the Spirit entire, the comfort of love complete! No crying, no complaining, no angry word, no frowning look, no suspicious thought; but as old Gryneus said, There Zuinglius and Luther are well agreed. Our communion here is but with a few, we are acquainted but with few; and our communion is not so large as our acquaintance, we have seen but few, we have heard but of few, and we have discoursed with fewer. There are but few in the counties, in the kingdom, where we live, and many of them are wholly unknown to us. But there is a glorious company of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, a noble army of martyrs, a numberless number of saints, of all countries, callings, conditions, relations; a thousand thousand are before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister to him. If Peter, when he saw but two of the children of God in glory with Christ on earth, cried out, 'Master, it is good to be here;' how good will it be to be there, where there shall be 'a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and crying with a loud voice, Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever,' Rev. vii. 9, 10. Oh what a blessed time, or rather eternity, will that be, when I shall fully understand what the communion of saints meaneth! If Solomon could say of militant saints, 'As ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel;' how much better might he speak it of saints triumphant? What is the sweetness and joy of that society, where every soul is a bed of spices, an orchard of pomegranates, a cabinet of perfumes, for their mutual delight and refreshment! If David was so taken with the beauty of the church in this world, notwithstanding her blackness, by reason of corruption and affliction, that he saith, 'If I

forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning ; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem before my chief joy.' How much is he taken with the spouse of Christ there, where it is granted unto her to be arrayed in fine linen, pure and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, not only imputed, but also inherent ; to be clothed with the embroidered graces of the Holy Spirit, perfect knowledge, perfect love, perfect joy, and all the beauties of holiness, without the least spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ! There, indeed, he prefers Jerusalem before his chief joy, whilst he beholds her all fair, completely conformed to Christ, with such a peculiar resemblance of his glory, as if the name of Christ was written on her forehead, and her spiritual affinity and kindred manifested thereby. Surely it is a lovely communion, when saints sit down together at the Lord's table in this world, and partake of his last supper ; when they see, and hear, and taste the true pledges of their Father's infinite grace, and read their Redeemer's boundless love written by himself in his own blood. Their hearts have many a time been so ravished therewith, that they have wished the ordinance might have lasted longer, and that Christ would have lain so all night between their breasts. But oh, how infinitely short is this communion of that which they shall have in glory, when they shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb ; when they shall eat of the hidden manna, and drink of the new wine in their Father's kingdom ! Then, then, indeed, every one may say, ' I sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste.' Without question, that communion which Adam had with Eve, that short time which they continued in innocence, was exceeding sweet. She was to him as a crown of glory, a meet help, and the delight of his eyes. What a fair bride was she, whom God himself dressed and decked with all the ornaments of grace ! What joy must there needs be at that wedding which was celebrated in paradise, covered with the curious tapestry of those pleasant trees, which the very hand of the Most High had planted, and delighted with the ravishing notes of those pretty choristers, which infinite wisdom had taught to sing at the marriage feast, where there was a perfect likeness and love between the married persons, where there was not the least evil, or show of evil, to allay their joy, and especially where the God of all consolation was fully and favourably present, as Master of the feast ! Adam could not but esteem her his loving hind and pleasant roe, his sweet yoke-fellow and pleasant play-fellow, the partner and sweetener of all his comforts ; he could not

but be satisfied with her breasts, and ravished with her love. But even this is far inferior to the communion of the saints above. There, in heaven, are more glorious bands and sweeter knots of loving fellowship than that of marriage; the attire of the bride is far richer, the beauty of the bride far greater; the wedding-chamber is the heavenly paradise, the melody made there will be by celestial courtiers, angels themselves; and there the fountain whence all joy floweth will run more freely, and he will turn that water which Adam had below into the richest wine. Lord, I acknowledge to thy glory, that I have sometimes been refreshed with the company of thy chosen in this world—I have seen thee in them, and heard thee by them; yet how little good have I got by them, in comparison of what I might and ought! Pardon all my weaknesses, and do thou so supply my spiritual wants, that I may both love more, and improve better, the society of thy saints here, that so when thou callest me from this imperfect communion with some few, I may be carried to Abraham's bosom, and enjoy perfect fellowship with those thousands that are before thee, where thou art visible in all, every one being thy temple, and every heart being the altar upon which the fire of thy love is ever burning. Oh let me praise thee in that great congregation, and my glory sing of thee before much people; for there shall those that mourned for Zion be filled with comfort, and rejoice for ever with Jerusalem; they shall be borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees; they shall suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation; they shall milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

How a Christian should exercise himself to godliness in solitariness. As also a good wish about that particular.

Thirdly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness in solitude. A gracious person is not only conscientious in company, but also when he is alone; his whole life is nothing else but a walking with his God. 'When I awake I am still with thee,' saith David, Ps. cxxxix. 18. He no sooner opened the eyes of his body in the morning, but he was lifting up the eyes of his mind to heaven; when he was alone in his bed, he was in company with his God. As God was still with him, so he was still with God: 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee,' Ps. lxxiii. True sanctity is visible in secrecy to him that is omniscient. The saint is many times most

busy when he hath nothing to do, and may say more truly than Scipio the African, *Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus*, I am never less alone than when alone. The pulse of the body beats as well in solitariness as in company, and so doth the pulse of the gracious soul towards his God and Saviour. It is said of Domitian, that he did one hour in a day sequester himself from all persons to no purpose, for it was to catch flies, which was the original of that answer to one that asked,¹ Whether anybody were with the emperor? *Ne musca quidem*, No, not so much as a fly. A believer hath business of great weight, when he withdraweth from the press of the world—it is that he might draw nearer to the Lord. Isaac goeth into the fields to meditate of God; Christ goeth into the mountain apart to pray to God; Daniel to the river's side, Peter to the house-top, the church to the secret place of the stairs, and all to enjoy communion with their God, Gen. xxvi.; Mark i. 35; Cant. ii. 4; Dan. viii. 2, and x. 4; Acts x.

A saint, therefore, sequestereth himself from the noise and clamour of company, and worldly businesses, that he might have the more free and intimate converse with his Redeemer. A forced banishment from men, to dwell among beasts, hath been bewailed as a great misery; but a free retirement from creatures, to enjoy more of the blessed God, is a great felicity. Woodruff, an herb of an extraordinary pleasant smell, delighteth in dark and shadowy places; so the Christian, who in company refresheth others with the fragrancy of his graces, loveth sometimes to be obscure and in secret.

Many of the heathen were so affected with the vanity and vexation of the world, that they willingly left their pleasures and preferences in courts, to live privately in the country. Sylla Felix laid aside his dictatorship to lead a retired life. Dioclesian's two and twenty years' reign could not make him out of love with a solitary life, but he voluntarily left the empire, and could not be prevailed to reassume it, though he was threatened to it. Demosthenes would shave his beard half off, and all his hair from his head, to necessitate his stay within-doors, and his abode amongst his books. Thales left the affairs of state, that he might have time for contemplation. Cato, in his old age, withdrew from Rome, to live, as he used to say, out of the crowd of the world; and the Romans were so much convinced of his prudence herein, that as they passed by his house to which he retired, they would ordinarily cry out, *Iste solus scit vivere*, This man alone knoweth how to live. Old Similis having lived long in the wars, and afterwards for seven years devoting him-

¹ Suetonius.

self to solitariness, when he died left this epitaph behind: Here lieth old Similis, yet one that lived but seven years. Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, gave over his kingdom to live a solitary life. Others, out of a deep melancholy, have avoided all society, and delighted only, like the shriek-owl and bittern, in desolate places and monuments of the dead, Zeph. ii. 14. Socrates, in his Ecclesiastical History, lib. iv. cap. 18, speaks of some, so strangely averse to all correspondence with men, that they have immured themselves in cells and silence, for sixty and ninety years together, even as long as they lived.

But, reader, I would not advise thee to such continued retirement, nor to any at all, upon such low, mean grounds. Those voluntary sequestrations of deluded votaries amongst the papists from human society, are, I daresay, as unacceptable to God, as uncomfortable to themselves. Such solitary persons bring little comfort to their own souls, little honour to God, and do no good at all to others. By how much as doing God great service, is better than doing him little, as doing good to many, is better than doing good only to myself, so much is company before solitariness. But the most public Christians have their times for privacy. It is no mean misery to be either always alone, or never alone. He that is always crowded with company, can neither enjoy himself nor his God as he ought.

SECTION I.

I shall first lay down some motives, and then shew wherein we should exercise ourselves to godliness when we are alone.

1. To quicken thee to exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, consider the benefit of solitude; well improved solitude is a good opportunity for godliness. Seneca was wont to say, that he seldom went into company, that he came not home worse than he went out. Society, as it hath much gain, so much perplexity. Solitude is a release to the soul that was imprisoned in company. To be much in company tires and wearies us; we are prone to count it a bondage, and the persons we associate with our fetters. Retiring seasonably from them, sets us at liberty, and giveth us freedom to mount up to heaven at our pleasure. Scipio would tell his friends, I have never better company than when I have no company, for then can I freely entertain my own thoughts, and converse with all the learned that have been in former ages. Jerome speaks better, *Sapiens nunquam solus esse potest; habet enim secum omnes qui sunt et qui fuerunt boni . . . et si hominum sit inopia, loquitur cum*

Deo; A wise man can never be alone, for he hath ever with him all the good men that are, or have been; and if he find any want of men, he can converse with God. It was a custom among the Indians, when their king went to bed, to pray with piping acclamations, that he might have happy dreams, and withal, consult well for the good of his subjects; as if the silent, secret night had been a friend to wisdom. One of the best kings that ever the world had, tells us: 'My reins instruct me in the night season,' Ps. xvi. 7. The sensual worldling is a stranger to such secrecy. It hath in some respects an advantage of society; it hath not those clamours nor distractions with it, which hinder us in our heavenly trade. As it hath fewer allurements to good, so it hath fewer impediments of good, and fewer suggestions to evil; and truly the grand argument to good, which is *instar omnium*, is not wanting to it. It hath the presence of God. Every godly man may say in a sense, as Christ did when his disciples were to leave him alone, 'I am not alone, because the Father is with me,' John xvi. 32. It is reported of Numa, that after the death of his wife Tatia, he left the city, and gave himself wholly to walk in fields and woods consecrated to the gods, and thence was said to enjoy the goddess Egeria, and that she made him her husband.—*Plut. in Vit. Num.* Though such stories are fabulous, yet it is true of the Christian, that he enjoyeth much of his God when he is out of the world's crowd. Lovers give and return the sweetest kisses and embraces, when they are together in secret. Isaac and Rebekah thought themselves in secret, when they sported together. David had his sweetmeats and heavenly junkets in the night, when the eyes of others were closed, and saw not the charger which was sent from above for his spiritual refreshment. His solitary meditations brought him more solace and comfort than the whole creation could afford him: 'When I meditate on thee in my bed, and think of thee in the night watches, my soul is filled with marrow and fatness,' Ps. lxxiii. 6. Communion with God in secret, is a heaven upon earth. What food can compare with the hidden manna? Some persons have excellent banquets in their closets. That bread which the saints eat in secret, how pleasant is it! Ah, what stranger can imagine the joy, the melody, which even the secret tears of the saints cause. Believers find rich mines of silver and gold in solitary places; they fetch up precious jewels out of secret holes, out of the bottom of the ocean, where are no inhabitants. Naturalists observe that those fish are sweetest which lie hid. Saints have often sweet joy and refreshment in secret; they have meat to eat which the

world knoweth not of. The fig-tree, olive, and vine, would not leave their sweetness, fatness, and cheerfulness, to be kings over other trees, Judges ix. 11-13. They that know what it is to enjoy God in secret, would not leave it or lose it to be kings or commanders over the whole world.

One place where the Israelites pitched in their passage to Canaan, was called Jothatha, from *Jatab* and *Batha*, a pleasant wilderness, or delectable desert. A Christian hath many such stations in his travels to the heavenly Canaan. When he is in a wilderness alone, out of the noise of Pharaoh's court, and free from the clamours and complainings of God's Israel, by reason of Egyptian taskmasters, he hath the pillar, the extraordinary presence of his God, which abundantly satisfieth and rejoiceth his soul. The highest princes sometimes give their largest gifts to their favourites in private, to prevent that envy which public notice or knowledge of them might occasion. Some saints give their largest alms in secret, that their left hand scarce knoweth what their right hand doth. The great and holy God sendeth many a rich present, giveth many a large alms to his indigent friends, when there is none by to witness his bounty and charity. In the dead time of the night, when deep sleep seizeth on men, the earth receiveth many pleasant, refreshing showers. The children of God have many costly collations, and much curious music, when no eye but their own seeth or tasteth the former, and no ear save theirs heareth the latter. The prophet Hosea represents God thus, speaking of his people: 'Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her,' Hosea ii. 14. God's method is marvellous; he brings his church into a wilderness, and then turns it into a Canaan, causing it to flow with milk and honey. By wilderness some understand a sorrowful, and others a solitary, condition; but then God appears to her, the God of all consolation, for he speaks comfortably to her. He that chid her when she was in the crowd of the world, saying as they said, and doing as they did, when he hath her alone, reflecting upon her sins, and recollecting herself, will speak friendly and comfortably to her. In the Hebrew it is, I will speak to her heart; and surely his powerful, satiable speech will banish all her heaviness.

This invisible trade brings in visible profit and comfort. Secret correspondence with allies is most difficult, but exceeding gainful and delightful. Some curious mysteries are like mines sprung underground, the less they are known, the more efficacious and effectual they are. The open air or breath of men would soil the

beauty and lustre of exact pictures. Christ calls his spouse out of the world's view and light, when he intends her the fullest seals of his love: 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; there will I give thee my loves,' Cant. vii. 11, 12.

Mark, there in the fields, where no eye beholdeth the sweet meeting of our lips, the close embraces of our arms, the intimate conjunction of our hearts—there I will give thee my loves. Kings do not unbosom and open their hearts before a multitude. The favourite is acquainted with the richest secrets of state in private. 'Oh that I were (saith Job) as in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was with my tabernacle,' Job xxix. 4.¹ As if he had said, according to some, Oh that I were as in my former days, when God was secretly in my family, and gave me familiar visits, which the world took no notice of; when I had many reviving soliloquies about God, and refreshing colloquies with him. The Egyptian laws placed the image of Silence in all those temples where the image of Serapis, their god, stood, as if they might expect most of her favour when they approached her privately, with as little noise as might be. Addresses to the true God in secret have been accompanied with great success.

2. Consider, if thou dost not exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, thou wilt be in great danger of running into sin, and contracting guilt on thy soul. The benefit of solitude rightly improved, may afford us comfort, but the danger of it commandeth our caution. A man in solitariness may be secure, because he seeth no visible enemies, but he is not therefore safe. We are no sooner alone, but armies of evil thoughts present themselves to us, and they will by force quarter with us, if the lodging-rooms of our hearts be not taken up beforehand.² When the virgin is alone, then she is in most danger of being ravished. In our solitude we should not be without fear of spiritual rapes. Our danger will appear if we consider three particulars.

(1.) Our minds are restless, and will be employed either upon what is good, or upon what is evil. The mind of man is as a mill-wheel, continually turning about, and drenching in the waters. Our hearts are as a stirring child, that cannot endure to sit still. No virgin hath so many suitors for her love, as our minds for

¹ Quando secreta Deus erat in tabernaculo.—*Vulgate.* ὅτε ὁ Θεὸς ἐπισκοπήν ἐποιεῖτο τοῦ οἴκου μου.—*Sept.*

² Sen., Epist. 10.

their thoughts. The sun may as soon be stopped from his race, as the heart from its thinking. We are all in this respect like the sea, which cannot rest, ever in motion. Is not he a foolish miller, that turns the water which should grind his corn into the highway, where it doth no good? And is not he a foolish Christian, that employeth those thoughts about needless toys, which should help to provide him spiritual food? As the natural heat will be ever working, if it have not food to digest, it will prey upon the spirits, and destroy itself; so the mind of man will be always busy, if not in thinking of the excellencies of God, or the love of Christ, or the beauty and necessity of holiness, then in speculative wantonness, or contemplative wickedness, in ambitious fancies, or revengeful desires. We are like a boat swimming against tide, there is no standing still. If the oar be left that we go not forward, the tide will carry us strongly backward. If the ground be not sown with good seed, it will of itself bring forth evil weeds.

(2.) Satan is subtle, and will not be wanting to fight us, when he finds us alone, and without any seconds to assist us. The raven, which is called the devil's bird, is observed to haunt deserts and solitary places. When the Spirit of God would speak of a city desolate and without inhabitants, he tells us, 'The raven shall dwell in it,' Isa. xxxiv. 11. When Satan was to enter the list against Christ, and would try his utmost power and policy to overcome him, he takes him to a mountain alone, Mat. iv. 8. The scripture, to shew the valour and strength of Christ, sets out his conquest and victory over the devil on his own dunghill in the wilderness. When Christ's lambs are in the desert alone, they may soon be a prey to this roaring lion. Satan is a cunning suitor, and will be sure to watch the time when the parents are from home, to woo the daughter, and steal away her affections. He that takes his leave of men to withdraw himself, may be confident the devil will come, though more bold than welcome, and sit with him. When we know of the coming of so bad a guest, is it not good policy to forestall him by filling the house beforehand with loving and beloved friends?

(3.) Our own carnal hearts will strive to improve our solitude to draw us to sin. The wife that lieth in the bosom, takes the opportunity of the night, when she is alone with her husband, to draw him to her mind, and to bend him to her will. Though she were afraid or ashamed to mention or motion her evil desires before others, yet in secrecy she hath courage enough to do it, and often with success. Our flesh is nearer to us than our wives—more

intimate with us, more powerful over us ; how frequently doth it draw us to those sins in secret, which it dares not be so bold as to whisper to us in public ! ‘They devise mischief on their beds,’ Ps. xxxvi. 4. When the goodman is from home, and gone a journey, then the whorish woman commits adultery with strangers.

Reader, thou canst no sooner be alone, but thy corrupt heart will send thee many, in wanton and thievish thoughts, to bear thee company. They will come, as Lot's daughters to him, in the dead time of the night, and defile thy soul, and thou shalt, like Lot, not know when they came in, nor when they went away. Thou little thinkest how subtle thy wicked thoughts are—how easily they will wind themselves into and out of thy mind, without giving warning, or being taken notice of. As the serpent crept into paradise secretly, so do sinful thoughts into our hearts. They conspire together against us, as the adversaries of Judah, and do as good as say, ‘They shall neither know, nor see, till we come in the midst of them, and cause the work (of exercising themselves to godliness) to cease,’ Neh. iv. 11. As God's Spirit hath filled his prophets with excellent revelations and visions in the night or day, when they have been alone ; so our flesh filleth us with loathsome, atheistical, blasphemous thoughts, oftentimes when we are by ourselves. Children never dirty their hands and faces, or defile their clothes more, than when they get alone, from parents and servants. When thou art in solitude, thou hast no human friend to watch over thee, and therefore hast the more need to watch narrowly over thyself. No town hath such need of a warder, no peer's gate of a porter to keep out nasty beggars, as thy heart hath of watch and ward to keep out wicked thoughts.

SECTION II.

Thirdly, Consider, the exercising thyself to godliness in solitude will be a probable evidence of thy uprightness. Men are withheld in company from doing evil by the iron curb of fear or shame, and provoked to do good by the golden spurs of praise or profit ; but in solitariness there are not such rubs in the way of lust to hinder our passage, nor such baits in the way of holiness to encourage our progress. The naked lineaments and natural thoughts of the soul are best discerned in secret. The darkest night may afford us light enough to see ourselves by, when outward objects and occasions do not interpose to hinder our sight, or discompose our souls. No man's temper can be discovered by his carriage in a crowd of

affairs, no more than his countenance in a troubled water. When the mind is stated in a due repose, it bewrayeth her truest affections, which, in the midst of business, she either doth not shew or not observe. If many servants and several masters be together, busy and active, we can hardly tell to what masters the particular servants belong; but when the masters be alone, and walk singly, their servants attend on them, and are known. Our affections are the servants of our souls, both rational and sensual; whilst both these masters are employed, as in company it sometimes falls out, and they wait, it is not easy to judge which they serve; in solitude, one takes upon itself the government, and then it is visible what attendants it hath.

As it is said of grief, *Ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet*, He grieves truly, that weeps without a witness; so it may be said of godliness, He is sincere in his godliness, who is godly in secret. The best characters, and truest pictures, which can be drawn of the minds of men, are to be taken from the bent of their thoughts, rather than from their works. Wicked men cannot do the mischief they conceive, for lack of the midwifery of fit instruments and opportunities to bring it forth; good men are unable to act all the good they would, because they want power and ability for execution—as Paul acknowledgeth that he was better at willing than performing; but every man hath liberty to devise and meditate, to study and contrive, what he will. Though a man's hand or actions may be overawed and overruled against his own will, yet his heart and thoughts cannot: 'As he thinks in his heart,' saith the wise man, 'so is he,' Prov. xxiii. 7. Practices may be swayed by outward ends, but the thoughts are always genuine and natural. Violence may cause the former, but love carrieth the latter in its own way. Hence good men have been signalised for saints, from the holiness of their thoughts. They 'thought upon his name,' they 'meditate in his law day and night,' Mal. iii. 16; Ps. i.; and they have even appealed to God with comfort, upon their confidence of their uprightness, from the goodness of their thoughts, 'Try me, O God, and know my thoughts,' as being the purest and most unfeigned issues of the soul, and such as have least danger of infection from foreign aims. It is observable also, that wicked men are set forth by this secret mark: 'They devise mischief, they imagine wickedness; the thoughts and imaginations of his heart are evil; God is not in all his thoughts;' because, as Adam begat a son after his own likeness, so doth the heart of every man beget thoughts according to its own likeness, whether it be spiritual or carnal.

The bowl runs as the bias inclines it; the ship moves as the rudder steereth it; and the mind thinketh according to the predominancy of vice or virtue in it. The more the fire of grace burns clear in the soul, the more of these sparks will ascend towards heaven. The more earthly a soul is, the more his thoughts will tend downward, the more he will mind earthly things, Philip. iii. 17, 18.

Naturalists tell us of the Gnomon, commonly called the mariner's needle, that it always will turn to the north star; though it be closed and shut up in a coffer of wood or gold, yet it loseth not its nature. So the true Christian is always looking to the star of Jacob; whether he be shut up in a prison, or shut himself up in his closet, he is ever longing after Jesus Christ. A true lover delights most to visit his friend alone, when he can enjoy privacy with him.

Our blessed Saviour doth not without cause call the pharisees hypocrites, though they fasted and prayed, and gave much alms, because they performed those duties chiefly, if not only, in company, and to be seen of men. The applause of others was the weight that set their clocks agoing; when that was taken off, as when they were alone, they stood still. Therefore Christ adviseth his apostles to take another course, if they would evidence the truth of their Christianity: 'Enter into thy closet, shut thy door, and pray to thy Father in secret,' Mat. vi. 6. One fervent prayer in secret will speak more for our sincerity than many in public.

When a prince passeth by in the streets, then all, even strangers, will flock about him, and look upon him; but his wife and children think not this enough, but follow him home, and are not satisfied unless they can enjoy him there. A false Christian, and one that is a stranger to God, if he have but a superficial view of him in his courts, is pleased; but the true believer, and one that is nigh to him in Christ, must have retired converses with him in his closet, or he is not contented.

SECTION III.

I come now to shew how a Christian should exercise himself to godliness in solitude.

1. If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness when thou art alone, guard thy heart against vain thoughts; this is the first work to be done, without which all that I have to commend to thee will be in vain. It is to no purpose to expect that a glass should be

filled with costly wine, when it is filled already with puddle water. When the house beforehand was taken up by strangers, there was not room for Christ himself in the inn. If such flies be suffered and allowed in our hearts, they will spoil our best pots of ointment.

Some persons, though poor, when they are solitary, delight in the fancies and imaginations of great preferments, and pleasures, and riches, as if they were real, whereas they are the mere chimeras and fictions of their own brains, and have no existence, but in their thoughts. No wonder our Saviour saith, "*Ἐσωθεν γὰρ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀφροσύνη*," 'Out of the heart of man proceedeth madness,' Mark vii. 21, 22. Such thoughts are distracted thoughts, and suitable to those that are out of their wits, who please themselves in thinking that their filthy holes in Bedlam are stately palaces, that their nasty rags are royal robes, that their iron fetters are chains of gold, and the feathers stuck in their caps are imperial crowns. As the Spanish page, in a high distemper of fancy, imagined himself to be some great emperor, and was maintained in that humour by his lord ; so some foolish men build these castles in the air, and then allow themselves a lodging in them.

Others please themselves in the thoughts of sinful sports, or cheats, or unclean acts, and sit brooding on such cockatrice' eggs with great delight ; it is their meat and drink to roll those sugar-plums under their tongues. Though they cannot act sin outwardly for want of strength of body, or a fit opportunity, yet they act sin inwardly with great love and complacency. As players in a comedy, they act their parts in private, in order to a more exact performance of them in public.

Others entertain themselves with needless and useless thoughts, such as tend neither to the informing the mind, nor reforming the heart or life. Like vagrants, a man meets with these in every place, but can neither tell whence they come, nor whither they go ; they have neither a good cause, nor do they produce any good effect. Such thoughts might be in a David's heart, but they were the object of his hate: Ps. cxix. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts.' The best Christian's heart here, is like Solomon's ships, which brought home, not only gold and silver, but also apes and peacocks ; it hath not only spiritual and heavenly, but also vain and foolish thoughts. But these latter are there as a disease or poison in the body, the object of his grief and abhorrency, not of his love and complacency.

Though we cannot keep vain thoughts from knocking at the door of our hearts, nor from entering in sometimes, yet we may

forbear bidding them welcome, or giving them entertainment: 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within me?' Jer. iv. 14. It is bad to let them sit down with us, though but for an hour, but it is worse to let them lie or lodge with us. It is better to receive the greatest thieves into our houses, than vain thoughts into our hearts. John Huss, seeking to reclaim a very profane wretch, was told by him, that his giving way to wicked, wanton thoughts was the original of all those hideous births of impiety which he was guilty of in his life. Huss answered him, that though he could not keep evil thoughts from courting him, yet he might keep them from marrying him; as, saith he, though I cannot keep the birds from flying over my head, yet I can keep them from building their nests in my hair.

Christian, be careful when thou art out of company, as well as in it, for these guests will visit thee as soon as ever thou art alone; and if thou shouldst not frown upon them, they will turn thy solitude into a crowd, as Jerome found Rome in a wilderness. The heathen Cicero employed his solitude to better purpose than most seeming Christians: I being weary, saith he, of living amongst wicked men, with whom all places in a manner swarm, betake myself to solitariness as much as I can; yet that none may think I trifle away my time idly, to say no more, let my books speak how I employ myself. Yet, alas! when many Christians are retired out of the crowd and throng of worldly men, they suffer worldly things to crowd and throng so abundantly in their hearts,¹ that, as it was said of Ephraim, strangers devour their strength, Hosea vii. 9. Earthly things, though tending to no profit, waste their time and devour their thoughts, which, as Reuben, are the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of strength.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, labour to spiritualise earthly things. I must say this is one of the most excellent and enriching arts in Christianity; though these occasional thoughts resemble lightning, as well in the suddenness of their journey, as the vastness of their way, being able to reach from one end of heaven unto the other, yet such light gains, with quick returns, make a heavy purse.

He that hath learned this mystery is the true chemist; he leaves the dregs and lees of things, and extracts the substance and quint-

¹ Quid prodest solitudo corporis, si non est solitudo cordis.—*Greg.*

essence of them. He hath better than Midas's wish ; he turns all he toucheth into better than gold. Many a great scholar begs with rare notions of the nature of silver, and gold, and pearls, when some merchants who never saw a mine, or furnace, or read a book concerning them, hath his coffers full of them. The Rabbis of the world, were they able, like Solomon, to speak of all plants, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of all beasts, and fish, and fowl, nay, and of all creatures, in a physical and philosophical way, are not comparable to the illiterate countryman who can read his God in them, and improve them for his spiritual advantage.

Luther relates a story of two cardinals riding to the council at Constance,¹ how by the way they heard a shepherd weeping and crying out sadly, upon which they turned aside to know what was the matter, and found the shepherd looking upon an ugly toad. They asked him the ground of his lamentation. He answered, I cannot but weep to consider the goodness of God, that he did not make me such a loathsome creature, and my own unthankfulness, that I should be no more sensible of it. At which one of the cardinals was so affected, that he fell from his horse in a swoon, and coming again afterwards to himself, told his brother: Well said St Augustine, *Indocti rapiunt cælum*, &c. The unlearned take heaven by violence, whilst we, with all our parts and learning, wallow in the mire of the earth and flesh.

Natural beings are as spades, wherewith we may open the mines, and dig out spiritual riches. He that hath a gracious fancy, may, like the bee, suck honey from every flower in the garden of the creation, and climb up by the stairs of the meanest creature to the supreme and infinite Creator. All objects to a wise Christian may be wings to mount him up to heaven. As the old Romans, when they saw the blue stones, thought of Olympus, so the holy person by every work is elevated to admire some excellency in the workman.

There is a threefold aspect which men cast upon the works of God, according to the difference of their eyes, or the degrees of their understandings.

1. Ordinary and vulgar persons, who differ little from brutes, and behold the face of nature as beasts do a picture, only viewing the outside and surface of it rudely and superficially, never considering any art or curiosity in it. As the horse and mule, which have no understanding, they view and drink of the streams, but mind not the purity or clarity of the water, or the fountain whence it floweth ; these look on God's works at best, but as passengers on a

¹ Luth. Declam. Popular de Terti. Preecept., tom. i.

clock, to know the time of the day, but take no notice of the wheels and poises, and their several motions and contrivances.

2. Scholars and philosophers, who go a step higher, and view this picture somewhat exactly, as artists contemplating its curious workmanship, its proper colours, comely features, and rare composure of the whole with admiration. As Nicostratus, that told the countryman who wondered at his wondering at the exact piece of Helena drawn by Zeuxis, If thou hadst my eyes, thou wouldst be affected as I am.

3. Christians and spiritual men, who move above the philosopher and most skilful naturalists in their own sphere ; these look on the face of nature with a spiritual eye, as a lover on the picture of her beloved, delighting more in the resemblance than the table ; contemplating the matchless power, embroidered wisdom, and infinite goodness of their God which appear in his creatures. These are the men that can turn the stones and dirt of the streets, yea, the snakes and serpents of the earth, into bread for their souls ; if they should be denied the Scripture, (which God forbid,) they can fetch spiritual food out of the creature. The heron findeth her food in lakes and rivers, and picks it out with her long bill, where other birds can get none : so saith Hesychius, The Christian by meditation can get food for his soul, where others, that understand not this duty, starve.

Our blessed Saviour teacheth us to see the face of heavenly things in earthly glasses, and to make a ladder of the creatures, whereby we may ascend to heaven in our thoughts.¹ He hath set us a pattern that we should follow his steps. What honey of profit and pleasure doth he teach us to draw from all the flowers and weeds too that grow in the garden of the creation ! He instructeth his disciples by lilies growing, and seed sown in the field ; by trees and vines in the orchard and vineyard ; by pearls, treasures, tares, leaven, mustard-seed, water, bread, nets, fish, salt, oil, lamps, and, as at Cana in Galilee, turns all this water into wine, as well for their imitation as information. A mean scaffold may serve to rear up a goodly building ; and an ordinary creature may afford matter for excellent meditations. God likens himself to many, to shew that there is something of him in all. He compares himself to a builder, to a buckler, to a castle, a captain, to a fortress, to a fountain of living water, to a helper, to health, to a habitation, to light, to life, to a rock, a refuge, a reward ; to a shadow, a shelter, a shield ; to a lion, an eagle, a leo-

¹ Non est ullum animalculum tam exiguum in quo non plus discere possimus quam in omnibus sculptis, pictis, aut fuis simulachris. — *Lavat.*

pard, a bear; to fire, dew, a moth, the sun. And why? but to teach us to read him in his creatures. In heaven the Christian shall know God, and all the creatures in him, but on earth we must learn to know him by them.

God hath given us three books, which we ought to be studying whilst we are living: the book of conscience, the book of Scripture, and the book of the creature; in the book of conscience we may read ourselves, in the book of the creature we may read God, in the book of Scripture we may read both God and ourselves. The great God sets us excellent lectures in the volume of the creation; though this book hath but three leaves in it, heaven, earth, sea, yet it teacheth us many rare lessons. If we think of the visible heavens, and behold those great lights of the world; how swiftly they move in their proper orbs; how unwearied they are in their perpetual courses; how they fail not a minute of their appointed time, nor wander an inch out of their designed way; how they divide the day and night, and the several seasons of the year; how they bless the earth with their smiling aspects, and keep the inhabitants of this lower world from finding it a dungeon by their enlightening beams, we may therein discover the wisdom and power of its Maker, and cry out with David, Ps. xix. 1, and viii. 2, 3, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast made: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him? O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! and thy glory above the heavens!' What rare fruit may a soul gather from these celestial trees! If the porch of heaven be such a curious piece, the work of his fingers, *i.e.*, an elaborate piece of embroidery, how curious is the palace within! If the outward court be so glorious, how glorious is the holy of holies! If light be so sweet, and it be so pleasant a thing to behold the sun, how sweet is the light of my God's countenance! and how pleasant is it to behold the Sun of righteousness! Oh what a blessed day will that be, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days, when all believers shall shine as the sun in the firmament of their Father! Lord, thou speakest to the sun, and it riseth not, to the moon, and it standeth still; why should not thy servant be as obedient to thy command, even when it is against my natural depraved course? Oh speak but as powerfully to thy poor creature, and he will as readily obey thy pleasure!

If we look a little lower, to the clouds, and meditate on them in their natural cause—thin vapours exhaled by the sun; in their principal use—to drop fatness on the earth; in the tenuity and smallness of their bodies, the weight and greatness of their burdens, the waters in them being like lusty children, encompassed only with a tender film; how they are tossed to and fro, hurried hither and thither with tempestuous winds, and yet burst not in pieces through lack of vent, nor sink under the heaviness of their load, nor leak out one drop till the hand of their Master unstop their bottles; we may well admire that infinite invisible power that upholds and governs them, and say, as Eliphaz, of their author, ‘He doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: for he giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth water upon the fields,’ Job v. 9, 10. What excellent water may I distil with the lembics of the clouds! If the favour of a prince be as a ‘cloud of the latter rain,’ Prov. xvi. 15, so refreshing and comforting, what is the favour of the King of kings! As the clouds mask the sun from the sight of mortals, so doth sin hide the smiling countenance of my God from the view of my poor soul. As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. If showers from above make the earth soft and fruitful, surely the showers of heaven’s grace would make my hard and barren heart both tender and abundant in holiness. Lord, whilst I am in my journey towards my heavenly Canaan, let thy good Spirit be my pillar of cloud to direct me; suffer me not to be as a cloud without water; do but say unto me, I have blotted out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and I will bless thee for ever.

If we look to the earth and view her well, though she hath been called and counted the vilest and grossest of the elements, we shall find her a glorious body, and not in the least degree a disparagement or disgrace to her Maker. Take her inside, and she is curiously and wonderfully made. Her centre, like the heart, is seated in the most convenient place, for the benefit of every part; her several channels underground, as so many veins, do convey her pure, though pale blood, for the animating and actuating, as it were, every member. Though her wealth lieth deep, and much of it was never discovered to any mortal, yet what rare jewels and rich metals have been seen in her very guts and garbage! Take her outside, and that clothing will be found better than of wrought gold; her garment is richer, in any part of it, than Solomon in all his royalty. The fine linen of Egypt, silks of Persia, and curious works

of Turkey, are exceedingly inferior to her daily attire; she is covered with the costly curious arras of herbs, and plants, and flowers; embroidered with variety of all sorts of colours, perfumed with the most fragrant and delightful odours; she is attended by birds and beasts of several orders, that all in their proper ranks move to and fro, acknowledging their engagements to her. Oh, who is like that God that hath made himself such a footstool! If his footstool be so glorious, how glorious is his throne! But, besides all this, he that shall ponder the fruitfulness and fecundity of her womb, her unweariedness in bringing forth, her wonderful care of her offspring, in bringing them up, providing them all, though of different kinds, food suitable to each of their natures whilst they live, and receiving them kindly into her bosom and embraces when they die, and all else are weary of them, may well cry out by way of admiration, 'O Lord, the earth is full of thy goodness, the earth is full of thy glory!' What rich mines may I dig out of the bowels of the earth! When my God is angry, the earth shakes and trembleth, and the foundations thereof are moved; and shall not my flesh tremble for fear of the God of the whole earth, and my soul be afraid of his righteous judgments? His hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and his right hand hath spanned the heavens; when he calls they stand up together, and shall not I hear his call and obey his command? Lord, if the earth be thine, and the fulness thereof, the world, and all that dwell therein, whose, then, am I? Surely thine. Oh help me to disown all title to myself, to quit all my interest in myself, and to live as one that is not his own, but the Lord's. The earth is full of thy riches, let my heart be full of thy righteousness, and that will turn earth to me into heaven, whilst I am full of thy likeness and thy love.

If we consider the ocean, that amazeth a beholder with its fierce countenance, and seems to have neither banks nor bottom, how it threatens the earth with its boisterous billows, as if it intended to swallow it up in a moment, and yet, when it hath swollen itself to the height of its pride, and its insulting waves have shewed their teeth, how soon it retreats, like a coward, as if it were afraid of the smallest worm, and had already outgone its bounds and commission! What innumerable fish, both small and great, take up their chambers in the waters, and find their food in the jaws of that devourer! What multitudes of massy vessels she fetcheth off from one island, and carrieth upon her back, as a porter his burden, and sets them down safe at another! how she playeth with them, what frights she puts them in by the way, as men do little children, tossing

them up to heaven, and then throwing them down again, as if her belly should be the certain place of their burial, and after all her frowns and fury, refresheth them with her smiles and favour, and doth but prepare them thereby to salute their harbour with the greater joy and gladness! How she sendeth out of her storehouse provision for the several families of the world, furnishing the several pipes and aqueducts of the earth with fresh springs and streams for the comfort of man and beasts; if we but consider these things, what cause shall we have to say with the psalmist, 'They that go down into ships see his wonders in the deep;' and with those mariners, 'What manner of man is this, whom the winds and the seas obey?' What manner of God is this, who gathereth the waters of the sea together, and layeth up the floods in storehouses; who shutteth in the ocean with bars and doors, and saith, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;' who puts a bridle in the jaws of such a monster, and, when she threatens nothing but death and destruction, pulls her in, and makes her retreat to her own den without doing the least hurt? Oh, what a God is this, whom the rugged, blustering winds, and raging, boisterous seas obey! What excellent conclusions may a Christian gather from such premises! Do the winds and seas obey God, as stubborn and surly as they are, and shall not I obey him? Are they kept within their banks, and shall not I be kept within my bounds? Lord, thou stillest the noise of the seas, the noise of the waters, and the tumults of the people; oh, why dost thou not quiet the headstrong passions in my breast? Thou observest how they roar and make a noise continually, what frightful storms they raise within me;¹ if thou wouldst but say to them in their height and heat, Peace, be still, there would presently ensue a calm. Oh, suffer not these high winds to overturn me, nor these swelling waters to overwhelm me! I am ever ready to sink, save me, Master, or I perish.

Thus a Christian may consider the works of God either collectively or severally, both in their insides and outsides, to his marvellous advantage. As the Rabbis say of the word, I may say of the works of God, Turn it over, and over, and over again, for all is in it; turn them over, and over, and over again, for all is in them. There is wisdom in them, in their variety, diversity of natures, subordination, and serviceableness each to other: 'O Lord, how marvellous are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.'

¹ Every creature, saith Bernard, hath this voice, *Qui fecit me propter te, fecit te propter se.*

There is power in bringing with a breath the whole creation out of the barren womb of nothing: 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' There is mercy in providing so bountifully for every of his creatures: 'The whole earth is full of thy goodness.' There is faithfulness in upholding all things in their being: 'Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth; yea, mercy and truth meet together. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.' Every of God's works is so profitable, that, as the aromatic fruit, not only the kernel is a nutmeg, but the skin of it is mace. As in a fair suit of arras, though the hangings never appear to their full advantage but when they are opened in all their dimensions, and seen together, yet a small shred may assure you of the excellency of the colours, and richness of the stuff; so, though the divine perfections would appear most in their beauty and glory, if we were able, at one view, to behold the whole world in its several eminences and beauties, yet a little part of it may speak the worth and richness of the whole. It was an honest speech of a monk, who, being asked how he could endure that life without the pleasure of books, answered, The nature of the creatures is my library, wherein, when I please, I can muse upon God's deep oracles. The Egyptians were instructed by characters and hieroglyphics: by something presented to the eye, notions were represented to the understanding.

Reader, it is thy privilege that thou mayest perform this duty in any place. No sight, no sound, but may afford matter for meditation. If thou walkest in thy garden, thou mayest turn it into an Eden by delightful meditations. Dost thou behold the flowers standing in their ranks, what a goodly show they make, thou mayest think what a lovely sight it is to see Christians continuing in those several places and stations in which God hath set them. Some flowers open and shut with the sun, so doth the Christian observe the shining and withdrawing of the Sun of righteousness. Some flowers die, having a worm gnawing their root, so will all hypocrites wither, and come to nothing, notwithstanding their gaudy show. Flowers are tender things, and must be charily looked to, or they fade away; so saints, if the Spirit of God were not choice of them, and ever watchful over them, would perish. How lovely are flowers to the eye! how pleasant to the taste! how soft to the touch! what ornaments to a house! How amiable are the children of God to those that have eyes to see his image on them! how fragrant is the smell of their spikenard, and calamus, and cassia! what a grace

are they to any family or society ! Dost thou walk into thy garden, to observe how thy flowers thrive ? Cant. vii. 11 ; so Jesus Christ goeth into his garden to see how his plants flourish. Thou wilt not allow any weeds or barren flowers in thy garden, and Jesus Christ will not permit such wicked, unprofitable ones in his church. Flowers are lovely and beautiful one day, and withered and fallen off the stalk the next, Isa. xl. 6 ; so man is a comely living creature one day, and a deformed corpse the next. Thus a saint may make every flower like the gillyflower, cordial to him.

If thou walkest by a river, thou mayest change the water there into spirits by meditation. How fitly may thy thoughts be raised by that object to the cleansing, refreshing properties of the word of God, to the water of life, to the well of salvation, to the river whose streams make glad the city of God, to the rivers of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore ! The same water which, being liquid, is penetrated with a horse-hair, will bear the horse himself when hard frozen ; so those threats and judgments of God, which penetrate deep into the tender consciences of the regenerate, enter not at all into the hearts of carnal men, hardened by custom in sin ; and hence thou mayest gather the reason whence the sword of the word, that in some divideth the joints and marrow, in others glanceth only, or reboundeth, not making the least dint or impression upon their frozen, adamantine hearts. If thou art eating and drinking, thou mayest feed thy soul as well as thy body, by meditating on the 'meat that endureth to everlasting life'—on that 'flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed.' Thou mayest think, If my outward man need food, and without it cannot subsist, surely spiritual food is as needful for my inward man, and without it that will starve. If a famine of bread and water be so dreadful, that the tongues of men cleave under it to the roof of their mouths, and their countenances become as black as a coal, how dreadful is a famine of the word of the Lord ! If natural food be so pleasant and savoury to my taste, surely spiritual food is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. If all the labour of man be for his belly, what labour doth the soul deserve ! If the ordinances of my God now are so pleasant to me, that my soul is even filled as with marrow and fatness, and refreshed as with wine on the lees, well refined, what a blessed day will it be, when I shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven, and drink new wine in my Father's kingdom ! O 'blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

If thou beholdest thy candle, thou mayest consider how that

light which makes small show in the day, yields a glorious lustre in the night, not because the candle hath then more light, but because the air hath then more darkness; so that holiness and grace, which in a day of prosperity and life seems of small worth and price, in a night of adversity and death will be of infinite value. Or thus, I set up this candle to help and direct me about my business; so God sets up the candle of my life, and affords me the light of his word for me to work out my salvation, not to play by them. Or thus, this candle is spending itself for my good; so I should be willing to spend and be spent for the good of others' souls. Or, this candle is always consuming, and will at last be quite wasted; so is my life daily wearing away, and ere long will be quite extinguished. The great candles, whilst they burn, make the greater light, but when they go out, leave the greater stench; so ungodly men, the greater they are, the more they shine with glory whilst they live, but when they die, leave the more stinking savour behind them. If thou art putting off thy clothes, thou mayest ponder thy duty to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to his deceitful lusts, and to put off the works of darkness, as also that ere long thou shalt put off thine earthly tabernacle. Art thou lying down in thy bed? Thou mayest think of thy grave, wherein thou must shortly lie down, and never rise up till the morning of the resurrection. Is the night dark? Thou mayest meditate thence on the darkness of thy mind naturally, of the works of darkness, of the blackness of darkness for ever. Ah, what a dark dungeon is hell, where not the least spark of light appears, though so much fire! My night will end, but sinners' evening will find no morning. If a bed be so refreshing to my wearied body, how refreshing is a Redeemer to a wearied soul! How lovingly he inviteth me, 'Come to me, all that are weary, I will give you rest!' And how refreshing will that rest be, which remaineth to the people of God! When thou wakest in the morning, thou mayest say with the psalmist, 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;' or, 'When I awake, I am still with thee;' or rouse thyself up with, 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not. Awake, thou that sleepest; arise, and call upon thy God.' When thou art rising, thou mayest meditate on the church's garment of needlework, the fine linen of the saints' righteousness; thy putting on the new man, created after God, in righteousness and true holiness; thy putting on that most excellent clothing, which is for warmth, for ornament, and defence, the Lord Jesus Christ. Dost thou look on the glass to dress thyself? Think of the glass of

God's law, how necessary it is daily to look into it, for the discovery of thy spiritual spots and filth. Dost thou wash thy hands? Oh wash thy heart from wickedness, and forget not that great laver of the blood of Jesus Christ! Doth thy stomach call for some food? Think of thy spiritual appetite, and how savoury it will make the dainties of God's house to thee: 'They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and they did all drink the same spiritual drink; they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.' Art thou to go about buying or selling, or worldly bargains? Take some thoughts of buying that one pearl of great price, which the wise merchant sold all he had to purchase, of buying that gold of grace, and fine linen of the saints' righteousness, Mat. xiii. 44; Rev. iii. 18. Amongst all thy gains and gettings, consider: 'What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what will a man give in exchange for his soul!' If the gaining a little silver or gold be worth so much time and pains, how much is holiness and heaven worth! Surely ten thousand times more. Art thou in the day to take a journey, thou mayest consider, I am but a pilgrim and stranger in this earth; I am every day travelling towards my long home; I have no abiding city here, but look for one that is to come, whose builder and maker is God. Oh that I could prepare for it, and daily make some progress towards it. Art thou to spend the day in thy shop, or fields, and about many businesses? Think on that of Christ: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall never be taken from her.' This, reader, were an excellent improvement of thy time in solitude, by such occasional meditations, which are obvious to ordinary understandings.

SECTION V.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, mind solemn and set meditation. In the former head I advised thee to occasional, in this to deliberate, meditation; hereby thou wilt not only prevent those covetous, ambitious, lascivious thoughts, which otherwise might crowd in upon thee, and pollute thee, but also exceedingly further thy soul in holiness. Occasional meditations do some good, but these much more, as making a greater impression upon the soul, and abiding longer with it. They differ as a taste and a full meal, as a sip and a good draught. Occasional meditations are like loving strangers, that afford us a visit, but are

quickly gone. Deliberate meditations are as inhabitants that dwell with us, and are longer helpful to us. The former, as the morning dew, do somewhat moisten and refresh the earth, but quickly passeth away; the latter, as a good shower, soaks deep, and continueth long. Because this is of great weight, I shall acquaint thee what solemn meditation is, and then give thee a pattern of it.

Solemn meditation is a serious applying the mind to some sacred subject, till the affections be warmed and quickened, and the resolution heightened and strengthened thereby, against what is evil, and for that which is good.

There are five things in this description.

1. It is an application of the mind. The understanding must be awake about this duty; it is not a work to be done sleeping. If the mind be not stirring, the affections will be nodding. The understanding in this is, as it were, the master workman—if that be out of the way, or missing, the servants of the affections will be idle, and stand still. It is by this sun that heat is conveyed to the lower world. Darkness, like the night, is accompanied with damps and cold. The chariot of light is attended with warming and quickening beams.

2. It is a serious applying the mind. Too quick digestion breeds crudities in the mind as well as in the body, and doth often more distemper than nourish. There must be a retentive faculty to hold fast that which nature receiveth, until a thorough concoction be wrought, or little strength will be gotten by it. Hereby it differeth from occasional meditation, which is sudden, and soon vanisheth: this calls at the door, salutes us, and takes its leave; that comes in and stays some time with us. Occasional meditation is transient, like the dogs of Nilus, that lap and are gone; set meditation is permanent—it, as the spouse begged of Christ, lodgeth all night between the breasts. This duty cannot be done unless the mind be kept close to it; the person that is negligent, cannot do this work of the Lord. Things of importance are not to be huddled up in haste; loose thoughts, as loose garments, hinder us in our business. We need as much our hearts united to think of God, as to fear God. Short glances do little good; it is the abiding influence of the sun that turns the earth into silver and golden metal; it is not once dipping the stuff into the dye-vat, but frequently doing it, that giveth the pure scarlet colour. The true mithridate, which is so cordial and opening, is long a-making. The yellow wax lieth long in the beams of the sun before it changeth its colour, and attaineth a virgin-like whiteness and purity. He that rides post,

though he wearies himself in travelling from place to place, is less able to give an account of the country through which he passeth, than he that is more slow in his course, but more constant in his abode ; *omnis festinatio caeca est*, saith Seneca. It is much blowing that makes the green wood to flame.

3. It is about some sacred subject. As good meat and drink breed good blood, so good subjects will breed good thoughts. There is abundant matter for our meditation : as the nature or attributes of God, the states and offices of Christ, the threefold state of man, the four last things—the vanity of the creature, the sinfulness of sin, and the love and fulness of the blessed Saviour, the divine word and works ; out of these we may choose sometimes one thing, sometimes another, to be the particular subject of our thoughts, Exod. xv. 11 ; Ps. i. 1, and cxix. 148 ; Prov. vi. 22 ; 1 Tim. iv. 13. To undertake more than one at a time, will deprive us of the benefit of all. Too much food will rather destroy than increase the natural heat. A little wood may help that fire to burn, which a great quantity would smother. Whilst the dog runs after two hares, now after one, and presently after the other, he loseth both. Many subjects, as a press or crowd of people, do but hinder one another. Those streams are strongest which are most united. Greediness of appetite, and receiving too much food, weakeneth digestion. Simples are most operative ; mixtures and compositions are often used to allay their force.

When thou hast fixed upon the subject, meditate, if it may be, on its causes, properties, effects, titles, comparisons, testimonies, contraries, all will help to illustrate the subject, and to quicken and advantage thee ; they do all, as so many several windows, let in those beams which both enlighten the mind and warm the affections, but they must be considered in their places, and methodically. The parts of a watch jumbled together serve for no use, but each in their order make a rare and useful piece.

4. It is that the affections may be warmed and quickened. Our hearts and affections should answer our thoughts, as the echo the voice, and the wax the character in the seal. If our meditations do not better our hearts, they do nothing. Whilst they swim in the mind, as light things floating on the waters, they are unprofitable ; but when they sink down into the affections, as heavy and weighty things, making suitable and real impressions there, then they attain their end. Our design in meditation must be rather to cleanse our hearts, than to clear our heads. ‘ Whilst I was musing, the fire burned.’ We strike fire by meditation to kindle our affections.

This application of the thoughts to the heart is like the natural heat, which digesteth the food, and turneth it into good nourishment.

When we are meditating on the sinfulness of sin. In its nature ; its contrariety to God, his being, his law, his honour ; its opposition to our own souls, their present purity and peace, their future glory and bliss. In its causes ; Satan, the wicked one, its father, the corrupt heart of man its mother. In its properties ; how defiling it is, filthiness itself ; how infectious it is, overspreading the whole man, polluting all his natural, civil, spiritual actions, and making his praying, hearing, singing, an abomination ; how deceiving it is, pretending meat, and intending murder. In its effects ; the curse of God on all the creatures, evident by the vanity in them, the vexation they bring with them ; in the anger of God on sinners, apparent in those temporal punishments, spiritual judgments, and eternal torments which he inflicteth on them ; I say, when we meditate on this, we should endeavour to get our hearts broken for sin, ashamed of sin, and fired with indignation against sin. Oh what a wretch am I, should the soul think, to harbour such a traitor against my sovereign ! What a fool am I to hug such a serpent in my bosom ! What sorrow for it can be sufficient ! what hatred of it is enough ! What watchfulness against it, what self-abhorrence, because I have loved it, and lived in it, can equal its desert ! Oh that I could weep bitterly for the commission of it, and watch narrowly for the prevention of it, and pray fervently for pardon of it, and power against it ! How much am I bound to God for his patience towards so great a sinner ! How infinitely am I engaged to Christ for taking upon him my sins ! It was infinite condescension in him to take upon him my nature ; but oh, what humiliation was it to take upon him my sins ! What life can answer such love ! what thankfulness should I render for such grace, such goodness ! The close applying of our meditations to our hearts, is like the applying and rubbing in oil on a benumbed joint, which recovers it to its due sense. He that omits it doth as a chapman, that praiseth ware and cheapens it, but doth not buy it, and so is never the better for it. David proceeds from meditation of God's works, to application of his thoughts : Ps viii. 2-4, ' When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, &c. What is man that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him ? '

5. It is a serious applying of some sacred subject, that his resolutions may be strengthened against evil, and for good. The Christian must not only pray his good thoughts, but practise them ; he

must not lock them up in his mind, but lay them out in his life. A council of war or of state is wholly useless, if there be none to execute what they determine. That kingdom flourisheth best where faithful execution followeth sound advisements: therefore the heathen pronounced that city safe which had the heads of old men for consideration, and the hands of young men for execution. Action without consideration is usually lame and defective; consideration without action is lost and abortive. Though meditation, like Rachel, be more fair; execution, like Leah, is most fruitful. The beasts, under the law, were unclean, which did not both chew the cud and divide the hoof. *Ruminatio ad sapientiam, fissa ungula pertinet ad mores*; Chewing the cud signifieth meditation, dividing the hoof a holy conversation, without which the former will be unprofitable, saith Augustine.

Reader, hast thou thought of the beauty and excellency of holiness, in its nature, its conformity to the pure nature, and holy commands of the blessed God—in its causes, the Spirit of God its principal efficient, the holy Scriptures its instrumental; in its names it is the image of God, the divine nature, light, life, the travail of Christ's soul, grace, glory, the kingdom of heaven; in its effects or fruits, how it renders thee amiable in God's eye, bath the promise of his ear, is entitled to pardon, peace, joy, adoption, growth in grace, perseverance to the end, and the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and hast applied this so close to thy heart, that thou hast been really affected with its worth, and wished thyself enriched with that jewel, though thou wert a beggar all thy life; and resolved with thyself, Well, I will watch, and weep, and hear, and pray, both fervently and frequently, for holiness; I will follow God up and down, and never leave him till he sanctifieth my soul? Now, I say to thee, as Nathan to David, when he told him of his thoughts and resolution of building a temple: 'Do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee,' 1 Chron. xvii. 2. Or as God to Moses, concerning the Jews: 'They have well spoken all that they have said; oh that there were an heart in them to keep my commandments!' It is well thou art brought to any good purposes; but it will be ill if they be not followed with performances. Good intentions without suitable actions is but a false conception; or like a piece charged without a bullet, which may make a noise, but doth no good, no execution. Indeed there is no way better to evidence the sincerity of thy intentions than by answerable actions. David was good at this: 'I thought on my ways,' there was his serious consideration; 'and turned my feet to thy testimonies,' there is his

holy conversation; so again, 'I will meditate on thy precepts, and will have respect to thy testimonies.' It is in vain to pretend that, like Moses, we go into the mount of contemplation, and converse with God, unless we come down, as he did, with our faces shining, our conversations more splendid with holiness. This, saith the chief of the philosophers, will [bring] a man to perfect happiness, if to his contemplation he join a constant imitation of God in wisdom, justice, and holiness.

Thus I have despatched those five particulars in meditations. The first three are but one—though for method's sake, to help the reader, I spake to them severally—and are usually called cogitation, the other two application and resolution. Cogitation provides food, application eats it, resolution digests it, and gets strength from it. Cogitation cuts out the suit, application makes it up, resolution puts it on and wears it. Cogitation betters the judgment, application the affections, and resolution the life. It is confessed, this duty of set meditation is as hard as rare, and as uneasy as extraordinary; but experience teacheth that the profit makes abundant recompense for our pains in the performance of it. Besides, as millstones grind hard at first, but, being used to it, they grind easily, and make good flour; so the Christian, wholly disused to this duty, at first may find it somewhat difficult, but afterwards both facile and fruitful.

Reader, to help thee herein, I shall give thee an example, though I would desire thee to remember that the advantage of meditation is rather to be felt than read. He that can paint spikenard, or musk, or roses, in their proper colours, cannot, with all his art, draw their pleasant savour; that is beyond the skill of his pencil.

Let us, O my soul, a little retire out of the world's company, to converse with the word of thy God. I cannot but hope the malefactor hath a high esteem for that psalm of mercy, without which he had lost his life. I have reason to believe that thou hast no mean value for that gospel of grace, and the grace of that gospel, without which thou hadst lost thy soul, thy God, thy joy, thy delight, thine all, and that for ever; yet sure I am, the price thou settest on it is far inferior to the worth of this pearl; and, besides, I have observed of late, whether partly because of its constancy with thee,—things common, though never so necessary and excellent, being less valued than meaner things that are rare,—or chiefly because of thy old seeming friend, or rather real enemy, thy flesh within thee, that never speaks well of it, because of its contrariety to the word, from which it hath received its death-wound, and therefore would die as

the thief on the cross, spitting out its venom and malice at it, or whatever be the cause, I perceive too much thou beginnest to decline in thy respect to it; what else doth thy backwardness to read it, thy carelessness in minding what thou dost read, and thy negligence in practising it, signify? Therefore let us take a turn or two together, and argue the case, lest it be argued against thee in a higher court, to thy cost; and I charge thee before the dreadful God, at whose judgment-seat thou art to stand or fall for ever, that thou attend to me seriously, and not dare to give me the slip, till the whole be debated, for it is not a vain thing, but is for thy life.

What is this word which thou art so prone to despise? Consider it, O my soul, first, in its causes, and then tell me whether the child be not worthy of love and esteem in the superlative degree for his parent's sake.

1. Its principal efficient cause is the glorious and supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, the spring and fountain of all excellency and perfection: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' It is the word of the Lord, the breath of his mouth, the law of his lips; whoever were the pens or scribes, his mind indited, and his hand wrote, every sentence in it. What a word must that be, which is the result of infinite wisdom! How precious are those tables which are the writing of God himself! How glorious is that beam of light which was darted from this sun, to whom a whole firmament of suns were worse than perfect darkness! If the breath of a man be so sweet, that his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew; if the heart of a man can indite a good matter, and his tongue resemble the pen of a ready writer, oh what is the speech of the tongue of a God! 'Never man spake as he spake;' his enemies themselves being judges, John vii. 46. The Queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and blessed those servants that waited at his table and heard his wisdom. But, lo, O my soul! a greater than Solomon is here: 'How blessed are they that wait at his gates, and that watch at the posts of his doors!'

2. The penmen and scribes of it were men of choice gifts and graces. Some of them were, like Saul, higher by the head and shoulders than their brethren in the fear and favour of God. As Moses, the meekest man upon the face of the earth; David, the sweet singer of Israel, a man after God's own heart; Solomon, who excelled in wisdom all that were before him, or came after him; Isaiah, of the blood-royal, an evangelical prophet, or prophetic evangelist, whose prophecy is clean and clear, and curiously gar-

nished with all kind of rhetoric ; John, the beloved disciple that leaned on the bosom of Jesus ; Paul, who was rapt up into the third heavens, and as famous for active and passive obedience as any in the world in his days ; all of them were men extraordinarily inspired, and assisted by the Spirit of God. Not only the notions, but the very phrases and words were imprinted on them, and infused into them by God himself. The writings of some naturalists have been bought at a great price, and thought worthy to be presented to great princes ; but the best of them (though the prophecy of the sybils, which the heathen so highly esteemed, be included) is but a bundle of folly and vanity to this book : ‘ Prophecy came not of old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ Oh how excellent must that Scripture be, of which such incomparable persons were the penmen or amanuenses, and to whom the infinite wisdom of God did dictate every word !

3. The matter of them is heavenly and divine, the epitome of all equity and righteousness, the compendium of whatsoever is fit to be believed or practised. The Scripture is a perfect rule, both for faith and manners ; it informeth us fully in our carriage towards God, and towards men—how we ought to walk in all relations and conditions ; it forbiddeth evil, all evil in the very thoughts ; it commandeth good, whatsoever is good, in the whole course of our lives ; it speaketh of such things as are far above reason, and yet nothing that is contrary to reason. The truths delivered in it, are many of them such as no human or created capacity could have possibly invented, yet such as are all agreeable to a rational understanding. It would have exceeded the wisdom of an angel to have thought of such a sweet mixture of justice and mercy, as is discovered in the gospel, about the redemption of fallen man. It teacheth the nature and excellency of God, the trinity of persons, the unity of essence, the immensity of all his attributes ; how he is infinite in his being, wisdom, knowledge, holiness, mercy, and faithfulness ; how he is a pure act, without the least passion ; a perfect being, incapable of any addition ; eternal, without either beginning or ending ; immutable, without the least alteration ; incomprehensible, beyond all conceptions ; omnipresent, without any circumscription. It instructeth us in the person, and offices, and states of the blessed Redeemer ; how he, being the Son of God, was partaker of the human nature, that the sons of men might be partakers of the divine nature ; how God and man were united in one person, that man and God might be united in one covenant ; how the eternal God

married our nature, that he might exalt his boundless grace in marrying our persons; how man was the debtor, God-man the surety, who made satisfaction to God the creditor; how he was born of a mean woman, that we might be born of the most high God; he was tempted, that he might conquer Satan for us, and succour us when tempted by him; what a life he led, filled with miracles and miseries; what a death he died, imbittered with shame and pain, and all that we might be exalted to eternal honour and pleasure; how he triumphed over death, the grave, the curse of the law, Satan, and hell, in his resurrection, and ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive; appears in his Father's presence, pleading his death, as the price of his chosen's safety and life, sitteth at his right hand, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Its precepts excel all the commands, and statutes, and laws, that ever were in the world, in purity, and justice, and goodness, much more than the firmament of stars doth a wisp of straws; its promises are exceeding great and precious, of special efficacy, superlative excellency, and unquestionable certainty. In a word, the Scripture hath all in it requisite either for counsel or comfort, for necessity or delight, for knowledge or action, for direction in life, or consolation in death.

4. The form of the Scripture renders it worthy my highest esteem and hottest affection.

(1.) Its inward form is, that perfect correspondence and agreement between the commands and promises laid down in the word, and that infallible and certain truth of God's own understanding. The books of men are suitable to their minds, and their minds being but in part sanctified, their works must be answerably imperfect; but the Lord's understanding being infinitely pure and true, his word must bear some proportion to it. God is truth, without the least shadow of error; holy, without the least tittle of mixture; hence his word is certain, without the smallest colour for doubts: 'Thy law is the truth;' pure, not admitting of the least sin or darkness; 'thy word is very pure, therefore doth thy servant love it.' Because of its exact conformity to the eternal will of God, it is called his word. As a man maketh known his mind by his words, so doth God; hence it is called the mind of God, Prov. i. 23; the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 15; the counsel of God, Acts xx. 27; the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2; the law of God, Ps. i. 2. Not only in regard of its author, which is the divine wisdom, but also in regard of its matter, which is the divine will.

(2.) Its outward form is both plain and difficult; according to

Gregory, so shallow that lambs may wade in it, and so deep that elephants may swim in it. Its style is so plain as to encourage the most unlearned, and yet so difficult as to exercise the greatest scholars and most profound rabbis. To those that are babes in understanding, the Scripture is milk; to them that are men in knowledge, the word is strong meat; it is therefore called light, the nature of which, is both to discover itself and other things also. 'Thy word is a light to my feet, and a lamp unto my paths;' it is 'a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts,' Ps. cxix. 105; 2 Pet. i. 19.

It is plain in regard of fundamentals and things necessary to be known and done. What we are to believe concerning God, the Mediator, our own estate of innocency, apostasy, recovery; what we are to practise in order to salvation, are all perspicuous and clear to ordinary capacities. Though there be some whose 'eyes the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine upon them;' yet 'all wisdom's ways are plain to him that understandeth,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; Prov. viii. 9. The Scripture sheweth the greatest simplicity, both in words and phrases and figures, that the weakest need not be afraid of searching into it. There is such obscurity also in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, that the deepest understandings need not be ashamed of reading and studying it. Peter affirms that in the epistles of Paul, there are *δυσνόητα τίνα*, some things hard to be understood. There are such abstruse texts in the word of God, that no man can make a certain comment on them. The Jews themselves confessed that in the latter end of Ezekiel, there are many things mentioned which are beyond all their apprehensions, against which, and all other difficulties in the Old Testament, they comfort themselves according to the expression of the woman of Samaria, *Messias venturus est, qui nobis annuntiabit omnia*, The Messiah will come and tell us all things. Now the wise God seeth fit to let some truths in Scripture be dark;—

(1.) To shame us for our ignorance, which is the fruit of our fall from him. The pride and height of man is laid low, by the profound and hard places in the word of God.

(2.) To quicken us to diligence, in reading and meditating, and comparing scripture with scripture. The deeper a mine of gold lieth in the earth, the harder we must labour to dig it out.

(3.) To raise our price of the word of God. We are apt to slight things that are easy and ordinary, and to value things at the highest, that cost us dearest.

(4.) To provoke us to pray to God, that he would give us his key, whereby we may unlock this cabinet of precious jewels. He only that made the Scripture can best acquaint us with his mind in the Scripture; therefore David entreated divine light, that he might understand the divine law: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of thy law.'

5. The final cause of the word, will speak it full of value and worth; namely, the glory of the great God, and the salvation of lost man, John vii. 18. The honour of God shines more brightly than the meridian sun, through the whole heaven of the Scripture, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The Scripture exalteth God in regard of his infinite nature and being, his transcendent excellencies and perfections, his eternal decree, his works of creation and providence. It advanceth God in all his attributes, declaring to us,

(1.) His wisdom; how he is the only wise God. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; yea, that angels themselves are fools to him. His understanding is infinite.

(2.) His power; how he is mighty in strength, the Almighty God; to him nothing is impossible; doth whatever he pleaseth; can do more than he will do.

(3.) His mercy; how he is full of mercy, rich in mercy, the Father of mercies; hath multitudes of tender mercies, his mercy endureth for ever, hath a height, and depth, and length, and breadth in it which none can reach.

(4.) His justice; how he fails not the least in the performance of his promises, and accomplishment of his threatenings; how he will by no means clear the guilty, not the greatest of his favourites, not for the least of their offences; how he hath manifested his justice in the deluge brought on the old world, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in his carriage towards apostate angels, rebellious Israelites, his own chosen people, and the Mediator his own Son, when he took upon him man's sin; in the instruments of eternal death, which he hath prepared in hell for sinners, and the solemn triumph which justice shall have at the great day, and to all eternity in the other world.

(5.) His holiness; how he loathes sin with the greatest abhorrency, cannot behold the least iniquity, shoots the arrows of his vengeance against its actors and authors; will be sanctified in, or upon, all that approach him; is terrible in his holy places, forbiddeth the least compliance with sin, though but in a sudden thought; and makes it his end in his providences, ordinances, the gift of his Son, his Spirit, to make men holy. I might shew how

it exalteth him in all his properties, but I pass on. It glorifieth him in every part of it. Its precepts and commands speak his purity and dominion; its promises and covenant speak his boundless mercy and compassion; its threatenings and comminations speak his justice and jealousy; its prophecies and predictions speak his wisdom and omniscience.

The Scripture tendeth also to the eternal good of men. It is helpful to beget a soul to Christ: of his own will begat he us again by the word of truth. The word of grace is instrumental for the conveyance of grace, Acts ii. 37; Rom. x. 14. It is helpful to build the soul up in Christ: 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' 1 Pet. ii. 2. Grace is increased by the same means by which it is generated; as the same sun that begets some living creatures is helpful for their growth. The word of God, of stones raiseth up children to Abraham, and of children maketh young men and fathers. It is so penned, that all sorts of persons, all ranks of Christians, may be directed into the way of truth, and guided by it in the way of life. It is able to make us wise to salvation: To shew the path of life, 2 Tim. iii. 15; Ps. xvi. 11. As Joshua, it leads the Israelites into Canaan. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,—

1. For doctrine. Where Scripture hath not a tongue to speak, I must not have an ear to hear. *Scriptura est regula fidei*, Scripture is the rule of faith; hence the doctrine of the apostles and prophets is called a foundation, Eph. ii. 20.

2. For reproof. It is the hammer of heresies. Ignorance of Scripture, is one main cause of error. 'Ye err, not knowing the Scripture.' By this sword of the Spirit Christ vanquished Satan, Mat. iv. 4; and the Jews, John v. 45; and Sadducees, Mat. xxii. 29. *Lapidandi sunt hæretici sacrarum literarum argumentis*, Heretics are to be stoned with Scripture arguments, saith Athanasius. The word of God hits that unclean bird in the eye, and wounds it mortally.

3. For correction of manners. The sword of the word pierceth the sinner's conscience; like Christ to the woman of Samaria, it tells him all that ever he did, and makes him smite upon his thigh, and say, What have I done? Scripture is a glass, which sheweth him the spots that are in the face of his heart and life.

4. For instruction in righteousness. It is the way in which we should walk, the rule of our spiritual race. What is written on some psalms, may be written on every psalm and chapter in the

whole Bible, Maschil, or psalm for instruction. Its precepts teach us what to follow, its prohibitions tell us what to forsake; its promises are to allure us to sanctity, its threatenings to affright us from sin. The good example of the saints speaketh as Christ to Peter, Follow thou me; the wicked actions and ends of sinners cry aloud, as Abner to Joab, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the end?

5. For comfort. There is no such cordial for a fainting spirit as a promise in the word. The gospel in the Greek is glad tidings, and not without cause: 'This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' When souls have been ready to despair under the sense of their wickedness, and to sink in deep waters, the word of God hath held them up by the chin, and preserved them from drowning: 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in mine affliction.'

6. For salvation. The word is called the kingdom of heaven, partly because it revealeth God's thoughts of such an inestimable happiness to the children of men. The celestial Canaan was *terra incognita* till that discovered it. 'He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10, partly because it prepares the soul for heaven: the word sanctifieth, and so saveth, precious souls. By filling us with grace, it fitteth us for glory, Rom. i. 16; John xvii. 17, partly because it is the seed of heaven. As the harvest is potentially in the seed, and a tall oak potentially in an acorn; so heaven and eternal life is potentially in the word of life. It is called the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It bringeth salvation to men, and it bringeth men to salvation.

Secondly, Consider it, O my soul, in its properties; they will also speak its preciousness.

I. It is pure and holy. There are some dregs that will appear in the exactest writings of the best men, when they have been shaken by a critical hand; but none could ever justly fasten the least filth upon the Holy Scriptures. The word of Christ is like the spouse of Christ: there is no spot in it. The Alcoran of Mahomet alloweth polygamy, promiseth sensual pleasures as the reward of his servants; but the Scripture winketh not at the least sin, no, not so much as in a motion of the heart, or a glance of the eye, and its promises are also pure and spiritual. The doctrine of the wisest heathen and philosophers were a mixture of good and bad. Theft was no fault amongst Lycurgus' laws, but if done slyly commended highly. Aristotle permitted revenge, and obscene jesting, which Scripture expressly forbids. 'Thy word is very pure;'

‘ the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.’ There is not the least dross of evil or error in it.

1. Its principal author is the original and exemplar of all holiness, his nature is the pattern, and his will the rule of purity, Exod. xv. 4; Isa. vi. 3.

2. The scribes of it were holy men, moved and actuated by the Holy Ghost.

3. Its effect is to sanctify and make holy: ‘ Ye are clean, through the word that I have given you.’

4. The matter of it is holy; its commanding part is holy. ‘ The law is holy, just, and good,’ Rom. vii. 12. Its assertory part is holy: what it affirms to be, is; what it denieth to be, is not, Ps. xix. 7. Its promissory part is holy, both *formaliter*, in its own nature, and *effective*, in its end and fruit. Its historical part is holy: other books are properly called profane histories, in distinction from this. The Scripture’s expressions are pure, of the most impure actions. ‘ He knew her no more.’ ‘ men with men doing what is unseemly,’ Gen. xxxviii. 26; Rom. i. 27.

II. It is powerful. As fire, it can melt the hardest metal; as a hammer, it can break the most stony heart, Jer. xxiii. 29.

1. It is powerful for conviction. It sets men’s sins before their eyes, and makes them behold their ugliness and deformity, whether they will or no. It tells the sinner, as Elisha, concerning the Syrian king, to the king of Israel, what he doth and saith in his bed-chamber, in the retiring-room of his heart. It makes the spirit of the stoutest sinner to tremble, as the leaves with the wind; and though he strives to put off his quaking fits by some humane cordials, yet he finds his soul-ague still continuing upon him. Sturdy murderers of Christ spring in trembling, and an earthly Felix quakes under the power of this word. This voice of the Lord is powerful, it shakes the cedars of Lebanon. The batteries of the word have shaken the senseless conscience, and shattered the flinty heart in pieces.

2. It is powerful for conversion. It is able to change the nature, and turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. It hath many a time enlightened dark minds to see the things which they never saw; enlivened dead souls, and enabled them to stand up from the dead. ‘ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ It hath dispossessed the strong man, cast him out of his strongholds, wherein he had reigned many years, and subdued the soul to another Lord and Sovereign. What hath been said of God, may

be said of the word in the hand of the Spirit: Who ever resisted its will? How powerful is that word which can make the proudest creature, that scorned former reproofs and precepts, threatenings and judgments, to cry and weep bitterly, like a child under the rod; that can create the new creature, the choicest of God's works! By the word of the Lord are the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness, made, and all the glorious host thereof, of sparkling graces, by the breath of his mouth.

3. It is powerful for conquering spiritual enemies. The noble victories achieved by the Lord's worthies are, most of them, obtained by this sword of the Spirit; whole armies of sins have been discomfited and forced to fly before the face of this weapon. God hews these by his prophets, and slays them by the word of his mouth. This word, like the rod in the hand of Moses, worketh wonderfully for the destruction of such Egyptian enemies. Satan is another enemy of the Christians, but, as powerful and as politic as he is, he falls down like lightning from heaven before the preaching of the word. This sword hath so wounded that leviathan, that destroyer of souls, that he can never recover himself: 'They overcame him (*i.e.*, the devil,) by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony,' Rev. xii. 11. In a word, it must needs be strong: for it is 'the power of God to salvation;' 'the rod of his strength,' Rom. i. 16; Ps. cx. 2.

III. It is perfect; it contains in it all that is necessary and sufficient for our eternal salvation. It is a full and complete rule and measure, both of things to be believed and practised; it will admit no addition, because it is defective in nothing; it will suffer no diminution, for it is redundant in nothing. If any man shall add unto it, God shall add unto his plagues. If any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life. Jesus Christ, who was the great teacher sent from God, was faithful in his office, and gave his church whatsoever precepts or doctrines were needful for her, in order to her endless good. He tells us, 'Whatsoever I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you,' John xv. 15. And his apostle speaks to the same purpose: Acts. xx. 21, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.' Besides, it is able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work, which it could never do if it were not perfect itself. *Nil dat quod non habet*, nothing can give that which it hath not in itself, either formally or virtually. Traditions are no way necessary to complete the canon of Scripture. Since God did

reveal his will in writing, every age had that revealed to it, which was sufficient for that age, to make such as then lived wise to salvation; but, as God was pleased to reveal more, the latter did assist us in the understanding of the former, therefore, so long as any truth was necessary to be more fully known, he inspired holy men to do it, and the completing of the divine canon was reserved for Christ and his apostles, John xv. 15, vii. 8, and vi. 13; Acts xx. 27; Gal. i. 6-8.

IV. It is true and certain. Not a tittle of it shall fail. It is called truth, 'the truth,' Ps. cxix. 142; 'thy truth,' John xvii. 17; 'the Scripture of truth,' Dan. x. 21; 'the word of truth,' Eccles. xii. 10; 'the gospel of truth,' Col. i. 4; 'a more sure word,' 2 Pet. i. 19; the comparative for the superlative; 'the most sure word,' Gal. i. 8; Christ prefers it before information from the dead, Luke xvi. 31; the apostle before revelation from angels, or any other way whatsoever, 2 Pet. i. 19.

1. The precepts of it are true; they are perfectly agreeable to the mind of the speaker: 'Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth,' Ps. cxix. 151. The words of men may be true, but the word of God only is truth. There is no error, no mixture in it, it is therefore called 'sincere milk,' 1 Pet. ii. 2.

2. The promises of it are true; they are accomplished to the least particle of them. Hence they are called the sure mercies of David. The promises of God are unquestionable, because their speaker is unchangeable, and one for whom it is impossible to lie. They are surehold, and will eat their way through all the Alps of opposition: 'Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath promised,' Joshua xxi. 45.

3. The histories of it are true; whatsoever is written in it of the first or second Adam, of any persons, or nations, is exactly true. There never was such an impartial historian as the inditer of the word. This is the book which hath no errata in it.

4. The threatenings are true. The sinner shall as certainly feel them, as he reads or hears them. He shall as surely be damned as if he were already damned, therefore he is said to be 'condemned already,' John iii. 18, to speak its certainty. He shall find the gnawing worm and the eternal fire, as unquestionably as if he felt them at this hour. Hence God appeals to the consciences of the Jews, whether, though the prophets died, his threatenings (which were denounced by those prophets) did not live, and take hold of them, Zech. i. 5.

5. It is true in the predictions and prophecies. The predictions

of the Israelites' distress in Egypt four hundred years, and deliverance thence, of their possessing Canaan, of Cyrus' birth, of the Jews' redemption out of the Babylonish captivity, of the four monarchies, and of Christ's coming in the flesh, his mean birth, afflicted life, death, burial, ascension, are all already accomplished. Those prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, concerning the future estate of the church, the ruin of Pope and Turk, the vocation of the Jews, and the glorious and pure condition of the people of God in the latter days, shall all to a tittle be fulfilled. It is observable, therefore, that some predictions that were or are future are set down in the present tense: 'To us a son is born,' Isa. ix. 6; 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,' Rev. xviii. 2; to assure us that they shall be as certainly fulfilled as if they were fulfilled already.

6. It is the rule of all truth. Other books are true no further than they are agreeable and commensurable to this. All other sayings and writings are to be tried by this touchstone. It is not what sense saith, or what reason saith, or what fathers say, or what general councils say, or what traditions say, or what customs say, but what Scripture saith, that is to be the rule of faith and life. Whatsoever is contrary to Scripture, or beside Scripture, or not rationally deducible from Scripture, is to be rejected as spurious and adulterate: 'To the law and to the testimonies, if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light (no truth) in them,' Isa. viii. 20.

Thirdly, Consider it, O my soul, in its names, and they will speak much to the excellency of its nature. What is this word which thy thoughts are now upon? It is called 'Scripture,' John x. 35; or 'Scriptures,' Mat. xxii. 29; by an antonomasy or excellency of phrase, as the most worthy writings that ever saw the light. It is called the 'word of God,' 1 Pet. i. 15; both in regard of its efficient cause, which is the 'Spirit of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 15; the material cause, 'which is the mind of God,' Eph. i. 9; the final cause, 'which is the glory of God,' Eph. iii. 9. It is called the 'law of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 17; the 'law of liberty,' James i. 25; the 'law of faith,' Rom. iii. 27; 'a perfect law,' Ps. xix. 7; 'a royal law,' James. i. 8; the 'book of the law,' Josh. i. 8; 'the book of the Lord,' Isa. xxxiv. 16; 'the book of life,' 2 Kings xxii. 8; the 'gospel of peace,' Eph. i. 16; the 'gospel of God,' Rom. i. 1; the 'gospel of God's grace,' Acts xx. 24; the 'counsel of God,' Acts xx. 27; the 'charge of God,' 1 Kings ii. 3; the 'breath of God,' Job xxxvii. 10; 'the mouth of God,' Jer. ix. 12; the 'oath of God,' Deut. xxix. 12; the 'oracles of God,' Acts vii. 38; the 'paths of

God,' Micah vi. 9; the 'wisdom of God,' Prov. viii. 14. It is called a 'good thing,' Rom. x. 14; the 'good part,' Luke x. 42; the 'key of knowledge,' Mat. xvi. 19; the 'key of heaven,' Luke xi. 52; 'tidings of salvation,' Luke ii. 10; 'glad tidings of peace,' Isa. lii. 7; 'a good way,' 1 Sam. xii. 23; a 'perfect way,' Ps. ci. 2; a 'narrow way,' Mat. vii. 13. Many other titles it hath which shew the excellency of this word of truth.

Fourthly, Consider it, O my soul, in its comparisons, which will shew thee somewhat of its perfections. Whereunto is this word resembled? It is resembled to a light, to a lamp. Solomon tells us, 'The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light,' Prov. vi. 23; it is likely he learned it of his father, 'Thy word is a light to my feet and a lanthorn to my paths,' saith David, Ps. cxix. 105.

1. It is light for its clarity and beauty; light is the ornament of the world, which is most incorporeal of all corporeal beings, therefore termed spiritual. Though it discovers all the pollutions of the earth, yet it is not polluted therewith. The word is the glory of this lower world; the law is spiritual, and its beauty is not faded, nor its purity stained, by all the filth of false doctrines and heresies which have been cast into the face of it, from the beginning of the world to this day. The word of the Lord abideth for ever.

2. Light is pleasant and delightful; darkness is affrighting and dreadful, but light is refreshing and reviving. 'Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun,' Eccles. xi. 7. The word of God is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing with the eyes of faith to behold the glorious sun of divine truths. The eye is not more affected with curious sights, nor the ear with ravishing music, nor the palate with rare meats, than a spiritualised understanding with spiritual truths. David found not only delight in the singular, but delights in the plural number, all sorts and degrees of delights in the word of God; 'Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, but thy commandments are my delights.' His delights in the law of God were so rare and ravishing, that they quite extinguished all sensual delights, as the light of the day the light of a candle, and drowned the noise of all his crosses and troubles by their loud and amazing melody. Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a pleasant garden, wherein every flower yields a fragrant flavour. Ambrose to a feast, wherein every book is a dainty dish, affording food both pleasant and wholesome.

3. Light discovereth and maketh things manifest. The night conceals things, and the day reveals them; 'That which maketh manifest is light,' Eph. v. 13. Light discovers things in their

proper shapes and colours, whether beauties or deformities. When the sun appeareth, we see the dust in corners, and dirt in ditches, which before lay hid. The word of God maketh a discovery of an unknown world of sin in the heart of man, and the great mystery of iniquity which lay hid there. 'I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Rom. vii. 9. The faults, and spots, and defects of his duties, were visible by the light of the word; 'All things are naked and open before it; it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. The word sheweth the beauty of holiness, the love and loveliness of the Redeemer.

4. Light directs us how and where to walk. In the night we wander and go out of the way, we stumble and fall, but the day helpeth us both to see our way and to walk in it, without stumbling. 'If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world,' John xi. 9. The word of God doth preserve us from sin, and guide our feet in the way of peace, Luke i. 73. It is our pole-star, as we are mariners; our pillar of fire, as we are travellers. 'The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide,' Ps. xxxviii. 31. Our feet, by the light of the word, are preserved from falling, and our steps from sliding, Ps. cxix. 105.

5. Light scattereth darkness. As the sun, where it ariseth, and displayeth its beams, dispelleth mists and clouds, causeth an alteration in the face of the air, and makes the shadows to fly before it, that they cry, like the angel to Jacob, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh;' so, the light of the word scattereth that darkness which was before upon the minds of men.

(1.) It dispelleth the 'darkness of error,' Mat. xxii. 29. Naked truth conquereth armed error; and little David with his small stones out of the silver streams of the sanctuary, the great Goliath of heresy. With this, silly women have confuted and conquered profound doctors, notwithstanding their deep and intricate arguments, and have wounded them as mortally, as that woman without weapons did Abimelech, that great captain, with a millstone.

(2.) It dispelleth the darkness of ignorance. The word is the key of knowledge, and openeth the door that lets us into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is that precious eyesalve with which our blind eyes, being anointed, see. It is sent 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness to light,' Acts xxvi. 18. When the word comes, the 'people that sat in darkness see a great light,' Mat. iv. 16.

(3.) It dispelleth the darkness of profaneness. This weapon of the word stabbeth lust under its fifth rib, and letteth out the very heart blood of it. The devil puts off his rotten wares in the dark shops of heathen, and unbelieving, and unchristian Christians; but where the word hath arisen upon any soul, it discerneth his cheat, and is too wise to be cozened by him. 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word,' Ps. cxix. 9.

The word is resembled to rain, to water, to dew. Moses tells the Israelites, 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech distil as the dew.' Christ calls it the water of life, John vi. 35.

1. Rain is from above. God keeps that key under his own girdle. 'Can any of the vanities of the heathen cause rain? Art not thou he?' Jer. xiv. 22. Man may speak long enough to the clouds before they will distil one drop; but if God command those bottles, they are presently unstopped, and pour down in abundance. 'He covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth,' Ps. cxlvii. 8. Thus the word of God came down from above. Every of the penmen of it might have spoken as David, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. It did immediately inspire me what particulars to utter, and in what phrases to deliver them. That which is said of some of the prophecies, may be said of every book, and of every chapter and verse in every book, 'Thus saith the Lord;' 'The word of the Lord which came to Amos;' 'The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' It is all one to say, 'The Scripture saith,' and 'God saith.' Compare Rom. iv. 3, and x. 11, with Rom. ix. 25, and Heb. iv. 3, and Gal. iii. 21, with Rom. xi. 32. Some observe that the word which Moses useth for doctrine dropping like rain, signifieth received doctrine, because the doctrine in the word is received from God, not devised by men, Dent. xxxii. 2. 'I received from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you,' 1 Cor. xi. 23.

2. Rain is mollifying and softening. When the earth hath been like brass and iron under our feet, by long drought or hard frosts, a few good showers supple it and make it tender. Therefore David speaking of the earth, saith, 'Thou makest it soft with showers,' Ps. lxxv. 10. So the heart of man is compared to a stone, to a rock, to a flint, to an adamant—the hardest of stones—for its hardness hath been supplied and softened by the word. The Jews that had embrued their hands in the blood of Christ had certainly very hard hearts. The thought of such a murder would have made a deep impression upon any conscience, that was not seared

with a red hot iron, yet this word preached melted them, as hard metal as they were. When they heard these things they were pricked to the heart. Peter's sermon, like Moses' rod, fetched water out of the rock, Acts ii. 37. David, upon the disorder and intemperance of his soul in the matter of Uriah, had a hard swelling, which continued and increased upon him several months; yet when Nathan comes and gently bathes it with this oil of the word, it groweth soft and tender, as appeareth by the title of Ps. li., 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.'

3. Rain maketh the earth fruitful, therefore some call it the earth's husband, because it helps the earth to bring forth. 'He watereth the hills from his chambers, the earth is satisfied with his works; he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man,' Ps. civ. 13, 14; so Ps. lxxv. 9-12. So the word of God turns that heart which was as a barren wilderness into a fruitful meadow, 1 Pet. ii. 2.

4. Rain reviveth and refresheth the earth. When the earth is chapped and faint, when it gaspeth and is weary, a shower of rain recovers and refresheth it. The psalmist tells us that upon such droppings from above, 'the pastures and valleys shout for joy, they also sing,' Ps. lxxv. 13. Thus the Christian, scorched with the apprehension of God's wrath due to him for sin, draweth all his comfort and refreshment out of those wells of salvation, the promises of the word. When conscience is sore and raw through the wounds sin hath made in it, and the weight of guilt that lieth continually grating upon it, 'He sendeth his word, and healeth them,' Ps. cvii. 20. David had experience what a healing medicine the word was: 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' When Philip had preached the word to the eunuch, he went away rejoicing. That milk which runs from the breasts of the two Testaments is never sucked with the mouth of faith without abundant satisfaction. That wine which is drawn from the pipes of the promises, rejoiceth the heart of man indeed. These things are written that your joy may be full. The saint never sits at a fuller table of joy, than when he is feasting on the dainties of the gospel.

O my soul, how many thoughts mightst thou spend about those several things to which the word is aptly and excellently resembled! It is compared to armour, to a tree of life, to a portion, to milk, to strong meat, to pastures, to seed, to an ornament of grace, to rest, to a crown of glory, to hidden treasures, to gold tried in the fire, to a glass, to oil and ointment, all which, as so many curious

colours well laid, may help thee to admire and prize more the beauty of that face which they resemble and represent.

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou word of God. Many books have done virtuously, have acted famously for the overthrow of sin and Satan, for the advancement of Christ and holiness, but thou hast excelled them all. Thou hast changed lions into lambs, ravens into doves, beasts into men, and men into angels. Thou hast subdued headstrong passions, mortified natural and riveted corruptions, tore up old and sturdy lusts by the roots, conquered principalities and powers, led captivity captive, and turned the world upside down. By thee wonders are wrought, the blind restored to their sight, the dead raised, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lepers are cleansed, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, and are changed into the nature of it. Where thou ridest conquering and to conquer, the whole world runneth after thee. Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, wherein there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Thy weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. By thee poor, weak, and contemptible men have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, stopped the mouths of roaring lions, quenched the violence of hellish fire, escaped the edge of heretics' and persecutors' sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Thou hast not only, like Saul, slain thy thousands, but, with David, thy ten thousands. Thou hast broken the serpent's head, destroyed the great leviathan, tramplest on scorpions and vipers, and nothing can hurt thee. Thou bringest heaven down to earth, and carriest earth up to heaven. Thou art the joyful message from a far country, the river whose streams make glad the city of God. Infinite wisdom contrived thee; infinite truth proclaimed thee, and infinite goodness discovered thee; the Father indited thee; the Son confirmed thee; and the Spirit revealed thee to the children of men. The countries and kingdoms of the earth were overwhelmed with worse than Egyptian darkness, till thou didst arise upon them, and with thy glorious beams enlighten and enliven them. By thee fools have been made wise, sinners made saints, ignorant men have been instructed, wandering men reduced, weak ones confirmed, and lost ones saved. By thee the heavens were established, the foundations

of the earth formed, the sorrowful are comforted, the scandalous reformed, the needy relieved, and the righteousness of God revealed. Thou art eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and food to the hungry, and rest to the weary, and physic to the sick, and life to the dying. The ablest historian will infinitely fall short in describing thy heroic deeds. None can declare thy noble acts, or display half thy praise. Angels may well pry into thee with admiration and astonishment, and make the contents of thy chapters the subject of their songs and substance of their hallelujahs to all eternity. When that heavenly host preached on earth, thou wert their text; be thou their triumph in heaven for ever.

Oh thou savour of life, thou living water, thou well of salvation, thou tidings of great joy to all nations, thou ministration of righteousness, thou mystery of godliness, thou mine of unsearchable riches, thou way of holiness, thou word of the kingdom, that thou wert written on the tables of my heart, and graven with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond on that rock for ever! Thou wast once written on tables of stone with the hand of God himself; how precious was that book wherein every leaf was immediately of God's making, and every line in it of God's writing! My heart is a heart of stone, I find it by too much experience, but if thou wert engraven on it, it would be a precious stone; its price would be far above rubies, the onyx and the sapphire should not be valued with it; the gold and the crystal should not equal it, neither should it be exchanged for coral or pearls. Oh that I were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, known and read of all men. Oh that my soul were the house, and thou the inhabitant for ever. Oh that the word of Christ might dwell richly within me, that I were able to say with holy David, 'I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart, or in the midst of my bowels.' Thou art the oracles of God, all thy sayings are faithful and true, and worthy of all acceptance; when, oh when shall I give it them! Thou art worthy of the eye: 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of this prophecy,' Rev. i. 3. 'Thou art worthy of the ear: 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Thou art worthy of the heart; oh that I could hide thee in mine heart, that I might not sin against the Lord. Thou art a counsellor to the doubting, a comforter to the distressed; thou art health to the navel, and marrow to the bones, an ornament of grace unto the head, and a chain of gold about the neck. They that walk in thy ways are safe, and their feet do not stumble. Thou teachest in the ways of

wisdom, and thou ledest in right paths ; oh that my ways were directed to keep all thy commandments, for thy steps tend to holiness, and thy paths take hold of heaven.

O my soul, is it possible for thee to hear the excellency of Scripture thus opened to thee, and not to burn in love to it? Hast thou been all this while in such a hot bath, and still cold and shivering? Hast thou felt its power, tasted its savour, seen its beauty, often heard its awakening voice, and known its universal virtue, and dost thou yet doubt its divinity, or question its excellency? Surely, if ever thou shouldst again through unbelief ask it the same question, which the scribes did Christ, when they beheld his miraculous actions: 'By what authority dost thou these things, or who gave thee this authority?' thou mayest answer thyself in the words of the man born blind, and then seeing, to the Jews: 'Is it not strange?' or, 'This is a marvellous thing, that thou knowest not whence it is, yet it hath opened thine eyes,' John ix. 30. Was there not a night of dread and horror with thee, when thou didst sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, till this sun did arise, with light and life under his wings. Oh cry out with the psalmist, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.' I was wallowing in my filth, weltering in my blood, rotting in the grave of corruption, till thou didst say unto me, live; yea, till thou didst say unto me, live. Thy voice is powerful, overcoming all opposition. The love revealed in thee is wonderful, far surpassing the love of woman. Thy promises are exceeding great and precious, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Thy Maker may well prevail for thine acceptance. Who would not reverence the issue for the author's sake; surely that coin deserves esteem, which hath that King's image and superscription on it. The matter in thee merits respect: thou art a love-letter from God to his creature, revealing his eternal thoughts of good will, publishing his acts of grace and oblivion to all traitors and rebels in arms against his Majesty, upon condition they will throw down their weapons and become loyal subjects for the future. Thou art the church's charter, containing all the privileges which the blessed Jesus purchased for her. What wise man would not value the deeds and evidences which speak and give a right to pardon, love, grace, joy, peace, and the undefiled inheritance for ever? When thou comest to a soul, salvation comes to that soul; thou art always attended with a rich train of all sorts of comforts. The good tidings thou bringest, and great blessings thou conveyest wherever thou comest, may well make thee welcome. I may well

say unto thee, beholding the bracelets and ear-rings wherewith thou adornest the spouse of the true Isaac, as Laban to Abraham's servant: 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without? I have prepared lodging for thee.'

If I am bound to bless my God for the natural lights which he hath made, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night, because thereby it appears that his mercy endureth for ever, Ps. cxxxvi. 7-9; how much am I bound to bless him for the spiritual light of his word, that true, that marvellous light which shineth in a dark place, till the eternal day dawn! Oh what mercy, what mercy enduring for ever, is there in every leaf, in every verse, in every line of that sacred book! If regeneration be a mercy, to be partaker of the divine nature, the stamping the lovely image of the glorious God upon thee; then the word is a mercy, for that is the seal in the hand of the Spirit which imprinteth it on thee, James i. 18. Is faith a mercy, that shield of the soul, whereby it quencheth the fiery darts of the devil, that ladder by which the soul mounteth to heaven, and converseth daily with its Lord and Master? then the word is a mercy, for 'faith comes by hearing,' Rom. x. 14, the word is 'the door of faith,' Acts xiv. 27. If repentance be a mercy, those second and best thoughts of the soul, that recovery of the man to his wits and right mind; then the word is a mercy, for it is the voice of Christ in the word that casteth the devil of impenitency and sensuality out of the heart, where it reigned and raged, sending out fire and flames, like *Ætna*, for many years, and makes the man like him in the Gospel, out of whom the devil was cast, to sit at Jesus's feet in his right mind, bitterly weeping and mourning for his former folly and madness: it is the hot beams of love that shine in the gospel that thaw the frozen spirits. Is hope a mercy, that helmet of salvation which defendeth the head of Christians from swords and muskets, the souls of saints from the darts and dangers of temptations, those bladders of the soul, which keep it from sinking in deep waters? then the word is a mercy, for we through 'patience and comfort of the Scripture have hope,' Rom. xv. 4. Hope had never looked out at the window, longing for the coming of its beloved, if the word had not come before as a faithful messenger, and brought certain news that he was upon the way. Are pardon, reconciliation with God, adoption, growth in grace, yea, heaven itself a mercy? then the word is a mercy: all those jewels are locked up in that cabinet. Man durst not have presumed, he could not have conceived that the glorious, jealous God should ever have such infinite respect for such wretches and

rebels, if he had not found it written with his own hand in the word. It is on the waters of the sanctuary that the saint saileth safely through the sea of this world to the port of salvation. There was no visible bridge laid over the gulf of God's wrath for sinners to pass into the kingdom of grace here, and glory hereafter, till the gospel erected one.

O my soul, what honour can be high enough, what love hot enough, for the Holy Scriptures!

1. Consider the preciousness of them in the eyes of good men, and the love they had for them. Job preferred them before food, before his necessary food; Solomon before ornaments of gold, crowns of glory; Paul before all other doctrines, though preached by angels; David before the honey and the honeycomb, great spoils, thousands of gold and silver, all riches. And when he ceaseth to compare, beginneth to admire its worth. 'Wonderful are thy testimonies,' and his own fervent affection to it, 'Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'

2. The price paid for it. It cost the blood of thy beloved; well may the Scriptures be called testaments, they were both sprinkled with blood and made valid by the death of the testator. Heb. ix. 15-17, 'And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance; for where a testament is, there must of necessity also be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth.'

3. The pearl hid in it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the matter as well as the author of it. Well may it be called the word of Christ. 'Search the Scripture, for they are they that testify of me.' He was the substance of the law, and he is the sum of the gospel. Thou hadst not known sin but for the law; nor the Saviour, but for the gospel.

When David considered the kindness he had received from Jonathan, he said to his servants, 'Is there none left of the house of Saul that I may shew kindness to, for Jonathan's sake?' He could not but in gratitude study some return suitable to that good will of his dear friend. Great is the kindness I have received from the Scripture; what wilt thou say, what wilt thou do, O my soul, for this word of thy God? 'Oh, swear unto the Lord, and vow unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, I will not go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes,

nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the law of the Lord, and an habitation for the gospel of the God of Jacob.' Wilt thou not willingly, O my soul, rather than this worthy guest should lie without doors, take it into thy heart? Oh that thou wert the ark wherein the two tables, the two testaments, might be laid up for ever. Lord, I will through thy strength ponder all thy sayings in my heart, and make them the rule of my life; I will delight in thy law, and meditate therein day and night. I will give diligence to reading, be frequent in hearing, and uniform and constant in obedience to it. I will teach it diligently my children, and talk of it when I sit in mine house, and when I walk by the way, when I lie down, and when I rise up; I will bind it for a sign upon my hand, it shall be as a frontlet between mine eyes; I will make thy statutes my songs in the house of my pilgrimage, I will rejoice in thy testimonies more than they that find great spoils; I will choose thy statutes as my heritage for ever, for they are the joy of my heart; I will delight in the law of God after the inner man. I will incline my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end; I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. But ah, Lord, what do I say? I have even cast thy law behind my back, I have broken thy bands asunder, and cast thy cords from me. My carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; I can of myself break thy law, but only through thy strength keep it; I have gone astray like a lost sheep, oh seek thy servant, and I will keep thy statutes. Be surety for thy servant for good, that I may observe thy precepts. I am a stranger in this earth, hide not thy commandments from me. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep thy law; yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart. Thou art good, and dost good; oh, teach me thy statutes. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; oh give me understanding that I may keep thy commandments. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, unto thy heavenly habitation. Then will I go into the presence of God, even of God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God, for ever.

Fourthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, accustom thyself to soliloquies, I mean to conference with

thyself. He needs never be idle that hath so much business to do with his own soul. It was a famous answer which Antisthenes gave when he was asked what fruit he reaped by all his studies. By them, saith he, I have learned both to live and talk with myself. Soliloquies are the best disputes; every good man is best company for himself of all the creatures. Holy David enjoineeth this to others, 'Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still. Selah,' Ps. iv. 4. Commune with your own hearts; when ye have none to speak with, talk to yourselves. Ask yourselves for what end ye were made, what lives ye have led, what times ye have lost, what love ye have abused, what wrath ye have deserved. Call yourselves to a reckoning, how ye have improved your talents, how true or false ye have been to your trust, what provision ye have laid in for an hour of death, what preparation ye have made for a great day of account. 'Upon your beds:' Secrecy is the best opportunity for this duty. The silent night is a good time for this speech. When we have no outward objects to disturb us, and to call our eyes, as the fool's eyes are always, to the ends of the earth; then our eyes, as the eyes of the wise, may be in our heads; and then our minds, like the windows in Solomon's temple, may be broad inwards. The most successful searches have been made in the night season; the soul is then wholly shut up in the earthly house of the body, and hath no visits from strangers to disquiet its thoughts. Physicians have judged dreams a probable sign whereby they might find out the distempers of the body. Surely, then, the bed is no bad place to examine and search into the state of the soul. 'And be still:' Self-communion will much help to curb your headstrong, ungodly passions. Serious consideration, like the casting up of earth amongst bees, will allay inordinate affections when they are full of fury, and make such a hideous noise. Though sensual appetites and unruly desires are, as the people of Ephesus, in an uproar, pleading for their former privilege, and expecting their wonted provision, as in the days of their predominancy, if conscience use its authority, commanding them in God's name, whose officer it is, to keep the king's peace, and argue it with them, as the town-clerk of Ephesus, 'We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this day's concourse,' all is frequently by this means hushed, and the tumult appeased without any further mischief. 'Selah:' This signifieth elevation, or lifting up either the mind, or voice, or both. For the matter of it, it importeth,—

1. An asseveration of a thing so to be. Hence the Chaldee

paraphrast, and some other Hebrews, have turned it, For ever. The foregoing assertions are true, and shall be so for ever.¹

2. An admiration at it. Such truths call both for our assent and wonder. Selah is affixed by way of emphasis, to note the excellency of the thing asserted, and the impression it should make upon our spirits.

As David enjoined this duty to others, so he practised it himself. Ps. lxxvii. 6, 'I call to remembrance my song in the night, I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' He communed with his own heart, was not a stranger at home. Indeed, a hypocrite, as the philosopher speaks of a vicious person, is not friends with himself, but endeavours more to avoid himself than any others, and is never in so bad company as when he is alone, for then he is forced to keep company with himself. Where conscience is an abused and incensed judge, it is no wonder that a guilty malefactor would flee from its presence. The servant that hath rioted all day, is unwilling his master should reckon with him at night. The heathen persecutors would not hear the Christians, because their cause would have appeared so just that nature itself would have justified them. The ungodly will not, for a contrary reason, hear the indictments which conscience prefers against them, because their cause will appear so bad, that they cannot avoid condemning themselves. It may be said of whorish hearts, as of the harlot, 'Her feet abide not within her house.' But the sincere Christian, that allows himself in no sin, delights to commune with his own soul, and when he is debating things with his own conscience, esteems himself in good company. He had rather God's deputy, conscience, should admonish him to contrition, than that God himself should do it to his confusion.

According to the apostle's doctrine, every one of us must give account of himself to God; therefore every one of us must take account of himself beforehand. It will be but a sad account which some will give at the great audit-day, when conscience shall confess against them, 'They made me keeper of others' vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.' And it is but a poor trade that they drive at present, who make little use of their shop-books. The greatest merchants, and the most thriving, are much in their counting-house.

5. In solitude, accustom thyself to secret ejaculations and converses with God. Lovers cast many a glance at each other, when they are at a distance, and are deprived of set meetings. A little

¹ Ainsw. on 1's. iii. 2.

boat may do us some considerable service, when we have not time to make ready a great vessel. The casting of our eyes and hearts up to heaven, will bring heaven down to us : ' My meditations of him shall be sweet,' Ps. civ. 34. Secret ejaculations have meat in their mouths, and will abundantly requite such as entertain them. If they be much in our bosoms, as Abishag in David's, they will cherish us, and put warmth into us. They are sweet in the day, like the blackbird, cheering us with their pleasant notes, and do also afford us, with the nightingale, songs in the night. A true Israelite may enjoy more of his God in a wilderness than in an earthly Canaan. Christians are nearest their heaven, when farthest from the earth. What care I how much I am in solitude, so I may but enjoy his desirable society ? Ah, how foolish are those persons that neglect the improvement of this glorious privilege ! They that, like swine, can look every way but upward, may well lie rooting in the earth, desiring no more then fleshly pleasures, because they know no better. Surely, the company of my God is of such weighty consequence and universal influence, that I need no other, I can have none to equal it. The society of my best friends, for all their love to me, and tenderness of me, is but as the company of snakes and serpents, to the company of my God. They have not pity enough for the thousandth part of my misery, nor power enough to answer in any degree my necessities. Their hearts are infinitely short of my God's ; his love to me, like his being, is boundless ; but their hands come far short of their hearts ; though they are not unwilling, they are unable to relieve me. How often have I told them of my doleful case and distressed condition in vain, when thereby I have rather added to their afflictions than lessened my own ? But my God is all-sufficient, both for pity and power ; he hath bowels and mercy, enough for my greatest sufferings and sorrows, and strength and might enough for my support and succour. My best friends are waspish, and upon a small cause are ready to snap asunder their friendship, when my God's good will is everlasting, and though he scourge me, he will never remove his loving-kindness from me. What need I those puddle streams, whilst I have this well of living water ? Oh, let me enjoy him more, though I never enjoy friend more.

Because I shall have opportunity to speak more to soul conferences, and also to converse with God in secret duties, in other parts of this treatise, I shall speak no more in this place.

A good wish about the exercising ourselves to godliness in solitude, wherein the former particulars are applied.

The blessed and infinite wise God, who made my soul for himself, and knoweth it will never be satisfied without himself, commanding me in all company to converse with his sacred Majesty, and calling me sometimes to solitude, that being freed from worldly distractions, I might have more of his society; I wish that my nature may be so suitable to his holy being, and my love so great to his gracious presence, that though his providence should cast me alone into a prison, yet enjoying his favour there, I may esteem it sweeter and pleasanter than the stateliest palace. It is both his precept and my privilege, that in the greatest company I should be alone to him; and in my greatest solitude, in company with him. There is not the most solitary place I can come into, nor the least moment of my life, but I have still business with my God, and such as is neither easy nor of mean concernment. All my transactions with men about house, or land, or food, or clothes, or the most necessary things of this present life, are nothing to my business with God about my unchangeable being in the other world. If they were all laid in the balance with this, they would be found infinitely lighter than vanity and nothing. My understanding is ready to be overwhelmed with the apprehension of an endless eternal state. All my business with meat, or drink, or sleep, or family, or friends, or mercies, or afflictions, nay, or the means of grace, or ordinances themselves, is no more worth or desirable than they tend to the furthering my everlasting good. All other things are but as passengers, to which I may afford a short salute, but it is my home where I must abide for ever, that my heart must be always set upon; and it is my God, upon whom this blissful endless life depends, that I have most cause to be ever with. O my soul, by this thou mayest gather with whom to deal, and about what to trade when thou art alone; tell me not henceforward, in the words of the lazy worldling, I am idle, for I have nothing to do. Hast thou pardon of sin, the image of thy God, an interest in thy Redeemer, freedom from sin, the law, the wrath to come, a title to life and salvation to get and secure, without which thou shalt be a fire-brand of hell for ever, and hast thou any while, any time to be idle? Hast thou that high, that holy, that weighty work of worshipping and glorifying the great God of heaven and earth, and of working out thy own salvation, and yet hast thou nothing to do? Oh that

I might never hear such language in thy thoughts, much less read it in thy life, when thou hast so much business of absolute necessity to be done, lying upon thy hands, that if all the angels in heaven should offer thee their help, unless the Son of God himself do assist, thou canst not despatch it in many millions of ages ! Lord, I am thine, absolutely thine, universally thine ; all I am is thine, all I have is thine. Oh, when shall I live as thine ? I have no business but with thee, and for thee. Oh that I could live wholly to thee ! I confess it is thine infinite grace to suffer such a worm as I am, to converse with thy glorious Majesty ; that heaven should thus stoop to earth, and the most holy condescend to so great, so grievous a sinner. Oh, affect my heart with thy kindness herein, and so fill me with thy blessed Spirit, that as thou art ever with me, whether I am alone, or in company, so when I awake, I may be still with thee.

I wish that I may esteem solitude, when my God calls me to it, a gracious opportunity for more united and intimate converses with his Majesty. How often hath the company of men distracted my spirit, and hindered me from having my conversation in heaven. Their misapprehensions, and carnal interests, and predominant passions, do frequently bring such prejudice to their associates, that none would be over-fond of their honey who hath once felt their stings. If I converse with wicked men, I hear their oaths, and blasphemies, and ribaldry, their mocks, and taunts, and jeers, against God and his people ; I see their intemperance and profaneness, and injustice, and oppression, and persecution of them that fear the Lord ; I can read in their wicked language, and cursed carriage, their bitterness, and rage, and enmity, against their Maker and Redeemer ; I may behold the body of Christ wounded, and his precious blood trampled on, the law, and love, and worship, and honour, of the blessed God, scorned and despised, and such vileness and wickedness committed in an hour, as shall be bewailed and lamented for ever. Such sights as these call for my deepest sorrow, and the best that I can get by such company is inward trouble and abundant grief ; but it is many to one if they do not make me either directly or indirectly to contract real guilt. Oh what pleasure can I take to be in a room filled with smoke, which will certainly wring tears from mine eyes, and probably smut and defile me ? If I converse with good men, though their company in many respects be desirable, and I have found it to be profitable, and I would prize them whom God esteemeth, and love them that have his beautiful image, and with whom I must live for ever ; yet how many

things are in them to allay the virtue and benefit of their society. Their peevishness, and passion, and pride, and selfishness, which are still too much in them, the difference of their judgments, and dispositions, causeth their company to be far the less eligible and lovely. Besides, their readiness and activeness to propagate their errors, and their power and prevalency to draw others to join with them in their wanderings from the truth, doth not a little abate of that comfort and delight, which I might have in them. Again, their miseries, and wants, and necessities, which are many, and great, and urgent, which I am wholly unable to relieve or remedy, call me to tears and weeping. Once more, their slips, and falls, and weaknesses, and backslidings, which I must observe, and reprove, and bewail, are far from being occasions of joy or pleasure to me. They are at best, as we say of children, certain cares, and uncertain comforts. Though they are roses, they have prickles which offend, as well as their pleasant smell to refresh us; the truest friend I have may occasion me as much trouble as comfort. When I travel with a cheerful good companion, I promise myself much delight in my journey, but anon he falls and wounds himself, or tires, or proves sick, and unable to go further; and instead of going forward, I must stay to attend on him; and thus, instead of being my help, he becomes my hindrance. Indeed I have the more cause to bear with it in another, not knowing how soon it may be my own case; but, however, these accidents which too often fall out, as they speak the benefit of it to one, so also the perplexity and trouble of it to another. If I converse with great or rich men, what disdainful looks do they give me! at what a distance do they behold me! It is hard to obtain the liberty of speaking to them; but if I would obtain their favour it will cost me more than it did the chief captain for his Roman freedom; unless I can gratify their lusts, I must not expect their love. If I can drink, and swear, and curse, and roar, at their hellish prate, it may be they will afford me a good word; but alas, what man in his wits would pay for their best words so dear a price? Their friendship can hardly be got without a breach with my God; and what wise man would lose the goodwill of the Lord for the gain of the whole world? When I have, by many friends, and with much difficulty, and even danger to my soul, procured their favour, how little am I the better for it! The most rotten tree is not so hollow; for as cunning wrestlers they will get within me to give me a fall: the wind itself is not more wavering than they are; except I can be contented to be their footstool, that by their treading on me they may be lifted higher in

the world, I must expect to be quite cast by. It is possible whilst they may make some use of me to decoy and trepan others, or to raise and advance themselves, they may carry me upon their shoulders, as men do their ladders, when there is hopes thereby of climbing to their desired height ; but when that is done, or if the ladder prove too short, they will throw it upon the ground. If I will not always be some way or other making provision for their flesh, I shall be dismissed with the brand of an unworthy fellow. If I converse with mean and poor men, I find but little comfort in their company ; I see their poverty, and indigency, and hunger, and nakedness, which I cannot help or prevent ; I hear their cries, and groans, and complaints, by reason of oppressing landlords, or tyrannical revengeful neighbours, or unfaithful friends, or distempered bodies—all which affect my soul, and grieve me to the heart, that I am ready to sit in the dust, and cry, and groan, and mourn with them. Let me go where I will to converse with any, in this wilderness of the world, I find little but briars, and brakes, and thorns, and thistles, and matter of sorrow and lamentation ; but when I retire alone to converse with my God, I am freed from those distracting clamours and vexations, cries and disturbing noise, and might, could I but leave an ungrateful unbelieving heart behind me, find in him a heaven upon earth. I may, with Moses, go up to Mount Pisgah, and take a view with the prospective glass of faith, of Palestine, and that goodly land flowing with milk and honey. I may enter into the suburbs of the new Jerusalem, taste some clusters of the grapes of Canaan, and view as in a glass those celestial beauties and glories which I hope one day to see face to face, and to be partaker of. O my soul, what needest thou care how much the world scorns thy company, or to what place thy God see fit to banish thee, if thou canst but as Zaccheus, when gotten out of the crowd, climb up into the sycamore of meditation and obtain a sight of thy Saviour ? If he want no company who is with the king, surely thou mayest deny all the company on earth for the King of kings ! Look how lovingly he invites thee to take a turn or two with him alone in the fields. ‘Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields ; there I will give thee my loves.’ Hast thou not many a time sighed out to him, ‘O kiss me with the kisses of thy lips, for thy love is better than wine.’ Lo, he tells thee the place where he will answer thy petition. There will I give thee my loves. Thy bridegroom is bashful, and desirous to satisfy thy longings in secret. Isaac met his bride in the fields, and thou mayest meet thy beloved when thou turnest aside from the world to enter-

tain thyself in solitude. Oh, how pleasant should solitude be to thee for his sake ! What matters it whether thou art driven, or who be the whips that drive thee, when thou art driven farther from men to be nearer the Lord Jesus Christ ? A loving husband is instead of all company to a faithful spouse. Is not Christ dearer to thee than all the world ? Be not thou dejected though thou shouldst be turned as he was into a wilderness, but expect an angel, even the angel of the covenant, to be sent from heaven for thy comfort. Lord, it is my support that wherever I am thou art continually with me. Oh that I were able to say, I am continually with thee. I would willingly, with Jacob, leave all my company to meet thee alone, so I might but as he did, weep in secret, and make supplication, so as to prevail with thee for thy blessing. Though I should find cause to say with David, ' Lovers and friends stand aloof from me ; ' and with Job, ' My friends scorn me ; ' yet, if thou pleasest, by parting me from them, to draw me nearer to thyself, and to afford me more of thy quickening, cheering presence, I shall account their absence a desirable advantage. The best society without thee is as a barren desert, and a howling wilderness ; the greatest solitariness with thee is as a fruitful country and delectable Canaan. How precious are thy thoughts (my thoughts of thee) to me, O God. Let me rather dwell alone in a prison with thy company than in a palace without thee.

I wish that I may be the more careful of my carriage in secret, lest what I intend as an opportunity for my God's service should prove a season and advantage for Satan. The body must be looked to narrowly when it comes out of a hot bath, lest the pores, being open, it should take cold. The soul must be carefully tended when it comes from Christian communion, lest, in solitude, it lose what it hath gained in good company. When the countryman hath been at market, and filled his purse, he is in most danger of robbing as he goeth home alone. The tempter will be sure to be present with me, whoever be absent. He walks to and fro in the earth, and whilst I am in his circuit, I must expect his company. Though he be more bold than welcome, and though I deny his desires, defy his works, and resist him, and sometimes foil him, yet he will still attend to solicit me to folly. Wherever I go, he will find me out ; and whatever I do, I must expect him at my elbow ; he hath a double advantage of me in solitude, partly in that I have no visible second to assist me ; he hopes, when I am alone, it is a good time to set upon me, and that he is strong enough by force to ravish and defile me. Partly in that shame, which restrains from sin in public,

hath no place, no prevalency in private. He will tell me that secrecy may be a curtain to hide my sins from the world's eye, of which I am so much afraid. As Joseph's mistress, he will cry, 'Come lie with me, be bold to sin, to take thy pleasure, for here is no man present to know it, or to reveal it to thy disgrace.' And for God, he hath forgotten, he hideth his face, he will never see it. How shall God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he doth not see, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven. But, O my soul, thy double danger calleth upon thee to be the more vigilant and diligent in minding thy duty. When thou hast no human friend to watch over thee, thou art the more concerned to watch over thyself. They that live far from neighbours are the more liable to thieves, and therefore, if wise, will make up that want by extraordinary watchfulness, and a greater provision of armour and weapons. If one devil be too hard a match for many secure Christians, how unable will one single Christian be to encounter with many, with a legion of devils! Shouldst thou be idle in solitude, or suffer thy thoughts to wander, expect more than good company, and such as will employ thee about works of darkness. Besides, consider, though thy thoughts are mantled from the view of men, yet thy God knoweth thy thoughts afar off, long before thou thinkest them, and will judge the secrets of men's hearts according to his gospel. He that numbereth the stars of heaven numbereth all the thoughts of thy heart: 'I know the things that come into your mind, O house of Israel, every one of them,' Ezek. xi. 5. And he that punisheth men for wicked deeds, doth not let them escape for their evil thoughts: 'Hear, O earth, behold I will bring upon this people the fruit of their thoughts,' Jer. vi. 19. Nay, thy God will scourge men both for and by their thoughts; accusing thoughts are stinging vipers. That worm of conscience which will ever gnaw the sinner's heart, to his inconceivable misery, is bred in his thoughts. Oh, therefore, wash thy heart from wickedness, let not vain thoughts lodge within thee. Remember also, O my soul, if thy most retired thoughts are legible to thy God, then thy secret actions are all open and visible to his eye. Never presume upon sin in hope of secrecy, for though thou mayest cover the candle of creatures with a bushel, yet thou canst not the glorious Sun of righteousness; nothing is hid from his sight. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. Lord, thou hast told me, 'There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed, nor secret which shall not be made known.' I confess my

wicked heart is apt to argue impunity from secrecy, and to think I am invisible to thee, because thou art invisible to the eye of my sense. Oh, affect my heart so thoroughly with thine omniscience and omnipresence that I may keep thy precepts, because all my ways (whether inward or outward) are before thee.

I wish that I may have this comfortable evidence of my sincerity, by the conscientiousness of my behaviour in secret. The lineaments and features of the body are best discovered in the night, when it is stripped naked of those garments which in the daytime covered it, and were not wholly answerable to the proportion of its several parts. The shape and countenance of the soul is much better revealed when it retires from the world, and is freed from those objects and businesses which hurried it hither and thither, possibly much differing from its own inclination. There is no right judging of the patient by his water, till it is settled; nor true discovery of the state of a Christian by his heart, till it be quiet and composed. When men are busy upon the stage of the world, surrounded with spectators, they put on strange habits, and act not their own, but the parts of others, and so are not easily known who or what they are; but he that followeth them into the retiring room, where they undress themselves, may soon discover them. The frame and bent of my heart in private, to sin or holiness, will speak its temper whether good or bad. The soul is not at such liberty to vent itself and to manifest its genius and disposition in its outward actions, as in its inward motions and meditations. External acts may flow from external principles, which as a team of horse draw the cart after it by force, but internal thoughts ever flow from an internal principle, which, as the natural and proper offspring of the mind, discover what its parent is. The laws of men, the fear of punishment, the hope of reward may tie my hands in company; but it is nothing but the fear of my God can bind my heart to its good behaviour in secret. My thoughts are not liable to an arraignment at any earthly bar, nor my person to any arrest from men, for any tumult or disorder in them, because the law of the magistrate can take no cognisance of them, they being locked up from all human eyes in the privy cabinet of my heart. Though I am limited in my words, not to speak what I will, and also in my works, not to do what I will, by reason of that shame or penalty, or ill-will from friends or superiors, which dishonest actions and unseemly expressions may bring upon me; yet my thoughts in this sense are free: I may think what I will, notwithstanding any of these considerations. Again, outward

actions, both good and bad, materially considered, are common both to sinners and saints. What good duties are there, but as to the matter of them, wicked men may perform them as well as the godly? Abstinence from gross sins, praying, fasting, hearing, reading, alms-giving, have been practised by some hypocrites in a larger measure than by some sincere Christians; on the other side, there are few sins so great, but some of the children of God have, at some time or other, been guilty of them. Gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, incest, murder, &c., have been committed by them that were truly sanctified: where then lieth the difference between them, so much as in their usual and predominant thoughts? Once more, my God judgeth of my actions by my thoughts, and therefore, by them I may well judge of my spiritual condition, Isa. x. 7; Gen. xxii. 16, 17. Lord, I have often heard out of thy word, 'Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also;' I know every man will be frequent in thinking of that which he esteems his happiness and treasure. The covetous wretch hugs and embraceth his wealth in his heart and thoughts, when it is out of his sight, and in other men's hands; the adulterer pleaseth himself in the meditation of his wanton dalliances with his foolish minion, when he hath no opportunity for the execution of his lust; the proud man fancieth himself in a fool's paradise, whilst he imagineth multitudes waiting upon him, in the presence-chamber of his crazy brain, with their bare heads, their bended knees, admiring and applauding the worth of his person, the vastness of his parts, and himself as the only epitome of all perfections. Oh, give me that character of thy children, to meditate in thy law day and night. Let my thoughts be conversant about those riches that are not liable to rust, those pleasures which satisfy a rational soul, and that honour which is from God; give me to know that my treasure is in heaven, with thyself, in thy Son, by having my heart and my conversation there also.

I wish that whenever I sequester myself from worldly business, I might leave all my sinful and worldly thoughts behind me. There can no work of concernment be done in secret, unless these disturbers be absent. Should I entertain such guests, I forbid Christ my company. Vicious thoughts are his sworn enemies, and he will not dwell in the same heart, in the same house with them. If I desire him to sit upon the throne of my heart, I must give him leave to cast down every imagination, and to bring every thought to the obedience of himself; places that are full of vermin are not fit for a prince's presence; vain and unnecessary thoughts about

lawful objects are strangers, though not sworn enemies, and will give my best friend distaste. Though a noble person should come to give me a visit, if he should hear me debasing myself to converse needlessly with inconsiderable impertinent fellows, I may look that he should pass by without calling in ; Christ loves not to be entertained in a room full of dust-heaps and cobwebs. If vain thoughts lodge within, the blessed Jesus will stand without ; gold and clay will not mingle ; if these mists arise, and these clouds interpose, they will hinder my sight of the true sun. Besides, my works will be answerable to my thoughts ; if my thoughts be wicked or fruitless, so will my actions be. My hands are but the midwife, to bring my thoughts, the conception of my heart, into the world. My thoughts are the seed that lieth in the ground out of sight ; my works are the crop which is visible to others ; according to the seed, whether good or bad, such will the crop be. If men be so careful to get the purest, the cleanest, and the best seed for their fields, that their harvest may be the more to their advantage ; how much doth it concern me that my heart be sown with pure and holy thoughts, that my crop may tend both to my credit and comfort ! Lord, there is no good seed but what comes out of thy garner. I confess the piercing thorns of vicious thoughts, and the fruitless weeds of vain thoughts, are all the natural product of my heart. Oh, let thy good Spirit plough up the fallow ground of my soul, and scatter in it such seeds of grace and holiness, that my life may be answerable to thy gospel, and at my death I may be translated to thy glory.

I wish that I may in solitude, when I have no men to discourse with, converse with other creatures, and spell the name of my Creator out of them. It is my privilege, that I may with Samson get honey and sweetness by occasional meditation, out of the carcase of every creature. The whole world is a great vast library, and every creature in it a several book, wherein he that runs may read the power, and goodness, and infinite perfections of its Maker. Every object is as a bell, which, if but turned, makes a report of the great God's honour and renown. Some have compared the creation to a musical instrument ; sure I am, every individual in it is a string, which, if touched by serious consideration, will loudly and sweetly proclaim its author's praise. He that hath much stock may well trade high. They who, by every sight, by every sound, by everything felt or tasted, are minded of their Father and fountain, may well be taken up with frequent apprehensions and admirations of him : ' For the invisible things of him from the creation of the

world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom i. 20. The highest and lowest, the kings and worms, the sun and stone, the cedar and hyssop, the smallest inanimate and irrational creatures read to me dumb lectures of my God's might and love; they are so many masters to instruct me, though silently, in his greatness and wisdom. The world below is a glass in which I may see the world above. The works of God are the shepherd's calendar, the ploughman's alphabet, the King of heaven's divinity professors, and why not my catholic preachers? Certainly those several varieties, choice rarities, and excellent contrivances which appear in them, were made as well for my inward soul as outward senses, and chiefly for my soul through my senses. The word of God is food for faith, and so may the works of God nourish faith by sense. Faith seeth God in himself, sense seeth God in his creatures, and, thereby may be helpful to faith. Take a view, O my soul, of thy beloved in those pictures which are always before thee, representing his glorious and eminent perfections. Ah, how strange is it, that he who is so near to thy senses, should be so far from thy thoughts! Try a little what wholesome cordial water thou canst distil out of these herbs and flowers that grow in this earthly Eden, by the fire of meditation: 'Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; or the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?' Job xii. 7-9. Thou needest not judge the attributes and excellencies of God, or the work he requireth of thee, so mysterious that none but men of extraordinary parts can reach or teach them. Though the longest line of created understanding cannot fathom his bottomless perfections, and though his commandments be exceeding broad, yet the meanest creatures do after a sort teach thee his wisdom and power, and thy duty and carriage. Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; as brutish as they are, they may instruct thee in many rare lessons. They will teach thee,—

1. Gratitude and thankfulness to thy Maker and preserver; 'the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know,' Isa. i. 2. If the dullest of beasts, the ox and ass, acknowledge their master, how shouldst thou thy benefactor!

2. Dependence on the fountain of thy being; if they depend on him for provision, wilt not thou? Jezreel crieth to the corn, wine, and oil to nourish her; these cry to the earth, the earth

crieth to the heavens, the heavens cry to God, upon whom they depend, Hosea ii. 19. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing; he giveth to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry, Ps. cxlv. 15, and cxlvii. 9. If the great housekeeper of the world be so careful to fodder his cattle, surely thou mayest believe that he will not starve his children.

3. The dread and awe of thy God; when the lion roareth, all the beasts of the forest tremble. What fear should possess thee, when thy God is incensed, and uttereth his terrible voice in his threatenings! Thy flesh may well tremble for fear of him, and thou hast good cause to be afraid of his righteous judgments.

4. Providence and diligence in thy place and calling; 'Go to the pismire, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; she provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,' Prov. vi. 6-8. If she be so wise as to know her season, and to improve it, how inexcusable wilt thou be if thou shouldst neglect it!

5. Innocency; the sheep will suffer many injuries, and offer none. He went as a sheep to the slaughter, dumb before the shearer, and opened not his mouth.

6. Wisdom and prudence; the serpent will, if possible, secure her head, whatever part of her be wounded. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field; the Christian must be careful to secure his faith; be wise as serpents; ask the fowls of the air, and they will tell thee; how many truths, O my soul, will the very birds chatter out to thee! They will tell thee,—

(1) Concerning thy God, his goodness and mercy. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them falleth to the ground without thy Father's providence,' Mat. x. 29. His providence reacheth the meanest creatures.

(2.) Concerning the wicked one, his cunning and policy. As the eagle, when she seizeth on the carcase, will first pick out the eyes, and then feed on its flesh: so Satan first blindeth the mind, and then leads them hoodwinked to hell. As the eagle carrieth the shell-fish into the air, only that he might break them by their fall, and devour them; so the devil, by his costly courtesy, advanceth many to their destruction, Prov. i. 32. As birds are caught with several baits by the fowler, some with chaff, some with corn, some with day-nets, some with a lowbel; so the arch-fowler hath various ways to seduce and catch poor souls: ye are not ignorant of his devices.

(3.) Concerning thyself, they will tell thee,—

[1.] That heavenly-mindedness is the only way to cheerfulness. Birds sing most when they are got above the earth. The pretty redbreast doth chant it as merrily in September, the beginning of winter, as in March, the approach of summer. Thou mayest give as cheerful entertainment to hoary frosts as to warming beams, to the declining sun of adversity as to the rising sun of prosperity, if thy conversation be in heaven.

[2.] That simple souls are soon seduced and slain. When the larker's day-net is spread in a fair morning, and himself is whirling his artificial motion, by the reflecting lustre of the sun on the wheeling instrument, not only the merry lark and fearful pigeon are dazzled and drawn with admiration; but stouter birds of prey, the merlin and hobby, are invited to stoop, and, gazing on the outward form, lose themselves. So when Satan spreadeth his day-net of pleasure and honour, he allures not only heathens and Indians, but even unsound and secure Christians; 'As the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time,' Eccles. ix. 12.

[3.] That those that would conquer their spiritual enemies must be full of courage and valour. The kite is *audax in minimis, timidus in magnis*, bold in dealing with tame fowl, as chickens and ducks, but cowardly in meddling with wild ones, that will not yield. Give not place to the devil; resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

[4.] The misery and mischief of contention. The hawk thinks constantly to make a prey of the heron, but sometimes the heron, when she cannot by any winding shifts get above the hawk, nor by bemuting his feathers make him flag-winged, resumeth courage out of necessity, and strikes the hawk through the gorge with his bill, and so have both been seen to fall down dead together. So rich men many times presume that they may oppress their inferiors at their pleasure; but the event of their strifes and law-suits (after all their turnings and winding meanders in the law, sought out to get above each other) hath proved the undoing of both.

[5.] The unreasonableness of diffidence and distrust. They will teach thee a lesson of faith, and help to banish our fears. 'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?' Mat. vi. 28.

[6.] The observation of times and seasons. It is thy prudence to

take notice of the storms of judgments, and sunshine of mercy. 'The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,' Jer. viii. 7.

[7.] The pains thou shouldst take for spiritual food. The fowls of the air will fly far for meat; where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. No labour should be thought too great for the meat that endureth to eternal life.

[8.] The regard thou shouldst have to the preservation and safety of thyself and family. They build on high, and make their nests on the tops and small twigs of trees; and will spare it out of their own mouths, to feed their young. He who provides not for his family, is not only worse than an infidel, but also worse than the very birds of the air.

O my soul, proceed further. Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee,—

1. A lesson of humility. Thou art but breathing earth, enlivened dust, as vile as the dirt that every beast of the field trampleth on. 'Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes,' Gen. xviii. 27.

2. A lecture of thy frailty, that thine earthly tabernacle will ere long fall to the ground. 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.'

3. A lesson of fruitfulness. It bringeth forth thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred for one. 'And Isaac sowed in the land, and had a hundredfold increase.'

4. A lesson of faith and trust in God. The earth hangs on nothing, it hangs in the thin air, where a hair ball, nay a straw, will not stay without a support: Job xxvi. 7, 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

Once more, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Though they are mute masters, yet they are great teachers; they declare unto thee,

1. The affection and communion that ought to be amongst saints. Fish of the same kind flock together in shoals. The Greek word for fish is *ἰχθὺς*, which is derived, as some think, from *ἵχνεω*, to come, and *θύω*, to be carried with force and violence, so the fish swim in troops with great force. The safety of saints consisteth much in their society.

2. The misery of want of government. The greater fish devour the lesser; the pike feed upon roach. 'Thou makest men like

fishes of the sea, that have no governor,' Hab. i. 14. So men without magistrates, like cannibals, feed on each other.

3. The folly of men that take not warning by others. Silly fish are caught by the angle or net, and carried to the fire, yet they that remain are still greedy of the bait. Satan takes some sinners with the snares and baits of his temptations, jerks them out of the water of life, and casteth them into the unquenchable fire; yet those that survive are as ready to hearken to his suggestions as if there were no such thing. Ecces. ix. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 26, 'For man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.' 'That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive at his will.'

4. The subtle malice of Satan. When thou seest the fisher baiting his hook, thou mayest think of the policy of the devil, who sugars over his poisoned hooks with seeming profit and pleasures. Eve's apple was candied over with divine knowledge; 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'

5. The multitude of believers that are begotten by the gospel. When the psalmist speaks of the sea, he saith, 'Wherein are things creeping innumerable, both great and small beasts,' Ps. civ. 25. The Latin *piscis* cometh of the Chaldean word *push*, which signifieth, to multiply and increase, for nothing multiplieth more than fish; so the great increase of Christians under the gospel is compared to the number of the fish of the great sea. Ezek. xlvi. 9, 'And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed,' &c.

6. The duty of men to abide in their places. Fishes do not change their element; birds are sometimes aloft in the air, sometimes below on the earth, but fish keep always in the water. 'Let every man abide in the same vocation wherein he is called,' 1 Cor. vii. 20.

7. The benefit of abounding in holiness. Fishes are then sweetest and acceptable to the palate, when they begin to be with spawn. The fruitful Christian is most pleasing to God. 'Herein is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit,' John xv. 8.

8. The noisomeness of sin. Fish cannot abide any ill savour; when the pump of the ship is emptied, they fly from the stench and smell of that nasty water; 'hating the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 23.

9. The necessity of faith and holiness. No fish were counted clean, but such as had fins and scales; the fins guide the fish, the scales are a defence and ornament to them; faith is a Christian's guide, and good works his garment. As the fish by the fins are raised from the mud to the top of the water, so faith lifteth the soul from earth to heaven; it is the evidence of things not seen. Good works are as scales, a shield to a Christian, and are not unfitly called the breastplate of righteousness. Thus, O my soul, though thou couldst not read a line in any printed book, thou mightest read many good lessons in this natural book. Even things without mouths can preach and speak thy Maker's praise and pleasure; their voices are heard in every language, and their words go to the end of the world, Ps. xix. 4.

Wheresoever, O my soul, thou goest, thou mayest by meditation get some steps nearer thine eternal weal. Art thou walking? Consider, thou art but a sojourner and traveller in this world, thy life is a continued motion, thy way is the Son of God, thy home is the Father's house, thy motion is painful, thy way is perfect, and thy home will be full of pleasure. Why shouldst thou wander and come wide, or loiter and come short of heaven? Oh, be sure to walk in the right way, and be content to travel hard, that thy safe way may find its end in solace, and thy painful walk make thy home more welcome. Art thou walking in thine orchard? Thou mayest from every tree, as a text, gather many profitable doctrines and inferences; take a turn or two among the trees, and thou mayest find much wholesome fruit on them.

1. Some trees are profitable for one purpose, some for another; some to quench thirst, some to comfort and refresh the inward parts, &c. So the children of God are diversely serviceable, according to the different gifts bestowed on them by the Holy Ghost.

2. Every living fruit-tree is in some measure fruitful; though some bring forth more fruit, some less, yet all bring forth some. All living Christians are thriving and bearing fruit; though some are more eminent for growth and proficiency in grace, yet all bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. The hypocrite, like a dead stake in a hedge, continueth at a stay, is without good fruit, nay, groweth more rotten every month than other; but the true saint, like the living tree, the longer he continueth rooted in Christ, the more abundant he is in the work of the Lord.

3. The best trees have a winter, wherein they seem to be dead and barren, yet they have their life and sap at that time remaining in the root. Christians under desertions and temptations may be

judged by themselves and others to be dead and undone, but even at such seasons their life is hid with Christ in God; though they may fall foully, they cannot fall finally.

4. Fruit-trees are tossed and shaken by the wind, but there is no danger of their overturning or death, whilst their root remains firm in the earth. Saints may be stirred and tossed by the high winds of Satan's and the world's temptations, but can never be overthrown, because they are rooted in Christ. Grace may be shaken in, but never out of, their souls.

5. The winter which the trees suffer in frosts and snow, and the continuance of their sap underground, is profitable for them, and helpful to their greater growth in spring; so the various and severest providences of God towards his people, are serviceable to their good, and their seeming delusions, in order to their greater growth; as children under a fit of an ague, they may at present be weakened and stand at a stay, but afterward they shoot up the more.

6. The fruits of trees are harsh and little worth till they are grafted; so the fruits of all by nature are wild and unpleasant to God, till they are grafted into Christ.

7. Those trees that stand most in the sun, bring forth the sweetest and the largest fruit; so those believers that live nearest God by a holy communion, do the more abound in the fruits of righteousness, and their fruits are the more acceptable, springing from a principle of love to God.

8. The more the boughs are laden, the more they bow down to the earth; so the more abundant they are in holiness, the more humble and lowly they will be.

9. The husbandman chooseth what plants he pleaseth to bring into his orchard; and his grafting of them, and care about them, makes the difference between them and others: so God chooseth whom he pleaseth, out of the wilderness and waste of the world; and his grafting them by regeneration, and conduct of them by his Spirit, distinguisheth them from all the rest of the earth.

10. The leaves drop from the trees in the beginning of autumn. Such is the friendship of this world: whilst the sap of wealth and honour lasteth with me, and whilst I enjoy a summer of prosperity, my friends swarm in abundance; but in the winter of adversity they will leave me naked. Oh, how miserable is that person who hath no friends but of this world! How happy is he that hath the sap of grace, which will remain with him in the coldest winter! Thus, O my soul, whilst thou art walking with regenerate creatures, thou mayest better thy spiritual senses, and walk with thy

Creator. Oh, how may thy thoughts be raised to the trees that are planted in the house of the Lord, and flourish in the courts of thy God, that are planted by the rivers of waters, and bring forth their fruit in due season! Lord, I confess thy goodness in giving me so many ushers, yet, alas, my dull and blockish heart to this day hath not learned those lessons which thou hast set me by them. Unless thou, who art the chief Master of the assemblies, undertake the work, all will be in vain. Thy creatures are as burning glasses, they cannot make the sun to shine, but when it doth vouchsafe its heavenly beams, they help to increase both light and heat. It is thine own promise, that all Zion's children shall be taught of God. Let it please thee to undertake the tuition and instruction of thine untoward scholar. Oh, do thou spiritualise my heart, and then I shall spiritualise all the works of thine hand; do thou enlighten me so powerfully by thy blessed Spirit, that I may turn every spark into a candle, and every candle into a star, and every star into a sun; and by the light of all be enabled to see more of thy beautiful face and blessed perfections.

I wish that I may not only taste by occasional, but make a full meal, by set and serious meditation, of that food which my God provideth for my soul. If a drop, a little, be reviving and strengthening, surely a good draught will yield me more comfort and profit. If ever it be true it is here, the best is at the bottom. That rare object which upon a transient view gives me some delight, upon a permanent vision will afford more pleasure. If my meat abide in my body, it will afford me the better nourishment. Fluxes in the mind, as in the outward man, are arguments and authors of weakness. The milk must be set some time before it will turn into cream. The longer physic remains within me, the more operative it will be. The flame of David's extraordinary affection to God's law, was kindled at the hot fire of his constant meditation. 'Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' His love was hot burning coals. He speaks not barely by way of affirmation, I love thy law; and by way of interrogation, How love I thy law? but also by way of admiration, 'Oh how love I thy law!' But his abiding thoughts on it were the warm beams, which, beating constantly upon him, put him into such a violent heat: 'It is my meditation all the day.' As the hen, by sitting on her eggs some weeks, warmeth them and hatcheth young ones; so may I, by applying savoury subjects home to my soul, and brooding some considerable time on them, bring forth new affections and new actions. Though my affections seem as dead as the Shunammite's son, by stretching

my thoughts thus on them, I shall warm and enliven them. Many blows drive a nail to the head, many thoughts settle a truth on the heart. Oh that I might not only at some times exchange a few words with the subject of my meditation occasionally, as I do with a friend passing by my door, but also at set times invite it, as Lot did the angels, to stay with me all night, being confident it will pay me bountifully, as they him, for my charges in its entertainment. Yet I would not only have my affections renewed, but also my actions reformed by my meditations. If I meditate what is good to be done, and do not the good meditated on, I lose my labour, and take much pains to no purpose. Cogitation is the sowing of the seed, action is the springing of it up; the former is hidden and under the ground, the latter is visible, and many are the better for it. If the seed should still lie buried in the earth, it is but lost and thrown away, it is the springing of it up that causeth the harvest. Meditation is the womb of my actions; action is the midwife of my meditations. An evil and imperfect conception, if it hath the favour of a birth, yet the mind is but delivered of a monster, and of that which had better been stifled in the womb than ever seen the light. A good and perfect conception, if it want strength for its birth, perisheth and comes to nothing. Like Ephraim, it playeth the part of an unwise son, and stayeth in the place of the breaking forth of children. It is pity that such conceptions should prove abortive, or such beautiful children be still-born. Lord, thou hast appointed me to meditate seriously on thy statutes, and those excellent subjects contained in them. I confess my heart is unwilling to this needful and gainful work, and apt to be unfaithful in the management of this sacred duty. If thou pleasest not to lay thy charge upon it, and to use thy power over it, it will either wholly omit it, or perform it to no purpose. Why should it not dwell now upon thee by meditation, with whom I hope to dwell for ever? What unspeakable joy might I receive in and from thyself, could I but get above this earth and flesh! Oh, who will bring me into that strong city not made with hands? Who will lead me into thy holy hill of Zion by meditation? Wilt not thou, O God? Grant me thy Spirit, I beseech thee, that my spirit, which lives upon thee, may be united in thinking of thee, and may live wholly to thee.

O my soul, now thou art spending thyself in wishes, set upon the work, and turn thy prayers into practice, for an example and pattern to others, and for thy profit. There is one attribute of thy God to which thou art infinitely indebted and beholden for every

moment's abode on this side the unquenchable fire, even his patience and long-suffering. Ah, where hadst thou been at this hour had not that attribute stood thy friend? Let the kindness thou hast received from it encourage thee to a serious consideration of it. Old acquaintance and former courtesies may well plead and prevail also with thee to afford it entertainment for some time in thy thoughts.

What is this patience of thy God to which thou art so much engaged? It is his gracious will, whereby he beareth long, and forbeareth his sinful creatures. It is that attribute whereby he beareth their reproach, and forbeareth revenge. It is sometimes called slowness to anger, Ps. ciii. 8. He is not easily overcome by the provocations of men, but striveth to overcome them by his patience. A small matter doth not incense him to anger; he is not presently put into a fury, and his wrath is not easily heightened into revenge. 'Thou wast a transgressor from the womb; for my name's sake I will defer mine anger, and refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. xlvi. 8, 9. It is sometimes called long-suffering, Exod. xxxiv. 6. He expecteth and waiteth a long time for the repentance of sinners. He doth not only pity our misery, which is his mercy, and notwithstanding all our wickedness and unworthiness load us with benefits, which is his grace, but also bears many days, many years, with our infirmities, which is his long-suffering. Men are transgressors in the womb; before they are able to go they go astray, yet after a thousand and thousand affronts, from the womb to the tomb, he bears with them. 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.' Infants, or green wood, are fit fuel for the eternal fire, yet he forbears rotten oaks and old sinners. They owe an infinite debt to justice, and are liable every moment to the prison of hell; but patience stoppeth the arrest of vengeance. He endureth 'with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,' Rom. ix. 22.

This patience of thy God is amplified by considering,—

1. How odious sin is to him. The evil of sin never obtained a good look from God. 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' He seeth all sins with an eye of observation, but he seeth no sin with an eye of approbation. It is not out of any love to sin that he is so long-suffering toward sinners, for sin is the object of his anger and dislike. 'He is angry with sinners every day.' Sin is the object of his wrath, which is anger boiled up to its greatest heat. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. Nay, it is the object of his

hatred, which is the highest degree of detestation. Hatred is abhorrency heightened to an implacability. Bare anger might be appeased, wrath might be pacified, but hatred is irreconcilable. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' 'Six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination to him.' There is an antipathy in his nature against the smallest sin, as sin is contrary to his being, law, and honour. Though he be so perfect a God that no sin can be hurtful to him, yet he is so pure a God that every sin is hateful to him. Therefore the Scripture, speaking of God after the manner of men, represents it as offensive to every of his senses. It grates his ears, and thence he complains of the cry of Sodom. It provoketh his eyes, and hence it is said, 'Evil cannot stand in thy sight, neither canst thou behold the workers of iniquity.' It oppresseth his feeling, wherefore he is said to be pressed with sin, as a cart is pressed with sheaves. It displeaseth his smell, and so he calleth sinners rotten carcases, open sepulchres, that send forth noisome savours. He proclaims to the world the offensiveness of sin to his sacred Majesty by the names he gives it in his royal law, wherein he forbids it. He calls it dung, mire, vomit, filth, superfluity of naughtiness, filthiness, a menstruous cloth, a plague, an issue, an ulcer. And yet, though sin be thus infinitely loathsome and odious to him, he bears with men that are all over infected with it in the highest degree.

2. The condition of sinners. His patience is much heightened by considering who they are that distaste and provoke him with their sins. They are his creatures, the work of his hands. They rebel against him, who were made and are every day maintained by him. They forget him that formed them, and fight against the fountain of their beings. They are his obliged creatures, such on whom he hath laid millions of engagements. They cannot speak a word, or think a thought, or fetch their breath without him. They live every moment wholly upon his merey. Hear, O heaven ! give ear, O earth ! he hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. He is daily multiplying mercies on them, and yet they are daily multiplying iniquities against him. They are creatures full of enmity against him. They sin against him out of hatred of him. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' If it could lay a plot to take away the life of God, it hath malice enough to put it in execution. Hence there appears little reason why he should pity or spare them. If a man find his enemy, will he let him go ? Yet God is patient towards them.

3. The multitude and greatness of sins and sinners. He cannot look down from heaven but every moment he beholds millions of transgressors proclaiming war against him, walking contrary to him, and provoking him before his face. The whole world is a field wherein the inhabitants are continually, with drums beating, and colours flying, with brazen foreheads and stubborn hearts, letting fly whole volleys of sins and impieties against heaven. Their whole work is to stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty. From the highest to the lowest they disown his authority, deny his dominion, deface his image, dishonour his name, despise his laws, scorn his love, and mock at his threatenings. 'All sin, and come short of the glory of God.' The whole earth is a kind of hell in regard of blasphemy and pollutions, and all manner of provocations. His pure eyes behold the devil-worship amongst the heathen, the impostor-worship amongst Turks, the idol-worship amongst papists, and the belly and flesh-worship amongst protestants. He seeth in the rich, oppression, atheism, swearing, cursing, pride, persecution of others; in the poor, envying, murmuring, carnal-mindedness, drunkenness, and ignorance; in the young, headstrong passions, uncleanness, youthful lusts; in the ancient, impatience, covetousness, profaneness. He understandeth the several hearts of men, so many sinks of sin; and the several lives of men, so many treasons and conspiracies against his being and law; and so many men in the world, so many monsters of wickedness. Though he enjoin them his precepts, they cast them behind their backs. Though he would allure them by his promises, they scorn them as babies to fool children withal. Though he would affright them with his comminations and threatenings, they laugh at the shaking of those spears, and look on all his words no better than wind. Though he endeavours by his works to reclaim them from their wickedness, sometimes loading them with his benefits, that his goodness might lead them to repentance—sometimes scourging them in measure, that they might not be condemned with the world—yet they slight his favour, are not afraid of his fury, and, by their impenitency and continuance in sin, dare him to his very face.

He sendeth his ministers to tell them of their danger, he sets up conscience within them to mind them of their duty, he hangs up others before them as spectacles of his wrath, that they might take warning and escape destruction; and yet they laugh at ministers for their weeping over them, check conscience for its boldness to

check them, and think themselves wiser than to be frightened with the scarecrows of God's judgments on others. They sin against his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his faithfulness, his patience, his providence, his ordinances, his Son, his Spirit, his law, his gospel, their own promises and engagements, the voice and cry of his vicegerent within them, and that day after day, and this throughout the whole earth; and yet, notwithstanding all these high affronts and notorious indignities, repeated and continued every moment, he beareth with them.

The meekest man in the world, no not all the men in the world, have patience enough for one sinner; what patience then hath God, that beareth so much with a world of sinners! It is the saying of one,¹ If but any tender-hearted man should sit one hour in the throne of God Almighty, and look down upon the earth, as God doth continually, and see what abominations are done in that hour, he would undoubtedly the next set all the world on fire. Oh, how patient is that God that beareth with it so many years! The meekest man upon earth could not endure the frowardness of one people, and they the best people in the world; the peevishness of the Jews drove him into that passion, for which he was excluded the earthly Canaan. How meek and patient then is God, who beareth the evil manners of all the nations of the world, the greatest part of which make it their work to spit their venom, and malice, and blasphemy in his face every day! The whole world is a volume, in every leaf, and in every line of which patience, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, are written in broad letters.

4. How he knoweth all their sins. He doth not forbear sinners from ignorance of their sins; he seeth and knoweth all things. All the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men. Men bear with others, because they know not their secret treasons and heart-rebellions; but God knoweth all the wickedness that is committed in the world, he telleth man his thoughts. All secret sins are public to him; all men are naked and open to him. He knoweth every thought, word, and action of every man as exactly as if he had none but him to mind. His knowledge is infinite; he knoweth all the sins of all men clearly; they are as visible to his eye as if they were written with the brightest sunbeam on the clearest crystal. He knoweth all the sins of men distinctly, not in a confused heap or lump, but one by one; knoweth all the sins of all men every moment. All the sins that

¹ Mr Bolton.

are, that ever were, or that ever shall be, are continually in his eye and view.

5. How he is able to revenge himself every moment. David did bear with Joab, because the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him. He was a tender plant that was scarce rooted, and feared to be overturned by their fury ; but God beareth with sinners though he be Almighty, and can do all things. He can as easily turn the sinner into hell, as tell him of hell ; he can blow the sinner with his breath into the bottomless pit. By the blast of God they perish, by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed. The most secret sin is within the sight of his countenance, and the strongest sinner within the reach of his vengeance. This is wonderful indeed ; he is infinite in patience who is infinite in power. ‘ The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power,’ saith the prophet, Nahum i. He that can in a moment speak the whole creation into nothing, beareth many years with his rebellious provoking creatures. The Lord looked upon the Egyptians and troubled them. It is an easy matter to look, especially for him that made the eye. A glance of his eye will overthrow the proudest, stoutest sinner. Men are great in anger, who are little in power ; their hearts are good, I should say bad enough, speedily to ruin such as offend them ; but their hands are weak and straitened, that we may thank their want of power, not their patience, for our preservation. But God, who is all power, is all patience. He that can spurn the whole world into endless woe, more easily than all the men of the world can spurn a football into the water, forbeareth them year after year.

6. He doth not only forbear, but also do men good. His goodness towards them is positive as well as privative ; he upholds them in their beings, protects them in their goings, supports them by his power, supplieth them by his providence, as well as forbear them by his patience. His enemies are hungry, he feeds them ; they are thirsty, he gives them drink. He gives them that corn, and wine, and oil, which they bestow on Baal ; he bestows on them those mercies with which they fight against him ; he blesseth them with life, health, strength, food, raiment, sleep, reason, friends, peace, liberty, riches, honours, the gospel, sermons, Sabbaths, offers of pardon and life, whilst they persist in their provocations against him. He is at infinite cost and charge, night and day, in sending provision into the camp of his enemies.

7. He wooeth us to be reconciled. He doth not only command and enjoin rebellious man to throw down his weapons of unrighteousness, but even prayeth and entreateth him with much impor-

tunity to accept of peace and pardon. 'As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' He is earnest and instant by his ministers, by the motions of his Spirit, by the calls and convictions of conscience, that he might persuade miserable men to be happy, 2 Cor. v. 15, 20; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15; Isa. lxx. 2, and xlii. 14. 'I have stretched out my hand all the day long to a rebellious house, that have walked in a way that is not good.'

8. He doth all this without any expectation of advantage to himself. He gains not by our holiness, neither is he a loser by our wickedness. The arrows of sin are always too short to reach him, and he is so high that he is far above our highest service, our blessings, and praises. Infinite perfection admits of no addition. 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?' He begs as hard as if it were for his own life, but it is wholly for ours; he loseth not the least, if we be lost; he saves nothing by our salvation; it is all one to the sun whether men open their eyes and are refreshed with its light, or shut their eyes and behold nothing of its glorious splendour.

9. He forbeareth us, who is infinitely our superior. It were much for a king to bear with affronts from a vile beggar; but it is infinitely more for the King of kings to bear with indignities, and treasons, and malice, and hatred, from his vile creatures. Oh, the patience of God! Man cannot suffer a disrespect from his fellow; but God doth from them that are infinitely his inferiors. The apostles were good men, yet upon a little disrespect from some of the same make and mould with themselves, they presently call for fire from heaven. What patience and goodness is then in God, who beareth with such innumerable and notorious affronts from his slaves and vassals, from them that in comparison of him are much less than nothing!

10. He warneth before he striketh; he threatens that he might not punish, and thundereth with his voice, that he might not overthrow us with his hand; he shoots off his warning pieces, that he might spare his murdering pieces. Men that are set upon revenge are silent. When Absalom resolved on the destruction of Amnon, he spake not a word to him, either good or bad; but God tells men fully what is intended against them by his justice, that it might be prevented by their fitness for mercy. The bitterest cup of threatenings hath the sweet of love at the bottom.

11. He punisheth temporally, that he might spare eternally. When he is forced to strike, he uses the rod that he might not use the axe ; we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world ; he forceth tears in this world to prevent eternal weeping. How many a man's way doth he hedge up with thorns, that he might not find the path to eternal death.

12. He is thus patient towards men, who did not wait at all on angels. The angels were more noble creatures, and able to have done him more and better service than man ; yet, when they sinned, he did not wait a moment for their repentance ; but he stretches out his hand all the day long to man. He that would not wait upon disloyal courtiers, waits upon rebellious beggars.

Consider the causes of it.

The moving cause is his own gracious nature. Men forbear punishing malefactors, sometimes because they are related to them, sometimes from hope of advantage by them, sometimes because they are afraid of them ; but God forbears none upon any such grounds. His goodness is the only string that tieth his hand from striking ; ' Yea, many years didst thou forbear them, for thou art a gracious and a merciful God,' Neh. ix. 30, 31.

The final cause is manifold.

1. That he might exalt his great name. It is light straw that upon the least spark takes fire. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass by infirmities ; mean and low spirits are most peevish and passionate ; sickly and weak persons are observed to be the most impatient. God makes his power known, when he endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. He intendeth the advancement of his praise in the lengthening of his patience : ' For my name's sake will I defer mine anger ; for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. xlviii. 9.

2. That sinners might amend. He is patient, that men might not perish. ' The Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' He defers their execution, that they might sue out their pardon. The Lord waiteth, not that he might be blessed in himself, but that he may be gracious to sinners.

3. That impenitent sinners might be left without excuse. If sinners that are turned out of the womb into hell, will justify God, surely those upon whom he waited twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty years for their conversion, will condemn themselves. If all

mouths shall be stopped, then they that tasted so largely of forbearing mercy may well be silent. Oh, how little will they have to say for themselves upon whom grace waited so many years, knocking hard at the door of their hearts for acceptance, and they refused to open to it, or bid it come in. How justly will they suffer long in the other world, to whom God was so long-suffering to no purpose in this world, Rom. iv. 2.

How fully, O my soul, doth the Scripture mention this patience of thy God! 'The Lord passed by and proclaimed his name, The Lord, The Lord God, gracious, long-suffering.' Though sinners try his patience by their heaven-daring provocations, yet the Lord is gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness; oftentimes they do their utmost to kindle the fire of his anger, but many a time turned he away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath. What monuments of his patience hath he reared up in his word! It is also written in broad letters in his works; he bore with the Jews after their unparalleled murder of his own Son, above forty years. The old world had larger experiences of his forbearance. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.' The Egyptians, though cruel persecutors of his own people, that were as dear to him as the apple of his eye, yet were suffered four hundred years. He beareth with men till he can no longer forbear. The woman with child is forced, though she hold out long, to fall in labour at last. 'I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman,' Isa. xlii. 14.

O thou dear friend of mankind, that thou wert imprinted in my thoughts, engraven in my heart, and always before mine eyes! O my soul, consider this long-suffering of thy God, till thou tastest some relish of its sweetness! This name of thy God is as ointment poured out, which yieldeth a refreshing fragrantcy; hath it been all thy days so near thee, and done so much for thee, and wilt thou not give it some warm entertainment within thee? Hast thou not infinite cause to cry out, 'Oh the depth of the patience and forbearance of God!' As soon as thou wast conceived, thou wast corrupted; before thou wast born, sin was brought forth in thee; thy God might have turned thee out of thy mother's belly into the belly of hell; devils might have been the midwife to deliver thy mother of such a monster, and their dungeon of darkness the first place in which thou didst breathe; yet he, who might have caused eternal death to have trodden upon the heels of thy natural birth, spared thee. Had he then suffered the roaring lions, his executioners, to

have dragged thee to their own den, he had got himself glory, and prevented much dishonour, which thou hast since brought to his name. As thou didst grow up, sin grew up in thee, and patience grew up with thee. Numberless have thine iniquities been, and his advantages for thy destruction, yet he hath forborne thee. What hath he got by all his long-suffering towards thee? He might have ruined thee, to his eternal honour; but his forbearance hath seemed to impair the revenues of heaven. Wicked men question his power, and good men quarrel with his providence, and all because of his patience. When some sinners are hanged on gibbets, as spectacles of his justice, others are kept in the more awe; but if judgment be not speedily executed, the hearts of the sons of men are set in them to do mischief. The thanks that are usually paid him for his patience, are indignities and affronts; the sleeping of vengeance occasioneth the awakening of sin. Besides, their thoughts of him are the more profane as well as their actions. If he be patient towards the sinner, he is judged a party in the sin. 'These things thou didst, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself;' because he is silent, they judge him consenting. O my soul, may not thy God be well called the God of all patience, when he aboundeth so much in it, though he be so great a loser by it? Was not the patience of thy Redeemer on earth wonderful, in bearing such mockings, smitings on the cheek, spittings in his face, scourgings on his back? But thy Redeemer in heaven endureth more affronts every moment against his divine nature, than he did all his time of abode in this world, against his human nature. Oh, why art thou no more warmed with it, and wondering at it? Even a Saul was so affected with the forbearance of David, that he should spare his enemy when he had him in his hands, and might as easily have cut his throat as the skirt of his garment, that he lift up his voice and wept. And art not thou affected with the patience of thy God, in whose hand is thy life, and breath, and all thy comforts, who can with a glance of his eye turn thee into the fiery furnace, against whom thou art an open traitor and professed rebel, that he should spare thee so many years, and instead of heaping up judgments on thee, lade thee with his benefits? Consider,

1. He is not patient towards all men as he hath been towards thee. Some have found justice arresting them immediately upon their contracting of new debts, and haling them presently to hell upon the commission of their sin. There are those of the serpent's brood, that have been crushed in the egg, and others that have

stayed longer, have been ripe for ruin, before they had attained their full age. Though the creditor hath forborne thee five hundred talents, yet he hath not forborne some others five hundred pence; wrath hath sometimes followed sin so close, that it hath lodged where sin supped. Gehazi's leprosy and lie were contemporary; Absalom's life and treason against his father expired together. A sudden thunderbolt from heaven hath struck some into hell without any forerunner to give warning of it, yet thy God hath spared thee.

2. He that forbore thee who hast so often offended him, did not forbear angels a moment, after they had once offended. Behold the severity and goodness of God! Towards angels, the highest and noblest house of the creatures, severity; towards thee, goodness. He that stated those excellent natures in an irrecoverable condition of woe and misery upon their first fault, hath borne with and forborne thee after millions of affronts.

3. He that spares thee did not spare his own Son. The Son of God did no sooner stand in the place of sinners, but it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin. Though he were free from sin, he was a man of sorrows; and thou who art little else than sin hast not so much as tasted what such sorrows are. Thy God hath forborne thee, a monster of rebellion and wickedness, when he would not in the least forbear him who was a miracle of obedience and dutifulness; nay, he did not spare him, that he might spare thee, and would not forbear him, because he intended to forbear thee. Wonder, O my soul, at this transcendent grace and goodness! Is it possible for thee to consider how a sudden arrow hath shot others dead on thy right and left hand! how angels themselves, upon their first breach of the divine law, were without any pity or forbearance reserved in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day! Nay, how the Son of God's boundless love, who never offended him, for becoming only a surety for others' sins, was without the least forbearance arrested and forced to pay the utmost farthing; and that thou who art a lump of lust, a sink of sin, an old enemy and traitor against the crown and dignity of the King of heaven, after thousands and millions of provocations against law and gospel, light and love, precepts and promises, are to this day spared! Canst thou, I say, consider all this, and not be transported into a high and holy passion of love and admiration, at such unparalleled patience? Thou mayest well say with the holy apostle, 'In me Jesus Christ hath shewed forth all long-suffering and patience,

for an example to them that should hereafter believe in him unto eternal life.'

O my soul, what dost thou think of these things? Was ever patience represented in such lively lovely colours? Thou mayest now fully satisfy thyself in the reason of thine abode so many years on this side the unquenchable lake. Dost thou ask, Why was I not cut off from the womb, and hurried through the light of this world to blackness of darkness for ever? I answer, Because thy God is patient. Dost thou ask, Though I was not as a poisonous viper, crushed to death, as soon as brought forth, with the foot of divine wrath, for the venom which was in me; yet when I put it forth to the injury of others, and did spit it in the face of God himself, why was I spared? I answer, Because God is patient. Thou sinnest often, every day, every hour, in every thought, in every word, in every deed, and he spares as often, because he is patient. Thou readeest of a season when the patience of the saints doth especially triumph. 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints;' this world is the stage, and this life is the time, wherein the patience of thy God doth act its part, to the amazement of all judicious spectators; here is the faithfulness and patience of thy God. Oh that I could affect and admire it, embrace and entertain it according to its worth! Oh that my heart were filled with its warmth, my tongue with its praise, and my life with its end! Oh thou that art so much in favour with God, and so great a friend to men, that thou wert engraven upon the palms of my hands, and thy walls were ever before me! Oh that thy noble deeds, and what wonders thou hast wrought for the children of men, were written for the generations to come, that the people yet unborn might praise the Lord! When, oh when shall this patience of my God make a suitable impression upon my spirit! I live upon it, I live by it, I had been a firebrand of hell at this moment had it not been for it, yet how great a stranger am I to it! It goeth with me when I walk abroad, it abides with me when I stay at home, it followeth me up and down day and night; I am beholden to it for my life and all my mercies, for my present enjoyments and future expectations; yet, alas, how little am I affected with it! I wonder at the patience of some choice Christians, that hold their tongues when others revile them, and their hands when others assault them; and do not wonder at the patience of my God, when their injuries are nothing to his, either for nature or number; and their patience to his far less than the smallest drop to the ocean. O my soul, how wilt thou be able to answer for this senseless stupidity? Must

the candles of creatures be gazed at with amazement, and thy God alone be neglected? Is a beam of the sun worthy of such admiration, and not its glorious body worthy of much more? Wilt thou not value a pearl of such infinite price, and disesteem all the meekness and forbearance of men, in comparison of the patience of thy God? Oh, where is thy judgment, that thou valuest so little such unsearchable riches, that thou dost not cry out, Oh the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the forbearance of God? Where are thy affections, that they do not cling about it, cleave to it, close with it, delight in its presence, and desire its continuance? Where is thy heart, that it doth not taste its sweetness, smell its savour, love its gracious author, and meditate on its precious nature and pleasant effects night and day? Where are my spiritual senses, that they are not conversant about so worthy an object? I cannot open mine eyes, but I may behold it in everything that is visible. The food, and raiment, and life, and health, and strength, and liberty, that I and others enjoy, present the patience of God unto me. Every friend I converse with, every drunkard and unclean person and atheist—yea, every man I meet, tells me, God is patient. The oaths, and curses, and murders, and adulteries, and blasphemies, and profaneness of wicked men, cry aloud in mine ears, that God is patient. The persecutions, and oppressions, and prayers, and cries, and tears of good men, proclaim to my conscience, that God is patient. The Sabbaths and ordinances, and seasons of grace, and offers of pardon and life, which both good and bad enjoy, speak plainly and distinctly, The Lord is patient. Oh that mine eyes could see it, mine ears hear it, and mouth taste it, my mind discern it, and my soul relish it in all these! O thou beautiful beam, darted from the Sun of righteousness, that callest poor mortals to life, when they are at the brink of death, thou that art the wonder of glorious angels, and glorified saints, be thou unto me as a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphor, always unto me; let me love thee much for my own sake, because thou hast done so much for me, but most for the Lord's sake, because he is all in all unto me.

Well, O my soul, how wilt thou requite the kindness thou hast received from this patience of thy God? When Ahasuerus, a heathen, had read and considered how Mordecai had saved his life, by discovering the two traitors that sought to lay hands on the king, he cried out, What honour hath been done to Mordecai for this? and could take no rest till he had given him some signal honour. Thou hast read, for thy whole life is a book written within and without with it, how the patience of thy God hath

saved thy life, the life of thy soul, when sin and Satan conspired together to take it away ; now wilt thou not say within thyself, What honour hath been done to the patience of God for this ? and be unsatisfied till thou hast done it some honour, for this good office it hath done thee ? What love doth that friend deserve who saves thy life ? What esteem doth that hand of pity merit, that keeps thee out of the bottomless pit ? What thanks is that messenger worthy of, that brings thee, a condemned sinner, certain news of a reprieve, and great hopes of a pardon ? Surely the respect thou owest to the patience of God, which doth as much for thee as all this, should be very great, especially considering thy disrespects formerly to the God of patience have been very grievous. Lord, I acknowledge I have formerly much abused thy patience, using it as an encouragement to profaneness, and turning thy grace into wantonness ; but now through thy strength I will no longer despise the riches of thy forbearance, but be led through thy goodness to repentance. I know thou intendest it as a city of refuge to the penitent, not as a sanctuary to the presumptuous. Oh, let me never make it a pillow for a hard heart, but a plaster for a wounded spirit ! Let this servant of thine, and friend of mine, obtain his errand, and accomplish the end for which thou hast sent him. Thou sparest me here that thou mightest spare me hereafter, thou waitest upon me that thou mightest be gracious unto me, and art long-suffering, because not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to repentance. Oh that therefore I might wait upon thee in all thy providences and ordinances for grace, that so thy long-suffering may be unto me salvation ! Thou hast told me, Though the sinner live a hundred years, and God prolong his days, yet it shall not go well with the wicked. His preservation is but a reservation to the sorer and great destruction. Though thou sufferest long, thou wilt not suffer always ; and when thou strikest impenitent ones, the slowness of thy pace will be recompensed in the heaviness of thy hand. The longer the child of vengeance is in the womb of the threatening, the bigger it groweth, and the more pain it will put the sinner to, when it cometh to the birth of its execution. Oh how dreadful will my doom be, when thou comest to reckon with me for all thy patience, if I do not at this day prevent it by repentance ! If thy patience do not now make me bend, hereafter it will make me bleed ; it is a sweet friend, but a bitter enemy ; no fury like that which is extracted out of abused patience. It were far better to be sent from the mother's breasts to everlasting burnings, than to live many years at the charge of patience,

and then to die impenitent. If I cause thee to suffer long now in vain, thou wilt cause me to suffer long in the other world, and the more dreadfully for thy long-suffering in this. Since thou art gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, oh take me not away in thy long-suffering, but give me to mind in this day of thy patience, the things that concern mine everlasting peace, that I may to eternity give thee honour and praise for thy wondrous and boundless patience. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness, on a week-day from morning to night.

Fourthly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness every week-day. I have spoken, in the first part, how a Christian may make religion his business on a Lord's-day; I shall therefore in this place discover how he may do it on a week-day.

Every day with a godly man is a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Godliness is not his holy day's, or high day's, but every day's work, and his exercise every part of every day: 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes,' not by fits and starts, but 'always unto the end,' Ps. cxix. 112. The flower called heliotropium or turn-sol, turneth its face towards the sun from morning to night, so doth the true Christian towards the Sun of righteousness. The command of God is: 'Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long,' Prov. xxiii. 17. And the carriage of holy men is answerable hereunto: 'The twelve tribes served God instantly day and night,' Acts xxvi. 7. As the angels, though they are employed up and down in the world for the service of the saints, yet they always behold the face of their Father; so the children of God, though they are occupied about civil and natural actions, are called hither and thither as their occasions are, yet they pass the whole time of their sojourning here in fear, 1 Peter i. 17. That watch is naught that goeth only at first winding up, and standeth still all the day after; that man's religion is little worth that, like Ephraim's goodness, is as a morning cloud or dew, which vanisheth away ere noon. The rivers run ever towards the sea, notwithstanding that hills, and rocks, and mountains interpose and force them to their winding meanders; nay, their compass about is not without profit, for they water those grounds in their passage through which they seemed to

wander. The person that hath the living water of grace in him is always tending towards the ocean of his happiness, notwithstanding his seeming diversions, by his worldly actions, and particular vocation ; nay, he is doing good, and serving his God and his soul, as well as his family and body, in those interjections. The wheel of a chariot, though it be in motion all the day, and turning about on the ground, yet it is but a small part of it that toucheth the earth at one time, the greatest part of it is always above it ; so the true Christian, though he be all the day busy about earthly affairs, yet it is but his body, his lesser part, that is employed about them ; his soul, his affections, which are his greatest part, are always above them.

SECTION I.

I shall first offer thee two quickening motives, and then acquaint thee wherein thy daily exercise to godliness consisteth.

First, Consider, any day may be thy last day, and therefore every day should be a holy day with thee ; I mean, not a holy day for play or recreation, but for the work of religion. He that knoweth not how soon his master will come and reckon with him, had need to be always employed about his master's business. Because there is no time of life in which thou art secure from death, therefore every day of thy life thou oughtest to be about thy duty : Prov. xxvii. 1, ' Boast not thyself of to-morrow, thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Every day is big-bellied, and hath more in the womb of it than any man knoweth ; he that salutes the morning with a smiling aspect, may bid the world good night for ever before the evening. The candle of thy life may be blown out on a sudden before it is half burnt out. The poets fable that Death and Cupid lodging together at an inn exchanged arrows, whereby it hath since come to pass, that old men dote, and young men die. Death cometh up to the young and strong, old and weak men go down to death. Thou mayest be called forth to that war in which there is no discharge, and not have an hour's warning to prepare thyself for a march. Sturdy trees are overturned by an unexpected wind, lusty men by violent fevers, or outward accidents ; our enemies are strong, our earthly houses weak, the coming of our landlord is unknown, the lease of our lives is uncertain, we are every moment liable to be ejected, and shall we not be so employed that our Lord when he comes may find us well-doing ? I remember I have in some author read, that the invention of clocks was not

primarily to mind us of the sun's posting in the heavens, but of our lives passing on earth. It was Calvin's reason for his unweariedness in his studies, when his friends urged against it the injury it did his body, Would ye have my Lord when he cometh find me idle? It will be woeful for that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find doing evil, or doing nothing: 'But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers,' Luke xii. 45, 46.

In which words we may observe, 1. The sin of the unfaithful servant. 2. The severity of his Lord.

In the sin, we may take notice,

1. Of the nature of. He beats his fellow-servants, and eats and drinks, and is drunken; he gives himself up to all manner of wickedness; he is unrighteous to his fellow-servants, he beats them, and unfaithful to his master, he abuseth his goods, he eats and drinks and is drunken. Sin doth not lie skulking in the secret trenches of his heart, but appeareth boldly in the open field of his life. It is a sign an enemy hath great power when he sheweth himself openly.

2. The occasion of it. His plea for it, his Lord delayeth his coming; because he hath not a speedy reward, he layeth aside all good works; because of God's gracious forbearance, he argueth a general acquittance for all his evil works. He makes bold to riot, because he is not called to a speedy reckoning. We tremble not at the noise of those cannons which we fancy to be a great way off. That which is looked upon at a distance seems small, and so is despised, though the same, beheld near, appears great and terrifieth us.

In the severity of the Lord, we may read,

1. How sore his judgment is. He shall cut him asunder, and give him his portion among unbelievers. These two expressions speak the dreadfulness of his doom, though no words can speak fully how woeful it is. He shall cut him asunder; an allusion to some tortures then in use amongst the heathen, to shew the exquisite pain which his body shall suffer, and give him his portion among unbelievers. Because the hottest hell is reserved for such: 'The wrath of God abideth on them,' John iii. 36, to note the extreme punishment which his soul shall undergo.

2. How sudden it is. Unexpected evils are most dreadful. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him. Sudden frights overwhelm the spirits; those miseries which, seen at some distance, have been entertained with patience, surprising men on a sudden, have stricken them into despair. Death comes sometimes like a thief up into our windows; coming in at the door is ordinary, but coming in at the window is unlooked for, Jer. xix. 21. As the snare secretly and unexpectedly seizeth the silly bird, so doth a day of death the simple children of men, Luke xxi. 35. Our Saviour speaks of his coming in the second or third watch of the night, which the Jews called, *Intempestum et gallicantium*, not in the first and fourth, because, saith Theophylact, they are the dead time of the night, when men are in their soundest sleep, to shew us how suddenly and unexpectedly he shall surprise most men, Luke xii. 38.

Reader, this present day's work may be the last act of thy life, it behoveth thee therefore to do it well. When thou art in thy closet, thou mayest think with thyself, I may possibly never pray more, never read the word of God more; how reverently, uprightly, graciously, should I therefore pray and read! When thou art eating or drinking, or refreshing nature, thou mayest consider, for aught I know, this may be the last time that I may use these creatures of God; how fearful should I be of abusing them! How should I eat my bread as before the Lord! When thou art in thy shop, or about thy calling, thou mayest ponder this, Possibly my last sand is running, and I must this day bid adieu for ever to wares and shops, and flocks and fields, and all civil commerce; oh, how heavenly should I be about these earthly affairs! How spiritual about these temporal things! Who would not do his last work well! Ah, how holy should he be at all times, who hath cause every moment to expect the coming of a holy and jealous God, to call him to an account.

Secondly, Consider, God's eye is all the day long upon thee, and therefore thou hadst need to be all the day long in his awe. It was a frequent speech of Seneca, *ubicunque eo; quodcunque ago; Demetrium circumfero*; wheresoever I go, whatsoever I do, I carry Demetrius along with me. Thou mayest, upon better grounds, say, 'Whatsoever I think, or speak, or act, wheresoever I go, whether to my closet, or shop, or field, or neighbours' houses, I have a holy, jealous God along with me.' Thou mayest write over every room which thou enterest into, 'Thou God seest me,' and call it by the like name which Hagar did the well, 'Beer-lahai-roi;

The well of him that liveth and seeth me.' Thou hast, in all the passages of the day, that God with thee, who takes notice of, and will reckon with thee for every passage. Thou mayest call every place thou comest into, 'Bethel,' or 'Penuel, I have seen God in this house,' or, 'God is in this place.' He is not like Jupiter of Crete, whom some pictured without ears, and publish never to be at leisure to take notice of small matters. He is all eye, all ear. He observeth the greatest, the smallest things and actions. As the optic virtue in the eye, he seeth all, and is seen of none. Cicero tells us, The King of Lydia had a ring, which, when he turned the head of it to the palm of his hand, he was invisible to others, and yet others were visible to him. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, though none hath seen God at any time, nor can see him; as a well-drawn picture, which way soever you turn yourself, it seems to have its eye still upon you, and to follow you. God doth that really which the picture doth seemingly; he beholds every person, and every action, with so direct a face, as if he beheld none or nothing else.

Reader, it concerns thee to be every day pious, who art all the day long in so holy a God's presence: 'I have kept thy precepts,' saith David, 'for all my ways are before thee,' Ps. exix. 68. The scholar will ply his book when his master is present, though he play and prate in his absence. The thief will not steal when the judge looketh on. He that was accused to force the queen before the king's face had a gallows for his end. If the eye of good or great men will prevail with us to be handsome and comely in our behaviour and carriage, how holy should they always be that are ever in the presence of the infinite God, who is clothed with majesty as with a garment, and who is so holy that the heavens are unclean in his sight! If a king sitting upon his throne scattereth evil with his eye, how much more should the eye of a God! Prov. xv. The sun, locally in heaven, is virtually on earth; its light, heat, influence, overspreadeth the face of sea and land. He that shuts his eyes, and will not see the light of it, doth feel its heat and influence; its presence scattereth clouds, and mists, and fogs. Though God's glorious and most joyful presence be in heaven, his real, essential, and gracious presence is on earth. They who put out the eyes of their reason and conscience, and will not see him, do yet feel him in their beings and blessings, for in him they live and move and have their beings. Shall not his presence disperse those clouds of sin, which would obscure his glory, and hinder the light of his countenance from shining on us?

SECTION II.

As to the exercising thyself to godliness on a week-day, though what I have written in former chapters, in this and the two former parts, hath much prevented me, yet I shall commend to the reader six particulars.

First, Begin the day with God. Never expect a good day unless you begin with a good duty. He hath the best good-morrow who meets God first in the morning. Though some sunshiny mornings are overcast before night, yet the heavens are usually all day clear to him that sets out early in the way of God's commandments. The mind retains a tincture all day of its first serious exercise in the morning. When the right watch or clock is wound up well in the morning, it will be regularly going and moving all day after. He that loseth his heart in the morning in a throng of worldly affairs seldom finds it to purpose in any part of the day. It was the honour of Rusticus, that though letters were brought him from Caesar, he refused to open them till the philosopher had done his lecture. Surely the worship of the blessed God is of more worth in itself, and of more concernment to us, than any moral philosophical doctrines to him, or any affairs whatsoever, and, therefore, ought to be first minded and performed.

As soon as thou awakest lift up thine heart to heaven. Great and noble persons are usually first served. Though others that are our inferiors wait our leisure, our superiors have the precedency of our time. Let the first messenger thou sendest forth be sent to the Lord of thy life, to present thy humble service and thanks to him for his providence over thee, and the rest and refreshment he hath afforded thee the last night. Thou mayest say with the psalmist, 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.' For 'except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain; he giveth his beloved sleep,' Ps. iii. 5, and cxxvii. 1, 2. Be mindful also, in some short ejaculation, to beg his guidance, protection, and blessing, all the ensuing day. For it is he that can make a hedge about thee, thine house and all that thou hast: 'If he bless the work of thine hands, thy substance will increase in the land,' Job i. 10. This small taste of ejaculatory prayer will quicken thine appetite after a full meal of set and solemn devotion. If thou canst after this keep thy mind intent whilst thou art dressing thyself on some divine subject, thou wilt be much the more fit for thy secret duties, and in a fair way to walk with thy God all the day.

The next thing I would advise thee to, or rather Christ enjoineeth : ' Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' Here is,

1. A precept to secret prayer: ' Pray to thy Father in secret.' The priest was every morning to renew the fire on the altar, and to offer sacrifice: ' And they offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord, even burnt-offerings morning and evening. And they offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required,' Ezra iii. 3, 4. So also in David's time, ' Asaph and his brethren ministered before the ark continually, as every day's work required,' 1 Chro. xvi. 33. Solomon took after his father, 2 Chro. viii. 14. And what is the substance of those shadows, but that Christians, who are a spiritual priesthood, should every day have their solemn morning and evening addresses to God, and offer up holy sacrifices, acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. David's purpose was to be early at prayer. ' O God, my voice shalt thou hear in the morning ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' And his practice was answerable: ' I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried,' Ps. v. 3, and cxix. 147. He was up before the day, and risen and at work before the sun. Nay, he tells God, In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. As if he would be at his prayer before God were stirring and going abroad. But surely we cannot rise so early but God is awake before us; for he that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth. His eyes are ever waking who holdeth sometimes our eyes waking. But David meaneth rather, that his prayers should prevent God's servants, his severest or most solacing providences, not God himself. He would send a messenger with petitions or thanksgivings to God, before God should send any messenger with good or bad tidings to him; he would be too early either for crosses or comforts.

2. The promise to secret prayer: ' And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' God heard Paul in the dungeon, as well as Peter on the house-top. The Sun of righteousness looks as well into the narrow closet casement, as into the large church windows. Secret prayers are audible to him that made the ear; as he bottleth up our secret tears, so he registereth our secret prayers. Though the ark was close on every side, that every man might not look into it, yet it had a window open to heaven.

As the flowers open themselves in the morning to take in the sweet influences of the sun, so should the Christian open his heart

in the morning, to receive a blessing from the Father of lights. Mary went early in the morning to the sepulchre of Jesus, and had the honour and favour to have the first sight of him, after his resurrection. Many a saint hath had a blessed vision of the glorified Saviour in a morning prayer. Knowest thou not, O man, saith Ambrose, that thou owest the first fruits of thine heart and voice to God? Therefore meet the Lord at the sunrise, that the sun rising may find thee ready.¹ It is reported of Cardinal Wolsey, that though he was Lord Chancellor, and had great and weighty employments, yet he would not go abroad any morning before he had heard two masses. I wish the popish matins did not shame the protestants for their sluggishness, and their frequent omissions. It is much that some should be so diligent at their blind devotion, which comes to nothing, and others that have experience, how profitable their spiritual trade is, so backward to it, and careless about it.

God's mercies prevent us early, and therefore our prayers should prevent him. 'His going forth is prepared as the morning, he satisfieth us early with his mercies, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days,' Hosea vi. 3; Ps. xc. 14. If his mercies are renewed on us every morning, our acknowledgments may well be renewed unto him. Every favour makes us debtors, and all the pay he expects is thanks. If any man should every morning send us, who have little of our own to live upon, very considerable presents, we should esteem ourselves very uncivil and unworthy, if we should not as often return him our service and thanks, and sense of his kindness. How great and how many are the mercies with which our God loadeth us every morning; and are we not sordidly ungrateful if we neglect the acknowledgment of them? Our ordinary mercies are of extraordinary merit, and deserve hearty thanks. The damned, could we speak with them, would tell us, that life, a naked abode on this side hell, were an infinite mercy. The sick, and such as are troubled with continual aches, or tortured with the stone, or gout, or colic, would tell us that health is a great mercy. The blind, and lame, and deaf would tell us that limbs and senses are a great mercy; the hungry, and naked, and houseless, and friendless would tell us that food, and raiment, and habitations, and friends, are great mercies. Poor prisoners, and such as are vexed with cruel wars, and forced to fly before their enemies, will tell us that liberty and peace are great mercies.

¹ An nescis, O homo, quod primitias cordis et vocis Deo debeas? Occurre ergo ad solis ortum; sol oriens inveniat te jam paratum.—*Amb. in Ps. cxix.*, Sermon. xix.

The saints in heaven, could we speak with them, would tell us, the patience of God, the gospel of our salvation, the tenders of grace, are inestimable mercies ; and do not all these, which every morning are, notwithstanding our notorious abuse, and frequent forfeitures, renewed upon us, deserve our solemn and sincere thanks every morning ? The Jews, some tell us, are bound to say over a hundred benedictions every day, and among the rest these two, when they go out in the morning : Blessed be he that created the greater light ; and when they come in at evening : Blessed be he that caused darkness. David was frequent at this duty : ' I will bless the Lord at all times : his praise shall be continually in my mouth. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments,' Ps. xxxiv. 1, and cxix. 164. It is a motto, say some, often repeated in Mercers' Chapel, Think and thank.

Our many wants and necessities command us to be every morning at heaven's gate for supply. We are needy indigent creatures, and must get our living wholly by begging ; all the day long we want forbearing, preserving, supporting mercy. It must be divine power, that must enable us to follow our callings, to stir or move about our business, that must defend and protect us in our outgoings and incomings, and prosper and succeed our undertakings. God alone can shield us from spiritual and corporal enemies, that can supply us with inward and outward good things, and surely such blessings are worth asking. They who will have mercies that are not of the growth of their own country, (earth,) must send thither (to heaven) where they are to be had. Prayer, like the patriarch's, and Solomon's good housewife, fetcheth our food from far ; as the merchants' ships, it supplieth us with commodities of all sorts, from foreign countries. No mercies hang on so low a bough, as to be pulled to us, and gathered by our own arms, therefore it behoveth us to beg, ' Give us this day our daily bread ;' besides, our dangers and difficulties every day are many, and call us to be early and earnest at this duty. Our callings, every company, all earthly affairs are snares and temptations to us, unless they are sanctified by prayer. It is not safe to drink of those streams wherein so many poisonous creatures dip their venomous heads, unless this unicorn hath healed them.

They who walk abroad without prayer, may fear they walk abroad without God's protection. *Oratio matutina clavis diei*, morning prayer is the key of the day, which openeth the treasury of divine bounty, and locketh the soul up in safety. A prayerless person goeth all day unarmed, and may expect many wounds from

that hellish crew, that lie always in ambush to destroy him ; the neglect of this pass, gives Satan a great advantage to take the city ; when Saul had left off calling at heaven's gate, the next time you hear of him is knocking at (a witch's, at) the devil's door. Prayer is one of the great ordinances that batters down the strongholds of the devil ; hence he sets his wits at work, to divert men from it. It is the soul's armour, and Satan's terror ; he that knoweth how to use this holy spell aright need not fear but he shall fright away the devil himself. The Lord Jesus, when he marched out against the powers of darkness, and was to fight with them hand to hand, armed himself beforehand with prayer, Luke iii. 21, 22, not only for his own protection, but also for a pattern to us. Every day we walk in the midst of enemies, which are both mighty and crafty, and will watch all advantages to undo us ; and should we go amongst them without prayer, we are sure to become their prey. It is too late to wish for weapons, when we are engaged in a battle ; Cæsar cashiered that soldier, who had his armour to furbish and make ready when he was called to fight. The moral of the fable is good ; the boar was seen, whetting his teeth, when no enemy was near to offend him, and being asked the reason why he stood sharpening his weapons when none was by to hurt him, he answered, It will be too late to whet them when I should use them ; therefore I whet them before danger, that I may have them ready in danger.

Another duty that concerns thee in secret, is to read some portion of the word of God. The workman must not go abroad without his tools. The Scripture is the carpenter's rule, by which he must square his building ; the tradesman's scales, in which he must weigh his commodities ; the traveller's staff, which helpeth him in his journey. There is no acting safely, unless we act scripturally. ' Bind it continually upon thy heart, and tie it about thy neck ; when thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou wakest it shall talk with thee ; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life,' Prov. vi. 21-23. The lawyer hath his Lyttleton or Coke, which he consulteth ; the physician hath his Galen or Hippocrates, with which he adviseth ; the scholar hath his Aristotle ; the soldier his Cæsar ; and the Christian his Bible, that book of books, to which all those books are but as a coarse list to a fine cloth, and scarce worthy to be waste paper for the binder to put before this to shelter it ; this will teach the lawyer to plead more effectually than Cicero, when, undertaking the cause of Quintus Ligarius, one of Cæsar's enemies, he did by the power of his

oratory, make Cæsar his sovereign to tremble, and often to change colour; and when he described the battle of Pharsalia, caused him to let his books fall out of his hand, as if he had been without spirits and life, and forced him against his will to set Ligarius at liberty; this will teach him so to plead, as to prevail with, and overcome God himself. This will teach the physician to work greater cures than ever Æsculapius wrought, to produce more strange and rare effects, than the most powerful natural causes. The weapon-salve, and most extraordinary cures that ever have been wrought, are nothing to the healing a vitiated nature by the Spirit, and a wounded conscience by the blood of Christ, which have been frequently done by the word of God. It hath opened the eyes of the blind, abated the dropsy of pride, softened the stone in the heart, stopped a bloody issue of corruption, healed the falling sickness or backsliding, and raised the dead to life. 'He sendeth his word and healeth them,' Ps. cvii. 20. The waters issuing out of the sanctuary, are healing waters, Ezek. xlvii. 9. This will teach the scholar to know more than the greatest naturalists, or than the Delphic oracle could enable him to, though it told him his duty, even to know himself. It is a glass, clean and clear, wherein he may plainly see the spots and dirt, and deformity of his heart and life; it will teach him to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal.' This will teach the soldier how to war a good warfare, how to fight the Lord's battles against the prince of darkness, and all his adherents, and over all to be more than a conqueror. There is no guide, no counsellor, no shield, no treasure (among all the books that ever were written) comparable to the Scriptures. It is reported, that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture, which was sent to Luther with this warning, from a faithful friend, that he should take heed of such a man when he saw him; by which picture he knew the murderer, and escaped his hands.¹ The word of God discovereth the face of those lusts in their proper colours, which lie ready in our callings, in all companies, in our goings out and comings in, to defile us, and which Satan would employ to destroy us; 'By them is thy servant forewarned,' saith David, Ps. xix. 11. By reading and applying it, we may know their visage, and prevent their venom; 'By the words of thy mouth, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer.' Cyprian would let no day pass without reading of Tertullian, nor Alexander without reading somewhat in Homer; shall the Christian let a morning pass with-

¹ Melch. Adam. in vit. Luth.

out an inspection into the word of Christ? As God commanded Moses to come up into the mount early in the morning, with the two tables in his hands; so, reader, he commandeth thee to give him a meeting every morning, with the two testaments in thy hand.

After the refreshment of nature, about which I have given thee directions elsewhere, and therefore shall omit it here, it will be requisite that thou shouldst call thy family together, and worship the blessed God with them. Our relations, namely, children and servants, have mercies bestowed on them, wants to be supplied, dangers to be prevented, natures to be sanctified, souls to be saved, as well as ourselves, and therefore must not be neglected. Some tend and feed the souls in their families on the Lord's day, and starve them all the week after; but herein they are guilty of dishonesty and unfaithfulness. They rob God of the service which is due to him from all in their house jointly. They wrong the souls in their families, by not allowing them the liberty, at least by not calling and causing them to hear the voice and seek the face of God with others. And they injure themselves most, by being false to their trust. Should they feed the bodies of their children and servants on the Lord's days, and make no provision for them on the week-days, their consciences would fly in their faces, and tell them they were inhuman and unnatural; and yet they omit all regard of their immortal souls, which are far more worthy of care and tendance, without remorse and sorrow. I must tell such persons, that if atheism had not the predominancy in their hearts, it would not bear such sway in their houses. Such men are like swine with their pigs, as if all their noses were nailed to the trough in which they feed, they look not up to the God of their food and of all their comforts. Such children and servants will in the other world find cause to curse the time that ever they knew such fathers and masters.

Others there are—some of whom I hope to be godly, though not in this particular—that pray in their families every night, but omit morning duties, as if God were the God of the night, and not of the day, as the Syrians blasphemously affirmed that he was God of the hills, but not of the valleys. These, as Austin speaks of those that worship the moon, are atheists by day, as they that worship the sun are atheists by night. 'The day is thine, the night also is thine, thou preparest the light and the sun,' Ps. lxxiv. 16. Surely, though evening sacrifice ought to be minded, yet there is as much, if not more reason for morning duties. A man at night in his

chamber is like a soldier in his garrison, subject only to the unavoidable and more immediate hand of God; whereas in the day, when he straggles abroad from his quarters to fetch in his supplies, he is then exposed to many unexpected casualties, and unthought-of accidents. Family perils and dangers, every day call for family prayers, and duties every morning; family favours and kindnesses, every night call for family thanks, and acknowledgments every day. When many are joined in a bond, they go often together to see the money paid. All in a family join in borrowing domestic mercies, therefore they must all join in paying hearty praises.

Reader, if thou art governor of a family, consider that thou canst not faithfully serve God as a commander, unless thou takest care that all the persons under thy power do their duties in their places. The Lord of hosts will never thank that officer who is careful to fight for him in his own person, but suffereth his company, through his carelessness, to fall away to the enemy. Do not pretend servants are abroad, or scattered here and there about their employments, and are not at leisure. But answer—

1. Art thou and thy servants contented to go all day without God's protection and provision? Without question thou art most unworthy of them, that dost not think them worth asking. Surely God may as well say he hath no leisure, he hath other employment than to defend, and feed, and preserve thee, as thou, that thou hast no leisure to serve him.

2. Dost not thou, and do not thine, squander away more time idly and vainly, than need to be taken up in morning duties?

3. Do not children and servants come together every morning to feed their bodies, and why not to feed their souls?

4. If any man should make use of thy goods, or servants of thy time, without leave, thou wouldst take it very ill at their hands. Thou art God's, and all that thou hast; may not God, therefore, take it unkindly that thou shouldst dispose of thyself and thine affairs without his leave?

5. Is it not plain atheism, and horrid disrespect to the blessed God, to put thyself, or them under thy roof, upon worldly employments, without asking his providence and blessing? Is it not too plain a speaking that there is no such need of him, that thou canst do well enough without him?

6. Thou wilt not say that thou and thine have no leisure in the morning to plough or sow, or buy and sell, or follow earthly affairs; and why not leisure as well to serve and worship the Lord? His

worship is of greater worth, of greater weight; it is of more necessity, it concerns thine endless bliss in the other world; it will bring in the greatest profit. In the doing of his commands there is great reward. Dost thou not believe that he is a better paymaster than the world?

7. Art thou able to do anything in any part of the day without his assistance? Dost thou not depend every moment upon him for all thy motions and actions, and is he not worth acknowledging?

8. Wilt thou say thou hast no time, no leisure, to be saved, to escape hell, and to attain heaven? I must tell thee, if thou hast no time to serve God, he will have no time to save thee.

9. Wilt thou stand to this plea at the day of Christ? When God shall ask thee why thou and thy family went abroad prayerless, and drowned yourselves in worldly affairs, and were taken and torn by snares and temptations, and disowned him and his laws, as if they were not worth regarding, dost thou think it will be sufficient then to answer, Lord, I was a knight, or a squire, and though I had many servants, yet they had their several offices and employments, and could not spare time to pay that homage they owed to thy Majesty, to implore thy mercy, and to entreat an interest in the merits of thy Son. We had other things to look after than thy beautiful image, and the blessed vision of thy face for ever. Or suppose thou art of an inferior rank, canst thou imagine it will be a comfortable plea to say, Lord, early in the morning my children and servants were called to tend my shop, or flocks, or cattle, or set upon some needful business or other, that they could have no leisure to mind their inestimable souls, or to approach thy glorious Majesty in holy ordinances? Oh blush, reader, if thou art guilty of morning omissions, and either cast away thy frivolous pretences, and set upon the duty, or else stand to thy foolish pleas, and try whether they will bear weight at the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus; but remember, in the meantime, that thou hast had one warning more.

I have written somewhat largely about family duties in the first part, and therefore had intended only to have saluted them in this place, and so to have left them; but observing how some families, even where governors are judged to fear God, are without morning, though not without evening, sacrifices, I dwelt the longer upon it, to quicken them to this duty, that they might be able to say with Abijah, 'The Lord is our God, and we burn incense, and offer sacrifice every morning and evening unto him,' 2 Chron. xiii. 10, 11.

SECTION III.

Secondly, Spend the greatest part of the day in thy particular calling. He that mindeth not his closet before his shop is an atheist; and he that mindeth not his shop after his closet is a hypocrite. The world is God's great family, and he will allow none in it to be idle. Though he distinguisheth some from the common mass, and maketh them vessels of honour, as superiors and officers in his house, yet to every one he committeth some talent or other, and commandeth them to trade till he come. The ancient Masilians would admit no man into their city who had not a good trade, knowing what pests and plagues such are to the people among whom they dwell.¹ He that is void of, or negligent in, his calling, is at best as a snail, (*φρὲνικος*, according to the Septuagint; *Domiporta*, according to the Latins,) keeping house, and unprofitable. But usually such a one is mischievous, and may not unfitly be compared to kites, that fly, lazing up and down, scarce moving their wings, making a querulous complaining noise, filching their food out of the shambles or warrens, or out of children's hands by force. Idleness is usher to murmuring and thieving. He quickly learns to do ill, by doing that which is next to ill, nothing. The air, when still, corrupts and putrieth. Wheat, if not stirred, groweth musty and unwholesome for man's body. The earth, if not tilled, breeds thorns. Millstones, if there be no grist, waste and wear out themselves. The soul needeth exercise as well as the body, to preserve it in health; action keeps the soul sweet and clean. It is no wonder that persons are almost choked with the phlegm of corruption, that deny themselves the benefit and advantage of motion; that they do not thrive who refuse to trade. It is a worthy speech of holy Master Boulton's,² He is a cursed drone, a child of idleness, the very tennis-ball of temptation, most unworthy the blessings and benefits of human society, who doth not one way or other co-operate and contribute to the common good, with his best endeavours, in some honest particular calling. Job saith, 'Man is born to labour;' but how many gentlemen sing the rich fool's requiem to their souls—Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years—till at last they come to his end, and that place where there is no ease day nor night for ever and ever; but as a bone out of joint, so is a good man out of his calling.

The sons of the husbandman in the fable, being told by their

¹ Valer., lib. vi. cap. 1.

² Directions for Walking with God, p. 49.

father on his death-bed, that he had left much gold buried in his vineyard, fell presently a-digging and delving with diligence, whereby they obtained, though not the gold they sought for, yet a rich harvest, by stirring the mould about the roots of the trees: 'In all labour there is profit,' Eccles. v. Though the Christian doth not ever, by diligence in his calling, reap that gold of outward profit (which is promised conditionally so far as God seeth fit for him) in this world, yet he reaps peace and comfort in the discharge of his duty, and prevents temptations, by being employed about other things.

It is in vain for any to pretend that they are so busy in praying, and reading, and hearing, and holy duties, that they cannot attend their particular callings; for the same God that calls them to spiritual traffic, commands them their temporal trades, and hath allotted them sufficient time for both. He doth the devil too great a courtesy, who makes the commands of God to quarrel and clash one against another. If Satan can prevail with men to neglect their callings whole days together, and leave their families declining, and almost starving through their idleness, for private fasting and praying, he never fears the good such a man shall get by all that devotion, which is, as Paul speaks of himself, born out of due time. He knoweth God doth not usually send in blessings at such back-doors, and that he is provoked as truly by leaving our shops, when our callings require our company, as by passing by our closets, when he calls us in to speak with us there. The best food may prove unwholesome and burdensome to the stomach, if a fit season for taking it be not observed. Our best duties, like some children, are utterly lost by being brought forth before their time. The Roman general said, *Non amo nimium diligentem*, I love not them that are too diligent, meaning them that leave their own callings, and are busybodies in others. God loves not such over-diligent, nor any negligent ones. As he commandeth our dependence on him for a blessing, so he commandeth our diligence in our several places.

But, having also treated largely of the Christian's carriage in his particular calling in the first part, how he should undertake it in obedience to the divine command, follow it with a heavenly heart, depend upon God for a blessing, I shall say no more.

Thirdly, Be watchful all the day long. If thou wouldst walk safely, walk as one that hath his eyes in his head. Ponder the paths of thy feet. Every man walketh every day in the midst of traps and gins, and rubs and blocks; now, the secure person is as a blind

man, stumbling at every stone. When a man goeth upon cords, straightened and fastened on high, it concerns him to look well to his footing, lest he totter and fall, and break his neck. There is no Christian but walks as dangerously as he that danceth on the ropes; it behoves him therefore to walk watchfully. The children of God are called to be soldiers, to fight a good fight of faith under Christ, the captain of their salvation; but soldiers must be upon their guard, especially such as are encompassed on all sides, at all times, with enemies of all sorts. Should they, who are the mark at which the world and hell are continually shooting their fiery darts to destroy them, give themselves to sleep? 'Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit yourselves like men,' 1 Cor. xvi. 13. The devil watcheth to devour us, and he is politic to ensnare us, and shall we slumber? Machiavel saith, A prince ought to know the tempers of men, that he may fit them with baits, and wind them to his own ends. Satan hath not waited on men, and observed them so long, but he knoweth the length of their feet, and can fit them to their will and woe; as Agrippina, the wife of Claudius, gave her husband poison in that dish which he loved best, so he can give them that meat which they love, with poison for its sauce. He is a serpent for his subtlety, and can bait his hooks answerable to the love and liking of poor silly fish. We read of his wiles, of his devices. As the chameleon, that lieth on the ground to catch flies and grasshoppers, changeth himself into the colour of the grass, whereby they are deceived and caught, so Satan can transform himself into any shape, even into an angel of light for a shift, that he may deceive and destroy. Though he appeared in the form of a serpent to Eve, he appeared in the form of a saint to the second Adam. If he should be quiet, yet our own flesh is free and forward to pollute and pervert us. Were he at any time absent, (though I fear he never is, but watcheth us night and day, more narrowly than ever keeper did his prisoner, for whose escape he was to die,) our own wicked hearts are his deputy to supply his place, and despatch his business effectually for him. Occasion and our own corrupt natures seldom meet, but, like two inordinate lovers, they sin and defile themselves together. The flesh is instead of a thousand traitors within the garrison, conspiring to deliver it up into the enemy's hands, who is resolved to give no quarter; and is it not time for the soldiers to be upon the guard, and to keep strict watch? Though both Satan and the flesh should grant a truce or cessation for a few hours, (which they never did, nor ever will,) yet the world, like a harlot, is always watching, with her fair breasts of pleasure

and profit, to allure us to folly. Like the whore the wise man mentions, she is subtle of heart, and lieth in wait at every corner ; she catcheth the careless sinner and kisseth him, and with an impudent face, saith unto him, ' I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning : let us solace ourselves with loves. With much fair speech she causeth him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she enticeth him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks ; till a dart strike through his liver ; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,' Prov. vii. 10 to the end. Oh what reason hast thou, reader, to watch, who hast so many and such crafty and mighty adversaries, every moment to encounter with ! ' Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.' Believe it, if thou sleepest, the enemy will sow tares.

Watch thyself in thy closet ; good duties must not be done between sleeping and waking. Praying and reading are not works that can be done nodding. Therefore Christ saith, ' Watch and pray ;' and the apostle, ' Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,' Col. iv. 2. The nightingale, that delights herself in her night songs, knowing, if she should fall asleep, she should be a prey to night-birds, she keeps a thorn at her breast to keep her waking. Watch in thy family among thy relations ; thy wife and children may be Satan's instruments to wound thee. Abraham caused Sarah to dissemble ; Eve brought Adam to undo himself and all his posterity. The nearer the person is to us, that dischargeth a piece at us, the likelier to hit, and the more dangerous the bullet. Watch in thy shop ; Satan lieth in ambush in every corner, sin in every counter, to defile and destroy thee. When thou art in company, when thou art alone, at bed, at board, when thou goest out, when thou comest in, keep thy heart with all diligence, for under every pile of grass there is a snail, under every fig-leaf, as Cleopatra found to her cost, there is a poisonous asp, in every place there is a snare.

Watch against the occasions of sin. They who have a brand or a candle flaming in their hands, had need to beware of thatch and straw. If the flesh and opportunity, like Shechem and Dinah, meet together, they will not part, unless there be the greater watchfulness, before they are polluted. It is ill to parley with the wicked one. The French have a good proverb, When the Spaniards talk of peace, then double bolt the door. The greatest wounds that

were ever made in conscience, had at first but weak beginnings. David's horrid murder and adultery had their rise only from a glance of his eye ; ' keep thee far from an evil matter,' *Exod. xxiii. 7.* The crocodile, say naturalists, is no bigger at first than a goose egg, and yet groweth to thirty cubits. An occasion of sin, embraced but a little, like a thief in the candle, insensibly makes sad work and waste.

Watch especially against thy own sin. This is, as the Philistines said of Samson, the great destroyer of the country, the great destroyer of thy conscience. Wise governors of a garrison besieged will take care of every part of the wall, and repair the least decays thereof ; but if one gate be more likely to be entered than another, or if one part of the wall be weaker than another, they will be sure to set the strongest watch in that weakest place. Our soul is our garrison, committed to our trust by the Lord of hosts, to be kept for his use and service ; Satan is our enemy, that besiegeth it, to surprise it ; sin is the wall or gate, by which alone he hopes to enter and destroy us. Our beloved sins, the sins of our callings, or conditions, or constitutions, which we hug and cocker most, which none must touch or reprove, these are the weakest part of the wall or gate, and so require a stronger watch and guard : ' Take heed and keep thy soul diligently,' *Deut. iv. 9.*

SECTION IV.

Fourthly, Be careful to redeem time. Look upon time as one of the most precious talents which thy God hath intrusted thee with, and which he will reckon with thee for, and therefore not to be vainly spent, or needlessly squandered away. They are worthy to be punished, that spend their gold and silver lavishly, and waste their estates prodigally ; but of how much sorer punishment are they worthy of that are prodigal and lavish of time, that is far more precious than gold and silver ! Time is of inestimable value, in regard of its present use, and because, when once lost, it is irrecoverable. Friends lost may be reconciled, an estate lost may be regained, but time lost can never be recalled. He is the best workman that can cut his stuff to the least waste ; and he is the best Christian who can contrive his affairs, and cut out his time, to the least loss. Remember that time is given thee, not to squander away in needless visits, or idle talking, or long meals, or unnecessary sleeping, but to get thy person justified, thy nature

sanctified, to secure thine interest in Christ, and the covenant of grace and heaven; and surely things of such infinite weight deserve all thy time, if thy life were lengthened to the age of Methuselah. Sleep robs us of much time; friends, saith one, are the greatest thieves of time; vain discourse, foolish sports and pastimes, idle company, sitting long at table, must all, like luxuriant branches, be pared off, because they suck the sap and juice away from the good boughs. 'Walk not as fools, but as wise men, redeeming the time,' saith the apostle, Col. iv. 5; Eph. v. 16. It is an allusion to wise merchants or tradesmen, who, dealing for most precious commodities, make the most of their markets, and buy their wares while a fit time of buying them serves;¹ and having possibly had great losses formerly, or spent their time idly, do by their diligence seek to redeem, and, as it were, to buy back again the time that is past. The Lacedæmonians were penurious of their time, and spent it all about necessary business, not suffering any citizen either to play or be idle; when their Ephori heard that some used to walk in the afternoons for their recreation, they forbade it, as savouring too much of pleasure, and commanded them to recreate their bodies by some manly exercise, which might breed them to be serviceable to the commonwealth.

Reader, the time of thy life goeth post, thou art hastening to thy last stage. Whether thou art eating or drinking, walking or sitting, buying or selling, waking or sleeping, death is always making speed towards thee;² the time of thy departure hence is concluded and resolved, beyond which it is impossible for thee, whether thy work be done or undone, to stay one day; no, not one hour, nay, not one moment, and shouldst thou waste thy time upon toys and trifles, as if thou hadst nothing to do, no God to make peace with, no Redeemer to lay hold on, no soul to take care of? He that hath a great way to go, or much work to do, and that upon pain of death, and but a little time for it, hath little reason to laze or loiter. When we have but a little paper, and much to write, we write small and thick. Oh how much work hath every Christian to do in this world, which, if he neglect, he is lost for ever! how many headstrong lusts to subdue, how many duties towards God and men to perform, how many graces to exercise, providences and ordinances to improve, and can all this be done in a little time? The candle of our lives burns low; if, like foolish children, we play it out, we

¹ Ἐξαγοραζόμενοι, of ἐξ and ἀγοραῖω *rursus emo*. Metaphora sumpta a mercatoribus.—*Beza*.

² Labitur occulte fallitque volubilis ætas.—*Ovid., Metam., lib. x.*

may thank ourselves if we go to bed in the dark, without the light of comfort to our graves.

It is one of the most irrational, yet ordinary actions of the children of men, especially persons of estate and quality, to waste time in dicing, or carding, or hawking, or hunting, or chambering, or reveling, and yet to murmur that they want time, and tell us, It is a pity man's life is so short, that it is not spun out to a longer thread. I must tell such, that they complain of God, when they should of themselves; he is not penurious, but they are prodigal in mispending it. I must ask them, Why would they have more time? Is it to be more riotous, and profane, and vicious? The shortest moment is too much for the service of sin; he that sinneth but once, sinneth too much by once. If it be that they might honour God, and get grace, and lay hold on eternal life, why do they not set about it, and make it their business? Every one would accuse him of folly, that were condemned one assize to be hanged, but was reprieved till the next, and had that time allotted to sue out his pardon, if he should in the interim give himself wholly to gaming and drinking, and take no care about his pardon, yet complain to all that came to him, that his time was short, and he had not enough to get his pardon in, or prevent his execution.

Our days are sufficient for our duties, had we grace to number them, and to apply our hearts to wisdom; but there is no overplus of time to be abused to fleshly or worldly lusts, or to be lavished away in idle and unnecessary things. A good man that liveth all the day long in the fear of his God, and husbands his time to the best advantage of his soul, finds it so sufficient for his work, that he is always ready to be called to an account, and whenever he dieth, he dieth full of days, and hath had his fill of living; but men waste their time in vanity and folly, sacrifice their youth to frowardness and unprofitableness, their manhood to pleasure and passion, their old age (if they live so long) to earthly-mindedness and atheism; nay, they will sit down and contrive sports, or send for, or go into, idle company to pass away the time, and then complain that time is little, and life is short, and they have not enough to provide for death and eternity in. The moralist observeth truly, *Non exiguum temporis habemus, sed multum perdimus*,¹ It is not a little time that we have, but it is much which we waste. God is bountiful in allotting us time; but we are lavish of it, and then grumble that it is no more. The largest possessions in a country, though worth thousands per annum, are nothing in the hands of a

¹ Sen. De Brevit. Vit., cap. 1.

prodigal heir, who useth to throw away thousands at a cast, and must pay the bills which pride, and luxury, and gluttony send him in daily; but a twentieth part of those revenues were a large estate in the hands of a frugal person. The vast incomes of Egypt and all the eastern provinces were but a small sum when they were gathered to maintain the pomp and ambition of Antony, and the riot and fleshly lasts of Cleopatra; when some prudent, provident emperors have lived freely and nobly a whole year with less than they consumed in a day. Foolish men that are riotous and prodigal of their time, as if it were given them only to sport, and play, and roar, and revel in, pine and whine at last that they are lost, because their time is so short; but wise and gracious persons that deny themselves, and crucify the flesh, that can redeem time from toys and idle talk, and foolish sports, and unnecessary diversions, to pray, and hear, and read, and examine their souls, and bemoan their sins, and provide for heaven, these grow rich in good works, and find the days of their pilgrimage sufficient for them.

SECTION V.

Fifthly, Call thyself to an account at evening. Take a review of thy carriage the whole day, how thou didst behave thyself. Begin with the morning, consider whether thou didst awake with God, what was the frame of thy spirit in closet and family duties, in company and solitude. Reflect upon thy actions, thy passions, thy speech, thy silence, thy behaviour at table, in thy shop; whether thy affections were heavenly, above the world, when thy actions were earthly, about the world; whether thou wast righteous in thy particular calling, and didst set upon it out of conscience to God's precept, and with an eye to his glory; whether thou didst not lose an opportunity of advantaging thy brother's soul, and doing thy God service; whether thou hast not failed in thy thoughts, or words, or deeds, in thy demeanour towards thy relations, or neighbours, or strangers; whether thou didst in all walk according to that rule which thy God hath prescribed thee. This is the way to make the day more pious, and the night more pleasant. Conscience will be the more faithful all day, when it knoweth beforehand that it shall be called to an account at night; and the more conscientious we are in the day, the more cheerful we shall be at night. Seneca reports of Sextius the Roman philosopher,¹ that every night before he took his rest, he would examine his soul. *Quid hodie malum*

¹ Sen. De Ira, lib. iii. cap. 36.

sanasti? cui vitio obstitisti? in qua parte melior es? What evil hast thou this day healed? what vice hast thou resisted? in what part art thou bettered? and then he addeth, How sweet is the sleep which ensueth upon such a review!¹

As the shopkeeper hath his day-book, wherein he writes down what he buyeth, what he selleth, which he looks over in the evening; so must the Christian, that would thrive in his general calling, at night reflect upon his well-doing, his ill-doings, his gains, his losses, lest his books cast him up (as some find by experience) because he will not take the pains to cast them up.

The merchant findeth it a ready way to make his factors and cash-keepers faithful, to reckon with them frequently. When great persons neglect to account with their stewards, they tempt them to be dishonest. Our consciences are corrupted as well as other faculties, and will be false, if not timely examined. Seneca acquaints us with his own practice,² which may shame many Christians: *Utor hac potestate, et quotidie apud me causam dico. Cum sublatum e conspectu lumen est, et conticuit uxor, moris jam mei conscia, totum diem mecum scrutor, facta ac dicta mea remetior. Nihil mihi ipse abscondo, nihil transeo; quare enim quicquam ex erroribus meis timeam, cum possim dicere: Vide ne istud amplius facias; nunc tibi ignosco. In illa disputatione pugnacius locutus es. . . . Illum liberius admonuisti quam debebas; itaque non emendasti sed offendisti.* I use, saith he, this authority, and daily plead my cause with myself. When the candle is taken away, and my wife (acquainted with my custom) is silent, I search into the whole day, and review all that I have said or done; I hide nothing from my own scrutiny, I pass by nothing; for why should I fear anything by reason of my errors, when I can say, See that thou do it no more, and for this time I will pardon thee, &c.

Pythagoras taught his scholars to talk thus with themselves, *Τὶ παρῑβην, τὶ δε ἔρεξα*; What evil have I committed, what good have I omitted? Reader, let not them who knew not God rise up in judgment against thee. Put every night some brief queries to thy conscience upon these few heads: How did I behave myself in religious duties, in natural actions, in my particular calling, in recreations, if any were used, in company, and in solitude? Compare the carriage of thy heart and life herein, to the word and law of God; bring all to the touchstone. Hereby,

¹ Desinet ira et erit moderatior quæ sciet sibi quotidie ad Judicem esse veniendum, . . . Qualis ille somnus post recognitionem sui sequitur? quam tranquillus? &c.—
Idem, ibid.

² *Idem, ibid.*

1. Sin will be prevented. The child will be the more dutiful and diligent all day, who expecteth to be examined, by them that have power to punish or reward for every part of it, at night. The Christian will keep his heart as clean as the neat maid her house, who is ever in fear of a severe mistress.

2. Hereby, if sin be committed, it will speedily be repented of. The wound will be healed before it be festered; a disease is much more easily cured at the beginning, than when it is habituated in the body. Had David called his conscience to a serious account, at the close of that day wherein he defiled Bathsheba, he had prevented both much sin, and much sorrow.

3. Our hearts will hereby be the better prepared for evening duties. The reflection upon the sins committed in the day past, will make the streams of our sorrow to run the more freely; wounds when fresh, bleed most. Our petitions also will be the more fervent for divine strength, when we are newly affected with the sad consequence of our own weakness. The more we feel our pain, the more urgent are our cries for a physician; a review of the mercies newly received, will likewise enlarge our hearts the more in thankfulness. Divine favours, like flowers, affect us most when fresh and green. Old courtesies, as old clothes, are too often cast by, and thought little worth.

4. Hereby our souls will be always ready for our great account, whenever God shall summon us to give it up. The keeping a diary of receipts and disbursements, facilitates the steward's annual reckoning with his lord. They who make all even between God and their souls every day, need not fear calling to account any day. None will give up their accounts with such comfort at the great day, as they that cast up their accounts with conscience every day; often reckoning will make long friends. He that will not hear the warnings of conscience, must look to feel the worm of conscience.

Sixthly, Close the day with God, in praying, and reading his word, both in thy closet and family. Our bed is resembled to our graves, sleep to death; it is of worse consequence to go to bed before we have made our prayers, than to our graves before we have made our wills. God is the first and the last, and ought to be the beginning and ending of every day: 'Thou causest the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice.' Some understand the inhabitants of east and west, others the vicissitudes of day and night, for which men rejoice in God. David was mindful of the word at night: 'I have remembered thy law, O Lord, in the night;' and also

of prayer: 'Evening and morning will I pray and cry aloud,' Ps. cxix. 55; and lv. 17.

The sins of the day call for our mournful confession. The mercies of the day call for our sincere thanksgiving. The perils of the night call for fervent petitions, so that none can want matter for a night's prayer. Our wanderings and aberrations in the day may well engage us to confession and contrition every night. They who do not paddle in every gutter, or thrust their hands into every ditch, though they washed clean in the morning, find them dirty at night. We cannot meddle with money, but we foul our fingers; nor about earthly affairs, but we defile our soul. Infirmity bewrayeth itself in all the actions of fallen man. We are steady in nothing but wantonness and wickedness. The feet of men limp at best, and are too slow to follow the word of God close at the heels. If we intend well in any action, like arrows that are shot in mighty winds, we wander from the bow that sent it, and miss the mark. Now whilst the ship leaketh, the pump must go; whilst we sin daily, we must sorrow daily. He is unworthy of the least favour from his creditor, who thinks much to acknowledge his debt. Augustine had David's penitential psalms written by his bedside, which at night he used to weep and read, to read and weep.

Our daily infirmities and imperfections must not be passed over. Some have died of very slight wounds in their fingers or toes. Small sands may sink a great ship. Small drops of rain make the earth miry and dirty. Vain thoughts, spending time idly, omission of doing good when a price hath been in our hands, are counted by us small sins, but such small drops will pollute our consciences to purpose, if not bewailed timely.

The mercies and good providences of the day deserve our acknowledgment at night. If God command his loving-kindness in the day-time; his loving-kindness may well command our thanksgiving in the night season. As David had his soliloquies in the day, so he had his songs in the night, Ps. lxxvii. 6. All our success in our callings and undertakings, is the fruit of God's providence; we may work, but God only can prosper. Human gains are from divine grace. The tables that are spread for us, like Peter's sheet, wherein were all sorts of four-footed beasts, and fowls, come down from heaven. How many perils are we protected in! how many dangers are we delivered from! how many evils are prevented, good things bestowed every day, and shall not our sun and shield be adorned! We may well every night speak in the words of the

psalmist, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah,' Ps. lxxviii. 19.

The perils of the night call for our prayers at night. If there were no fear of visible thieves and robbers, yet there is of invisible devils. We cannot bolt our doors so fast, but they will find the way in. We never lie down to sleep, but those roaring lions are waking and waiting by our bed-side to devour us. If God were not our guard, we could not sleep a moment in quiet. He that goeth to bed before he hath gone to God, by humble and hearty supplication, lieth down before his bed is made, and may well expect to find it uneasy all night; nay, like a foolish governor of a fort beleaguered with cruel and crafty enemies, he takes his rest before he hath set his watch, and is liable to be called up at midnight, or to be killed in his bed every moment.

Cyril speaks of a certain people that chose to worship the sun, because he was a day god; for, believing that he was quenched every night in the sea, or that he had no influence on them that lighted up candles, they were confident they might be atheists all night. I fear, many who worship the sun are too much of the minds of that people in their night atheism. Though they know not, but when they close their eyes they may sleep their last, and never open them more, yet they will rather die intestate, than take the pains, by fervent prayers, to bequeath their souls into the hands of their dearest Redeemer. Reader, take heed of going prayerless to bed, lest Satan take thee napping. How unworthy art thou of God's protection, if thou dost not esteem it worthy a petition! I have read of a prince that would walk abroad every evening in a disguise, and stand hearkening and listening under his subjects' windows, to understand what they said. It is true enough that the great God looketh down from heaven every evening; he is under thy window and in thy chamber, to observe whether thou hast the manners or grace to bid him good-night, before thou goest to rest. Believe it, if thou forgettest him, thou wilt find, sooner or later, that he will remember thee to thy cost.

A good wish about the Christian's carriage on a week-day from morning to night, wherein the former heads are applied.

The rock of ages, and everlasting Father, to whom a thousand years are but as one day, having out of his rich merey afforded me

a short time in this world, not to play or toy with temporal things, but to prepare my soul for my blessed eternity, I wish that I may never waste that precious season, which is given me for the working out my own salvation, about needless affairs, but mind the one thing necessary, and pass the whole time of my sojourning here in the fear of my God. Every day that I live, and do not improve for my eternal good, is lost. If I live to eat, and drink, and sleep, the beast liveth in me, not the man ; I do but act a brutish part in a human shape. If I live to buy and sell, and increase my heaps, the heathen liveth in me, not the Christian ; what do I more than an infidel ? Time is a silver stream, gliding into the ocean ; eternity depends upon this poor pittance of time ; as I use time well or ill, so eternity will use me. The everlasting harvest will be suitable to the seed that is sown in time, whether wheat or tares. It is irrational to expect a crop of barley, if I sow thistles ; or a crop of bliss for ever, if I now sow to the flesh. My life is given me, to dress my soul in for the coming of my bridegroom at death. Whatsoever I do, if it hath not relation and subserviency to my last end and chiefest good, it is lost time, and waste strength ; and though I may be so busy as to sweat about it, yet Christ may say to me, as to him that stood in the market-place, Why standest thou all the day idle ? Lord, my time is not mine own, but thine ; the day is thine, the night also is thine. It is thine by creation, and why not thine by a religious observation ? It was thy favour that I was not turned out of the womb into the unquenchable fire. I could wish that, as soon as ever the sun of my life arose, I had gone forth to my spiritual labour till the evening of my death, that my childhood and youth had been employed in remembering my Creator ; but since it is impossible to recall those days and years which I have spent in folly and vanity, oh teach me so to number my remaining days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom, and live every day of my life in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

I wish that the uncertainty of my life, and certainty of my death, may quicken me to be religious every hour of every day. Every day may be my last, therefore every day should be my best. There is no part of my time in which I am privileged from an arrest by the king of terrors. Am I young ? yet I am old enough to die. Death observeth no order. Some drop out of the arms of their earthly mothers, into the embraces of their mother earth, and do no sooner speak, but they are sent to the place of silence. My sun may set in the morning of my age, and death may tread upon the

heels of life. Some have experienced those words of the wise man : There is a time to be born, (so little to live that it is not mentioned,) and a time to die. Am I strong? this Samson of death can fetch meat out of the eater, and out of the strong sweetness. Death's harbinger, sickness, which prepareth its way before it, will make me melt like wax before the sun, though my strength were the strength of stones, and my flesh as brass. Fresh flowers are cropped in their pride and greatest beauty; the autumn of death comes ordinarily before the winter of old age. Besides, I am liable every day to many sudden accidents, and unexpected surprisals. How many die in their shops or fields, or in the church or streets, as well as others in their beds! All men do not go out of the world at the fore-door of sickness, many at the back-door of a violent death. When my blood frisketh merrily in my veins, and light sparkleth gloriously in mine eyes, when my countenance is most fresh and lovely, and my senses are most quick and lively, even then, at my best estate, I am altogether vanity. I may draw a long line of life, because nature may afford radical moisture enough for it, when death lieth in ambush like a thief in the candle, and wasteth all on a sudden. Should I, as the rich fool, reckon falsely to a million, when I cannot count truly to one, and promise myself many days, when my soul may be required of me this night, how gross is my delusion! Ah, how sad, how fatal is that error that can never be mended!

The time past is gone, and never, never, to be called back. All my prayers and tears, all the revenues of the world, cannot regain the last moment. The time to come is God's, not mine own; it is not in my hands, therefore I have no reason to reckon upon it; I am both foolish and dishonest if I dispose of another's goods. Reversions are uncertain, and he may well be poor that hath no estate but what he hath in hope, or rather presumption. Lord, thou reckonest my life, not by ages, no, not by years, but by days. Thou hast told me that my days are few, my time is little, though my work be great; I acknowledge my proneness to put far from me my dying day, whereby I gratify my grand enemy, in drawing nigh to the seat of iniquity. Oh, help thy servant to live every day as if it were his last day; grant that I may live well and much, though my life be little and short, because there is no day of my life in which I can promise myself security from the arrest of death; let me expect it every day, and every hour of every day, that whenever my Lord shall come, I may be found well-doing.

I wish that since the eye of my God is ever on me, my eye may be ever on him, and I may be so pious as to carry myself all the day

long as in his presence. Whatever I do, my God observeth, whatever I speak, my God heareth, whatever I think, he knoweth ; I may call every place I come into Mizpeh, the Lord watcheth and observeth. Ah, how holy should he be, who hath always to do with so pure and jealous a Majesty ! The Jews were to dig and cover the natural excrement of their bodies, because the Lord their God walked in the midst of their camp. Sin is the spiritual excrement of my soul, and infinitely more odious and loathsome to God ; oh, how watchful I should be against it, who walk ever in in his company ! The sun is said by some to be all eye, because it hath a thousand beams in every place ; it filleth the largest windows, and peepeth in at the smallest keyhole ; it shineth on the prince's palace, and the poor man's cottage ; the heavens above, the earth beneath, and air between ; it looks on every person with so direct a countenance, as if it beheld none beside. The natural sun is darkness to the Sun of righteousness ; the whole world to him is a sea of glass—he seeth it through and through. The watch-maker knoweth all the wheels, and pins, and motions in the watch ; he that made me cannot be ignorant of me, nor of anything in me, or done by me. Whether I be in my shop or closet, abroad or at home, in company or alone, the hand of God is with me, and the eye of God upon me ; oh that I could set him ever before me, and set myself ever before him ! and that I could always see him who always seeth me, and like a sun-dial, so receive this sun in the morning, as to go along with him all the day. ‘ Lord, thou searchest and knowest me ; thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising ; thou understandest my thoughts afar off ; thou compasses my paths and lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways ; for there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me ; if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me ; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day ; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.’ Oh teach me to walk before thee, and to be upright !

I wish that the end of all my days may be the beginning of every day, that my first thoughts in the morning may be of him by whom alone I think. The firstling under the law was to be the

Lord's, and why not the first-fruits every day under the gospel? Surely the worthiness of the person deserves precedency of despatch. It is no mean ineivility to let an honourable man wait our leisure; what impiety is it, then, to let the great God stay till the dreggy flesh or world be served! Ah, how unworthy, as well as wicked, is it to put that God off, who deserves all I am and have, with the leavings of his slaves! Besides, the soul usually walks up and down all day in the same habit in which it is dressed in the morning. The day is usually spent well or ill, according to the morning employment. If Satan get possession in the morning, it will be many to one but he keeps his hold all day. What youth is to age, that is the morning to the day; if youth be not tainted with vice, age is employed in virtue; he that loves chastity will not marry her that spent her youth in whoredom. A man may give a shrewd guess in the morning, when second causes are in working, what weather will be most part of the day. If I set out early in my heavenly journey, I am the more likely to persevere in it all the day. As some sweet oils poured into a vessel first, will cause whatsoever is put into it afterwards to taste and savour of it; so, if godliness and the immediate worship of God do first in the morning possess my soul, my natural and civil affairs will probably relish of it. Again, men's hearts are generally upon that in the morning which they esteem their happiness and portion. The covetous muck-worm no sooner openeth his eyes, but his heart is tumbling in his heaps; the voluptuous beast no sooner wakes, but he is sporting in sensual waters; the ambitious peacock no sooner is able to think, but his gay feathers, and gaudy dress for that day, come into his mind; and why should not my heart send its first thoughts into heaven? 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.' The birds early in the morning salute the rising sun with their sweet notes, and shall not I the Sun of righteousness? Further, my wants, my mercies call for morning duties; I walk in the midst of deaths, of dangers, every day, and shall I dare to travel without my defence? Men clothe their bodies against the sharpness of the weather, and why not their souls against the assaults of the flesh, the world, and the wicked one? There is no safety without this breastwork. If Satan take me out of my trenches and strongholds, as Joshua did the men of Ai, it will be no wonder if he rout and ruin me. If I do not bless God in the morning, how can I expect that he should bless me in the day? Is any earthly prince so prodigal of his favours, as to throw them away upon those that esteem them unworthy to be

desired? If I do not serve the precepts of God, I am presumptuous to look that his providence should serve me. Should I undertake my affairs on earth, before I have despatched my business with heaven, I am a notorious cheat and thief. I am a thief to God, by robbing him of his glory, and that natural allegiance which I owe to my Maker; I am a thief to myself, in robbing myself of that blessing which I might have on my callings and undertakings. Oh that prayer might be the girdle to compass in the whole body of my natural and civil dealings and concernments. And that I could every day of my life forestal the world's market, by setting early about closet and family duties. Suitors find it fittest to wait upon, and despatch their business with, great persons, betimes in the morning. Lord, freedom of access to thy throne of grace is an unspeakable favour. Access is hard to earthly princes. No worldly court is so open as to admit all comers. Those that with much difficulty present their petitions, are often, against all reason, denied. Thy gates are open night and day; all that will may come, and be welcome. Thou invitest souls to come into thy presence, and delightest to hear and grant their prayers. Thine ears are more open and ready to hear, than their mouths to ask. Thou pressest upon many undesired blessings, but deniest none who ask not stones instead of bread. Importunity never angers thee; the more fervent and frequent my soul is with thee the more prevalent. Thou fillest the hungry with good things, and dost not send any that desire thy grace empty away from thy gate. What care I how little notice or knowledge the nobles of the earth will take of me, when I can speak so freely to their better, their sovereign, and not fear a repulse. Oh teach me the right art of begging! and then I need not be afraid of poverty. If I be but skilful to follow that trade, my returns will be both sure and large. Thy mercies are renewed upon me every morning, so are my necessities; oh let my praises and prayers be as frequent and early! 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth. O God, my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and barren wilderness, where no water is. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning. O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.'

I wish that, having done with the more immediate service of my God in praying and reading, both in my closet and family, I may proceed to serve him in my shop and particular calling. When God saith, Man is born to labour, I must not sing, with the fool, Soul, take thine ease. An idle person is like caterpillars and mice,

that devour God's creatures, and do no good to others. It is pity he ever lived, the book of whose life is filled up with nothing but ciphers. Nature never intended men to be drones, to feed on others' labours; nor bats to spend their lives in the company of sleep, the brother of death. My God, my soul, my family, my country, do all call upon me to be diligent in that calling whereto he hath called me. My God is a pure act himself, and hath capacitated all his creatures for action. He created all men, but never made a sluggard. The idle person wholly degenerates from the end of his being, and receiveth his faculties in vain. The command for civil labour hath the same divine stamp as that for sacred rest. I have also his pattern for my encouragement, as well as his precept for my warrant: 'Hitherto my Father worketh, and I work.' My soul also stands in as much need of exercise as my body. Idleness is the door at which diseases enter into both. Rust eats up vessels that are laid by, and unused. The mind is never more bright than when it is in employment; from doing nothing, we proceed to do evil. Idleness is not only a vice itself, but also hath this unhappiness, to usher in all other. This is [not] the least advantage of industry, that it gives the soul no leisure to play with sin, or to entertain the wicked one. Standing waters do not sooner putrefy than lazy souls. It is action that preserves the soul in health. As gnats dance up and down in the sun, and then sit down and sting the next hand they seize upon, so they who have no time to work, have much to employ in slandering and backbiting others. One sin never goeth alone. Again, my family may well rouse me out of the bed of laziness. If I expect supply of their wants, it must come in with God's blessing at the door of diligence. I am stealing from my wife and children all the while I am loitering. The heavens may cause seed sown to ripen into a joyful harvest, but untilled land will afford no crop, save of weeds or stones. Once more, my country commands me to my calling. I am but an ill member in the body politic, if as a diseased part I take of its nourishment, but rather hinder its growth than contribute to its health. A jarring string is not more prejudicial to the rarest viol in the hands of a skilful artist, than an idle person to the music and composure of the universe. The most venomous creatures that nature produceth, are some way serviceable to their fellow-creatures. Oh that I might never, by filling up my life with laziness, be a wen in the face of nature, serving no way to profit, only to disfigure it. Yet I desire that my diligence in my particular, may be regulated by my duty towards my general calling. Oil, moderately poured in,

feeds the lamp; excessively, drowns it. Alexander's soldier run so lightly upon the sand, that he made no impression with his feet. My duty is to give earthly things my hands, but my heart only to the things of heaven. Lord, it is as well thy pleasure that I should work here, as thy promise that I shall rest hereafter. Let thy grace be so operative in me, that I may never give Satan advantage against me, by being negligent, or over-diligent, in my particular calling. Suffer not the interposition of the earth ever to cause an eclipse of holiness in my soul; but let thy word so limit me, and thy Spirit guide me, that as one diligent in his business, I may come at last to stand before the King of kings, to my eternal comfort.

I wish that I may no part of the day be so overcharged with the cares of this life, by my particular calling, as to expose myself to wickedness by neglecting my spiritual watch. If my heart be full of earthly vapours, they will fume up into my head, and make me drowsy. A drunken man is no sooner set in his chair, but he is fast asleep. *Sober* and *vigilant* are sisters in Scripture: 1 Thes. v. 6, 'Let us watch and be sober;' 1 Pet. v. 8, 'Be sober and vigilant.' The immoderate love of the world will incline me as effectually to spiritual slumbers, as immoderate drinking of wine to bodily. If Satan can get me to take this opium, he doubts not but to lock me fast to my bed, and to have me at what advantage he pleaseth.

Oh how easy is it to destroy a sleeping body, to defile a sleepy soul! Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, walked, in their sleep and dreams, in strange and sensual paths. When the eye of the soul's watchfulness is shut, the soul is open to all dangers and assaults. Whilst the husbandmen sleep, the enemy soweth tares. Sisera's head was nailed to the earth whilst he lay snoring on the ground. Epaminondas was not more severe than exemplary, when he ran the soldier through with his sword whom he found sleeping upon the guard, as if he intended to bring the two brothers, sleep and death, to a meeting. The hare therefore, say some, being liable to many enemies, sleepeth with her eyes open, to see danger before it surprise her. I walk continually in the midst of powerful and politic adversaries. The Canaanite is yet in the land, though not master of the field, yet skulking in holes and ambushments, watching an opportunity to set upon and destroy me; there is not only an army of temptations besieging me without, but also many traitors conspiring within to open the gate of my heart to them, that they may enter and undo me. My own heart is like Jacob, a supplanter, and conspireth to rob me both of the birthright

and the blessing. Let me go where I will, I tread upon lime-twigs, which the arch-fowler layeth to entangle and ensnare me. Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, and to slay him, 1 Sam. xix. 11; Satan sendeth messengers after me in all places where I come, to watch me, and to slay me. The whole world is as the vale of Siddim, full of slime-pits; and without watchfulness, the anointed of the Lord are taken in those pits, Gen. xiv. 10; Lam. iv. 10. Sin is a sly thief, that steals upon the soul to rob it when it is asleep. Oh what need have I of the greatest watchfulness and circumspection imaginable! As the eyelids guard the tender eyes from harm, so doth watchfulness preserve the soul from wickedness. O my soul, canst thou not watch with thy Redeemer one hour, when he ever liveth to make intercession for thee? It is but the short night of this life that thou art commanded to stand sentinel; ere long thou shalt be called off the guard, and freed from that trouble. Lord, thou art ever watchful over me for good; thou never slumberest nor sleepest, but thy seven eyes are ever upon me. Thou mayest say to me, as to thy vineyard, 'I the Lord do keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day.' Oh, since thou watchest to preserve me, let me watch to serve thee! set a watch, O Lord, before my lips. Be thou the governor of my heart; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Let mine enemies never find me nodding, lest they leave me dying. Thou hast told me, 'Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' Give me so to wake and watch now, that death may bring me a writ of ease, and call me to my endless rest.

I wish that I may all the day long be even covetous of my time, as knowing it is allowed me, not for the service of the flesh, but for the service of my God, and to dress my soul for heaven. If I be lavish of my time, I am the greatest prodigal in the world. If he be a spendthrift that throweth away a hundred pound every day, he is a far greater that wasteth half an hour in one day; time is more worth than the revenues of the whole world. He that can command millions of treasure, cannot command one moment of time: the Father of eternity hath the sole disposition of time. The value of this commodity is not known to this beggarly world in a day of life. Now men study sports, and pleasures, and company, and plays, to waste time; it lieth as a drug upon their hands, and they think themselves beholden to any that will help them to put it off; but when the king of terrors with his ghastly countenance

approacheth them, and summons them to a speedy appearance before the King of nations to receive their eternal dooms, oh then their judgment will be quite altered, and time will be precious indeed. Then they who play away their time, and give all to the world or flesh, will tell me that time was good for something else than to eat, and drink, and sleep, and trade; that it was good to feed an immortal soul in, and provide for an eternal estate. Then the rich and covetous, as well as they loved their wealth, though it be now dearer to them than their God and Christ, and souls and heaven, will part with all they have for a little time. Then the swaggerers and gallants of the world, who spend twenty hours in taverns to one hour in the temple, and if it were not for play-houses, and ale-houses, and whore-houses, and hawks, and hounds, and cards, and dice, could not tell what to do with their time; who mark all the days in the calendar of their lives for festivals, and make them all play days, as if there was never a working day among them; that are as busy and tedious in dressing their worm-eaten bodies, as children in dressing babies, and are more troubled at the smallest disorder in their hairs, than the greatest disorder in church and state; would give up all, and much more if they had it, for a little time. Then the nobles, and kings, and emperors of the world, will disesteem their honours and height, and trample upon their robes, and sceptres, and crowns, for a little time. Then they who dally with their days of grace, and delay the preparation of their souls for death and judgment, as if time were at their command, and they could force it to attend their leisure, that live as if death were their servant, and must wait on them till they thought fit to come to their graves, will find that time was time indeed. O my soul, of what worth will time be at that day, and wilt thou waste it at this day? Alas, how little is that time which thou hast to improve for thine unchangeable estate! My life is but a shadow, that is gone when the sun hides his head; a bubble, that vanisheth when a small breath of wind appeareth; a day that is soon overtaken by a night; a span, nothing. Thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth; mine age is nothing unto thee. Wert thou able to secure a long life, though thou hast work enough of infinite weight to employ it all, yet thou mightest have more colour of reason for being lavish; but when thy time is little, and thy business of such consequence, what unspeakable madness is it to be wasteful of it! He that hath thousands of acres of land will spare some for a park, some for a bowling-green, some for a courtyard, some for pleasure and pastimes; but he that hath but a little land, upon which him-

self and his family must live, and by which they must be maintained, can spare none at all for vain pleasures, but must improve all to real profit. Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days; he comes up as a flower, fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not; and wilt thou, O my soul, revel and riot away this poor pittance in which thou shouldst work out thy salvation? Oh that I could value this jewel in some measure answerable to its worth, and do the work of the day, in the day allotted me for work! Time rightly husbanded is acceptable time; a day well employed is a day of salvation. Lord, though my journey be great, my time is little; nay, how much of that little time have I lost! A considerable part of it hath been taken up with my infancy and childhood, wherein I did little above a beast. My youth hath been squandered away in trifles and vanity, and too much of it in lust and iniquity. Much of what remains, if thou shouldst add a few more days to my life, must be spent in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and necessary natural actions; and shall I not redeem it to my power, for the service of my Saviour? Oh affect my soul thoroughly how eternity rides upon the back of time, that I may prize time highly, redeem it carefully, and improve it so faithfully, that eternity may be my friend, and when time shall have an end, I may enjoy that joy which hath no end.

I wish that I may every day so cast up my accounts, that I may be always ready for the great audit-day. Wise stewards do not write down great sums in gross, which they have disbursed for their lords at several times, but set down the particulars, whereby they are prepared for a general reckoning, and enabled to justify their accounts. My trust is more weighty than of any prince's steward on earth; my Master will be more exact than the severest human lord; and am I not then concerned so to number my days, as to reckon every day what I receive from my Lord, what I disburse for my Lord, and at the foot of every day to write the total sum? How foolish is he that rejects his books, till his books reject him! Ah, is it not better for me to look over the book of my conscience, and observe what blots and errors are there, whilst I have licence and liberty to correct them, than to neglect them till those eyes, which are purer than to behold iniquity, come to look it over, and leave be denied of ever amending what he finds amiss? O my soul, this evening, now I am writing this page, I must send to thee Amaziah's challenge of Joash, 'Come let us see one another in the face!' Why should we, that are so near together, be such strangers to each other? I must ask thee, as Elisha did Gehazi,

Whence comest thou? Where hast thou been? What hast thou done this day for God and thyself? Hast thou lived, or only been in the world this day? Doth thy soul-work, thine eternity-work, go forward or backward? Hast thou lived as if thou wert going to die, and walked in the fear of the Lord all the day long? Hath the awe and dread of the divine Majesty all along possessed thee? Dost thou consider that thou hast one day less to live, and one day more to account for? Suppose God should come to thee this night, as he did to Belshazzar, with a *Mene, mene*, It is numbered, it is numbered; thy days are told, God hath counted them up and finished them; thou shalt not live to see a morrow. Thy days are extinct, the grave is ready for thee. Art thou ready for thy grave? If God should say to thee, as that lord to his servant, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward; Are thy accounts and God's even? Dost thou reckon as he doth? What do all the actions of this day stand for in thine account, figures or ciphers, something or nothing? What were thy first thoughts in the morning? Was he, who came first to thee with his morning mercies, first served by thee? How didst thou pray in thy closet and family? What sorrow accompanied thy confessions? Was thy heart broken that thou hast broken his holy laws? What faith and fervency did accompany thy requests? Was the heat of thy affections answerable to the weight of thy petitions? Didst thou present thy petition to the master of requests, the Lord Jesus Christ, by him to be delivered to the Father? What spiritual joy and delight didst thou find in thanksgiving? Didst thou wonder at that infinite cost which the glorious God is at with such an unworthy wretch? How didst thou read the word this day? Did it come with power and authority to thy conscience? Was it mingled with faith? Didst thou hide it in thy heart? Hadst thou any resolution to make it thy rule, and counsellor, and comforter, and to order thy conversation according to it? How didst thou eat and drink this day? Didst thou feed with fear? Didst thou receive thy meat as in God's presence, and hadst thou an eye therein at his praise? How didst thou behave thyself in thy particular calling? Did it no way encroach upon thy general? Was thy conversation in heaven, whilst thy dealings were about earth? Wast thou diligent in the exercise of it, righteous in thy dealings in it, depending on God for a blessing on it? What was thy carriage in company? Was thy life holy, spotless, exemplary, profitable to others? Mightest thou not in such a place have done thy God more service, and thy brother's

soul more good? May I not say to thee, as God to Jonah, Didst thou well to be angry at such a time upon no cause? What were thy thoughts in solitude? How wast thou employed? Had God any true share in thy thoughts? Hast thou watched thyself this day, and kept thy heart with all diligence? Hath none of thy precious time been lavished away on unnecessary things? Answer me faithfully to all these particulars, that I may be able to return an answer to him that sent me. Oh that I could but employ one half hour every day, with seriousness and uprightness, in such soliloquies! Lord, thou didst create the world in six days, and thou wast pleased to look back on every day's work, and behold it was very good, and then ensued thy Sabbath. Cause thy servant to be a follower of thee, as a dear child, in minding every day the work thou hast given me to do, that I may every night review it with comfort, finding it good in thy Christ; at the end of all my days, looking back upon all my works, I may see them very good, through the acceptation of thy grace, and with joy enter into my eternal Sabbath.

I wish that I may end every day with him who is the beginning and first-born from the dead; that I may every night go to bed as if I were going to my grave, knowing that sleep is the shadow of death, and when the shadow is so near, the substance cannot be far off. Though lovers cannot meet all day, yet they will make hard shift but they will find an opportunity to meet at night. Should my devotion set with the natural sun, I may fear a dreadful night of darkness to follow. That bed may well be as uneasy as one stuffed with thorns, that is not made by prayer. If the soul lie down under a heavy load of sin, the body can have no true rest. Jacob could sleep sweetly upon a hard stone, having made his peace with God, when Ahasuerus could not, though on a bed of down. I cannot sleep unless God wake for me, and I cannot rationally expect his watchfulness over me unless I request it. My corruptions in the day call for contrition in the night. How many omissions, commissions, personal, relative sins, heart, life wickedness am I daily guilty of! and should I lie down under their weight, for aught I know, they may sink me before morning into endless woe. Whilst blood is in my veins, sin will be in my soul. The weed of sin may be cut, broken, pulled up, yet it will spring again. I shall as soon cease to live, as cease to sin. Though I should be free all the day long from presumptuous enormities, and only defiled with ordinary human infirmities, yet these, if not bewailed, are damning. The smallest letters are most hurtful to the

eyes, and far worse than a large character. Those sins which are comparatively little, if not lamented, are far more dangerous than David's murder and adultery, which were repented of. When the soul, like Tamar, hath, notwithstanding its utmost endeavours to preserve its chastity, been ravished, and by force defiled, it must, with her, lift up the voice and weep. If the sun may not go down upon my wrath against man, much less may I presume to lie down under the wrath of God. Besides, how can sin be mortified, if it be not confessed and bewailed? Arraignment and conviction must go before execution.

The favours of the day past are not to be forgotten, but to be acknowledged with thankfulness. I receive every day more considerable mercies than there are moments in the day; and when I borrow such large sums, the principal of which I am unable ever to satisfy, shall I be so unworthy as to deny the payment of this small interest, which is all my creditor requireth? Whatsoever gain I have got in my calling, whatsoever strength I have received by my food, whatsoever comfort I have had in my relations or friends, whatsoever peace, liberty, protection, I have enjoyed all the day long, I must say of all, as Jacob of his venison, 'The Lord hath brought it to me.' Surely the hearer of my morning prayers may well be the object of my evening praises. Ah, how unreasonable is it that I, like a whirlpool, should suck in every good thing that comes near me, and not so much as acknowledge it! Should any one be the thousandth part so much indebted to me as I am to God, how ill I should take it if he should not confess it! If a beggar at my door receive a small alms from God, by my hands, I look for his thanks. How often have I complained of the baseness and unworthiness of some that are engaged to me! Oh what tongue can express, what heart can conceive, how much I am indebted to my God every moment, though I am less than the least of all his mercies! and doth not all his goodness merit sincere thankfulness? Lord, I confess there is not a day of my life wherein I do not break thy laws in thought, word, and deed. Sin is too much the element in which I live, and the trade that I drive. I find continually a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and captivating me to the law of sin and death. Ah wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? Since I am no day innocent, make me every night penitent. As my sins abound, let my sorrow abound, and thy grace much more abound. Though I can never requite thy favours, help me to admire and bless the fountain of them.

Suffer me never to go to bed, till I have first asked thee my heavenly Father's blessing. Let the eyes of my soul be always open to thee in prayer and praise, before the eyes of my body be shut. And oh, be thou always pleased so to accept my confessions, petitions, thanksgivings, my person and performances, in thy dear Son, that I may lay me down in peace and sleep, because thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.

Finally, I wish that every day of my life may be spent as if it were the day of my death, and all my time employed in adorning my soul, in trimming my lamp, and in a serious preparation for eternity. Whilst I am living I am dying; every moment my sand is running, and my sun is declining. I am as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. I fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. My life is chased away as a vision of the night. The eyes which have seen me shall see me no more, neither shall my place any more behold me. I must live now or never; if I die, I shall not live again. Oh that all the days of my appointed time, I could wait till my change cometh! Were I to take my leave of the world this night, and were my life to end with the day, how then would I spend every hour, every moment of it? Should I lavish away my time about this or that vanity? Would I play it away in vain company? Would I neglect my spiritual watch, or waste my talents upon trifles? Should I dally about secret or private duties, or be careless of my carriage in my calling? Would I starve my immortal soul, or cast off all care of eternity? No; but I should all the day long act by the square and rule of the word. How serious should I be in praying, in reading, in working for my soul, for my salvation! how diligent to do all the good I could, to receive all the good I might! How watchful to catch at, and embrace all opportunities of honouring and serving my Maker and Redeemer, because my time is short, and I must pray, and read, and work for eternity, now or no more, no more for ever! And why should I not be as holy, though I do not know that I shall die this night, when I know not but I may die this night? How foolish is he who neglects doing his work till his work is past doing! Besides, other creatures are constant and unwearied in serving their Maker; they are every day, all the day long, in their stations obedient to his commands. If I look to heaven, to earth, to inanimate, to irrational creatures, I behold them all as so many soldiers, in their several ranks, exactly and continually subject to the orders which they receive from the Lord of hosts; and shall I be shamed by them? I am at present more

indebted, more intrusted by God. I have a reward hereafter of joy to encourage me, of pain to provoke me to unweariedness in well-doing, which they neither hope nor fear. Lord, I live every moment upon thee, why should I not live every moment to thee? My life is by thy providence, oh that it were according to thy precepts! I would not be thine hireling, to serve thee merely for wages—thou thyself art my exceeding great reward—but I would be thy days-man, to work for thee by the day, every day, all the day long. Oh help me to live well in time, that I may live well eternally! Let every day be so devoted to thy praise, and every part of it so employed in thy service, that I may be the more fitted to please and worship thee in that place where there is no night, yet all rest—no sun, yet all day, all light, all joy; where I shall have no meat, or drink, or sleep, or shop, or flocks, or family, and, which is best of all, no unbelieving, selfish, carnal heart, to call me from, or hinder me in, thy work, but I shall worship and enjoy thee without diversion, without distraction, without interruption, without intermission, both perfectly and perpetually. Amen.

END OF VOL. II.