

THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART III.

BY

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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 delicates, 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 *ἀλκίαιετος*, 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, *Abstinit 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.—*Goliuss.*, 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 ἐαυτοῖς*, 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 presentia corporum tantum, non subdola et palpans 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 choosest 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 choosest 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 voluntary 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-aborrence, 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 blesteth 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 moderatio 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 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 acceptance 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.

THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING.

PART III.

CHAPTER VII.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in visiting the sick.

FIFTHLY, Thy duty is to exercise thyself in visiting the sick. The visitation of the sick is a work of as great weight as any enjoined us relating to others, and as much neglected and slighted in its management as almost any duty commanded. Sickness is so common, and death so ordinary, that with most their frequency takes away the sense of them, and charity in many sickens and dieth as fast as others' bodies. The generality of pretended Christians, like the priest and the Levite, if they see a man wounded, both in his body and soul, though it be to death, pass on the other side of the way, not caring to meddle with any that are in misery. They tell us they are true members of Christ, but, like a bag of suppurated blood, they feel nothing, neither have any communion with the body. Many on their dying beds, whose souls are worse and more dangerously sick than their bodies, may speak to their minister or neighbour (for the duty belongs to the people as well as the pastor) almost in the words of Martha to Christ, Sir, if thou hadst been here, my soul had not died. Some visit the sick, but rather out of a compliment than out of conscience, or to profit themselves more than their neighbours. The ingenious heathen Seneca, will tell such, If a man visit his sick friend, and watch at his pillow for charity's sake, and out of his old affection, we approve it; but if for a legacy, he is a vulture, and watcheth only for the carcase. The discourse of these is chiefly about worldly affairs,

and nothing about the great concernments of eternity. Others sometimes go about the work, but perform it so ill, administering cordials when there is need of corrosives, sewing pillows under their sick friends' heads, that they may die easily; or if they tell them of their danger, they do it so coldly and carelessly, and by halves, that, as he said, there is *plus periculi a medicamento quam morbo*, more danger from the physic than the disease; their soul-sickness is curable, but the unsuitable medicines they take make it incurable. It may be said of many a soul, as Adrian's counsellors said of him, *Multitudo medicorum*, &c., Many physicians have killed the emperor. Ah! how dreadful is it, when unskilful and unfaithful mountebanks undertake to tamper and trifle with immortal souls, that are just entering into their eternal estates; 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' Galen saith, in respect of bodily medicines, *In medicina nihil exiguum*, There is nothing small in physic; everything in it is of great consequence; a little mistake may cause death. I may upon greater reason say, There is nothing little in spiritual physic; a small error in our prescriptions to sick souls, may cause dreadful mischief; instead of curing, we may kill the patient. Hazael's wet cloth was not more deadly to his master's body than the discourse of most is to their sick neighbours' souls. Fear of displeasing, and a natural propensity to flatter, prevail with too many to soothe their dying friends into unquenchable flames. But surely there is more love (as well as more faithfulness) in frightening a sick person out of his spiritual lethargy, than in fawning him into the eternal lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Some venomous creatures tickle a man till he laughs, even when they sting him to death; so doth the flattering minister or neighbour—he raiseth a sick man, void of grace, to the pinnacle of joy, and highest hopes of heaven, and thereby throweth him down into the gulf of irrecoverable sorrows, and leaves him to undeceive himself in hell.

I shall first lay down two or three motives to stir up the reader to this work, and then direct him about it.

SECTION I.

First, It is a duty commanded thee by God. Men are apt to think the visitation of the sick to be only an act of courtesy and civility, which they may omit or perform at their pleasure, when it is an act of charity and Christianity, which every Christian is bound to by a divine precept. The ministers of Christ are

especially enjoined this task ; but every member of Christ also, when God gives him opportunity, oweth this debt to his neighbour : James v. 14, 15, 'If any be sick, let him send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.' The same word which commandeth the sick man to send, commandeth the elder to go. Indeed, it is a gross fault in many sick persons (and therein they are exceedingly their own enemies) that they either send not at all for the minister, or if they do, not till they have done with the physician ; when their bodies are past all hope, then they look after some hope for their souls. But without question, it is a duty for the elder sometimes to go uncalled. It is good manners to be an unbidden guest at a house of mourning. Our Master was found of them that asked not for him, and so should his servants. There are those that can invite themselves to their neighbours' tables, who withdraw themselves from their chambers. Some are drunk so often with their parishioners whilst they are in health, that they are afraid or ashamed to discourse seriously with them when they are sick. God may speak to many, as to the shepherds of Israel, Woe be to the shepherds of England, that do feed themselves ! should not the shepherds feed the flock ? 'Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed ; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken ; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them,' Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4. None are more cruel to the flock than those that are most covetous of the fleece.

Oleaster, on Lev. xiv. 44,—'Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread,' &c., (that being the third time the priest was to visit the infected house,)—hath this useful observation, *Si sacerdos toties invisit leprosam domum, cur tu non ægrum ?* If the priest were commanded so often to visit the leprous house, why dost not thou visit the sick person ? The plague in the heart calls for more pity and help than the plague in the house.

This duty also belongs to private members, as well as to public officers. Every Christian should love his neighbour as himself, which he cannot do unless he have a sense of his sickness, and endeavour to improve such an opportunity for his neighbour's salvation. True love, like fire, burns hottest when the weather is coldest. Histories make mention of one Ursinus, a physician, that being to die for the gospel, and beginning to waver, Vitalis, a godly man, stepped to him, and, though he knew it would cost

him his life, encouraged him, saying, What! have you been so industrious heretofore, to preserve men's bodies, and will you now shrink at the saving your own soul? Be courageous! For which faithful counsel he was condemned, and suffered accordingly. It is our duty to assist them that die natural, as well as those that die violent deaths. To visit persons in their affliction, is one testimony of the truth of our religion at this day. Holiness and charity are like father and child. 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions,' &c., James i. 27. The fatherless and widows are expressed, (but the sick, and strangers, and captives are included,) because these are usually most afflicted and most neglected. Those that have received mercy, cannot but shew mercy. As visiting the distressed is a sign of it now, so it will be the test of Christianity at the great day. Mat. xxv. 34-36, 'Come ye blessed, &c. I was hungry, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me,' &c. Works of mercy fill up the whole bill, as the evidence of the saints' right to heaven. Whereof Luther gives this reason: because the consciences of the wicked shall justify Christ as well in the absolution of the godly, as in their own condemnation. Though Christians do not give their alms, or visit the sick, to be seen of men, yet in doing many offices of love, and acts of charity, they are seen of men. So they who can witness the truth of Christians' mercy, will be forced to acknowledge the equity of Christ's sentence.

SECTION II.

Secondly, It is a special opportunity of doing and receiving good.

1. Of doing good. I think it the more necessary to speak to this motive, because many are apt to judge all pains with sick persons to be to no purpose. They are discouraged from endeavouring the conversion of profane men upon sick-beds, supposing that such men's repentance will be as unsound as their bodies, even when they are sick unto death. Though I would not give the least encouragement to any men to defer their turning to God, believing him worse than mad who puts off the weighty business of his soul, because peradventure God may grant him repentance hereafter; yet I must obviate this suggestion of the devil, which hinders men from doing their duty—God may shew mercy to a soul at last. There is one example in Scripture, that

none might despair. Sickness is with some men the tide-time of devotion. They who scorned godly men, and made a mock of godliness in their health, will prize the saint, and desire his sanctity above all the world, when they lie upon sick-beds, and consider what a holy God they are going to appear before. Sickness, as one saith, is, *Officina virtutis, morum disciplina*, The shop of virtue, and the school of manners. Therefore king Alfred was wont to say, I ever find myself best when worst; best in soul when worst in body: the sickness of my body is physic to my soul. Experience daily informeth us that the swaggerers and gallants of the world (whose consciences are not seared with a hot iron) though they gave themselves up to drunkenness, and gluttony, and gaming, and whoredom, and all manner of wickedness in their youth and strength, yet when they are weakened much with a disease, and have no hopes of continuing longer on earth, begin to wish that they had spent their time to more purpose, and are sensible of their neglect of God and Christ, and their souls, and eternity; then many of them will desire the company of those that fear God, and beg their prayers, and hearken to their counsels, and would give all they are worth for a little of their grace and holiness. Even Benhadad, the king of Syria, an enemy to the prophets and people of God in his health, will send a prince to Elisha with a large present, and most submissive expressions—‘Thy son Benhadad’—in his sickness, 2 Kings viii. 9. Sickness gives men a double advantage for holiness.

(1.) It takes off their hearts from creatures, by teaching them experimentally what a poor, weak cordial the whole creation is to sick or dying men. When men are strong and lusty, they can taste and savour earthly things; carnal comforts hinder their endeavours after spiritual. They take up with creatures, as Esau, and say, they have enough; but sickness makes them know the emptiness of all sublunary things. When men are sick, they cannot relish the world's dainties and delicates. The preferments, and riches, and pleasures of the earth, are all unsavoury and uncomfortable to them. They now see the vanity of those things which heretofore they so much idolised; how unable they are to revive their fainting spirits, or to allay their pain, or purchase them the least ease, or procure them the least acceptance in the other world; and hence the price of the world's market falls abundantly in their judgments. Bernard tells us of a brother of his, that when he gave him many good instructions, and he being a soldier, regarded them not, he put his finger to his side, and told

his brother, One day a spear shall make way to this heart of thine, for admonition and instruction to enter.

(2.) In sickness conscience is usually allowed more liberty to speak its mind, and men are then more at leisure to hear it. In health, their callings, or friends, or lusts, or sports, or some carnal comfort or other, take up their hearts and time; that conscience must be silenced, as too bold a preacher, for offering to disturb them in their pleasures, or if it will use its authority, and continue to speak in God's name, and forbid their foolishness, and atheism, and sensuality, and profaneness, they are deaf to its calls and commands, and drown its voice with the noise of their brutish delights. But in sickness they are taken off from their trades, and pastimes, and merry meetings, and jovial companions; when their bodies are weak, their fleshly lusts are not so strong as formerly, whereby conscience hath a greater opportunity to tell them of their miscarriages and wickedness, and they themselves are more attentive to its words and warning.

Reader, it is a special piece of wisdom to improve such a season for the good of thy neighbour's soul. When the wax is softened, then we clap the seal upon it, lest it harden again, and be incapable of any impression. When the hand of God hath by sickness made the heart of thy wicked friend or brother soft and tender, then do thy utmost to stamp the image of God upon it. Paul would preach whilst a door was opened, and there was likelihood of doing good. It is a great encouragement to work, when the subject upon which we bestow our pains seems capable of what we prosecute, and probable to answer our labour. We have some heart to strike a nail into a board, because there is hope it will enter; but no list to drive a nail into a flint, because we despair of effecting it. The smith strikes when the iron is hot; he knoweth, if he should stay till it is cold, his labour would be in vain. Friend, take the advantage of others' bodily sickness to further their spiritual health, lest they either die in their sins, or harden upon their recovery. Opportunity is like a joint in some part of a fowl, which, if we hit upon, we may easily carve and divide the fowl; but if the knife fall on this side or that side of the joint, we do but mangle the meat, and take pains to no purpose. It is the speech of Master Richard Rogers in his Seven Treatises, I have visited some persons that have been condemned to die, in whom, (through the blessing of God upon his endeavours,) I have found as good signs of saved persons as of any that died in their beds, not having tasted of repentance before.

2. It is a special opportunity of receiving good. We are taught more effectually by the eye than by the ear. The sight of a sick or dying person hath often a strange and a strong operation upon the beholder. When the father heard of one that sinned notoriously, he cried out, I may be as bad as this man is. When thou seest one dangerously sick, thou mayest think with thyself, I must be as this man is, sick unto death, when none of my relations or possessions can afford me the least comfort ; and oh how much doth it concern me to prepare beforehand for such an hour ! If this man's work be now to do, when his life is ending, how sad is the condition of his precious soul ! Oh that I were wise to consider timely, and to provide seasonably for my latter end ! The sight of a dead man was instrumental to the spiritual life of Waldus. The sight of others' sickness may well quicken me to the greater industry and diligence after spiritual health. Do I behold my neighbour, whose sail formerly swelled with a full gale of worldly enjoyments, now wind-bound, chained to his chamber, or fettered to his bed, unable to relish his food, or take any comfort in his friends ? do I see him full of aches and pains, tossings and tumblings, crying out in the evening, Would God it were morning, and in the morning, would God it were evening, because of the anguish of his spirit ? do I behold his cheeks pale, his eyes sunk, his lips quivering, his loins trembling, his heart panting, and nature striving and struggling with the disease to keep its ground, and yet at last forced to quit the field, and leave the victory to its adversary ? how many excellent observations may I draw from such a text ! What a fool am I to trust the world, which leaves this man in his greatest want ! How mad am I in loving sin, which is the cause of all these crosses and miseries, and which makes death so mortal to poor souls ! Of how much worth and value is the blessed Redeemer, who will comfort a Christian in such a time of need, and carry him through his last conflict with joy and conquest ! How careful should I be to get and keep a good conscience, which in such a day of extremity will yield me true courage and confidence ! The wise man doth not without cause tell us : ' It is better to go into the house of mourning, (to the terming or charnel-house,) than to the house of feasting : for that is the end of all men ; and the living will lay it to heart,' Eccles. vii. 2. Men in a house of feasting are apt to be forgetful of their duty to God, themselves, and their neighbours, Isa. xxii. 13, 14 ; Amos vi. 3, 6 ; Isa. v. 11, 12. When the body is filled, the soul is often neglected. Job was afraid of this in his sons : Job i. 6, ' It may be my sons

have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts,'—*i.e.*, when they had been feasting at their elder brother's house. God gives Israel a special caution against this, Deut. viii. 12, 14. Men, in a house of mourning, are put in mind both of God's sovereignty, who draweth away their breath and they perish, Ps. civ. 29, and their own frailty, how soon they are gathered and withered, even in their prime and pride, Ps. xxxix. 5. I am blind if I do not see mine own end in the end of another; and distracted if I do not provide for my last enemy, which I must necessarily encounter. Thus it is a mercy to ourselves, to be merciful unto others; and whilst we visit the sick, we visit our own souls. Who would not do his neighbour good, when he may be confident it will tend to his own gain? I have but hopes by my visit of advantaging a sinner; but I may be sure, if I be faithful therein, of profiting myself.

SECTION III.

Thirdly, It may be the last opportunity thou mayest ever have of advantaging thy sick neighbour's soul. His sick-bed may be his death-bed, and then it will be too late to counsel or advise him. There is no purgatory in the other world. Diseases, both bodily and spiritual, must be purged away before death, or never. He that is filthy at death, must be filthy still, even to all eternity. All the tears in hell will not wash out the least spot in the soul; all the fire of hell will not purge out the least dross. Therefore Christ took the opportunity of dropping good counsel into the heart of the thief on the cross, knowing that if he had omitted it a very few hours longer, the soul of the poor thief had been lost for ever. Hadst thou a friend going to sea, and never to return again, waiting at a port for a wind, and then to be gone, and hadst business with him of as great concernment to him as his life—thou couldst tell him of a quicksand which he must beware of, or he will be cast away—wouldst thou not be quick and speedy to acquaint him with it, lest he should be under sail before thou didst see him? Would it not cut thee to the heart, if he should miscarry through thy negligence? The application is easy. The soul of every neighbour is, or ought to be, dearer to thee than the body of thy nearest friend or relation. When thy wicked neighbour is sick, his soul is launching, for aught thou knowest, into the ocean of eternity, whence he shall never, never, return more. He waits only for a wind, a word from God, and he is gone. The sick-bed is the passage or pathway to the grave. Thou hast work to do with him,

that is more worth to him than his life, that is of as great value as his immortal soul, and eternal salvation. Now thou mayest acquaint him, while he is on the shore, with his danger, and the way of his delivery ; but if once he launch into the main, thou mayest call loud and long enough after him in vain. Oh, will it not pierce thee to the quick, if his soul should be swallowed up in the boundless and bottomless sea of divine wrath, through thy laziness or unfaithfulness? When the day drew near for the destruction of the Jews, the heart of Haman swelled with hopes, and Esther had then an opportunity to step in and preserve the lives of her countrymen. Mordecai tells her, ' Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this ? ' She made use of the season, and saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Had she delayed a little longer, it had been too late ; they had all been sacrificed upon the altar of Haman's ambition. When the hour of a wicked man's death approacheth, the heart of the roaring lion is big with expectation of his prey, and a Christian friend hath then possibly an opportunity to save the poor creature's soul. Now or never ; there is no knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, whither the sick person is going. If he make use of the price God puts now into his hands, by serious, prudent, faithful, and affectionate counsel, he may help the sinner to heaven. Who knoweth whether he be come, by the providence of God, into the sick man's chamber for such a thing as this ?

I have but one thing more to commend to thee, and then I shall speak to the work itself.

Before thou goest to thy sick neighbour, go to God by prayer ; entreat him to direct thee what to speak, and to succeed what shall be spoken ; it is his own ordinance, and therefore thou mayest the more comfortably beg and expect his assistance. Nehemiah would speak to God before he spake to the king for the afflicted Jews ; Esther prefers her petition, first to her Maker, that her prayer might prosper, and then her petition to her husband for the lives of her countrymen. God is the principal agent ; and if he be left out, all thy labour will be lost.

Wherein the exercising thyself to godliness in visiting the sick consisteth—

1. In endeavouring to benefit the soul of thy neighbour.
2. In getting some spiritual profit to thyself.

First, In endeavouring the spiritual good of thy neighbour. We are enjoined, in the eighth command, to mind and further our neighbour's temporal wealth, but much more his spiritual welfare. It

was true which Bucer's physician told him, when he expressed his eagerness to die, *Non sibi, sed multorum utilitati, se esse natum*, That he was not born for himself, but for the good of many others ; every saint is to be, as it were, a common stock for the profit of many. He is born, and new born, not only for himself, but for others' benefit. The lynx is a spotted, unclean beast, that, knowing how his urine will congeal into a precious stone, and be profitable to men, maketh a hole in the ground when he pisseth, to hide it from them. Job, who knew the advantage that might accrue to others thereby, would not conceal either the word or works of God from them, Job vi. 10, and xxvii. 11. To this end—

1. Labour to be acquainted with the state of the sick person's soul. It is dangerous to give either purges or cordials ignorantly, or at peradventure. The souls of men are of unconceivable value, and therefore not to be tampered or trifled with. It is a good step to the cure to understand fully the disease, and the constitution of the patient ; therefore physicians feel the pulse, view the urine, inquire of the sick person, or his friends, concerning his former course of life, diet, present digestion of his food, place of his trouble or pain, &c., that they may proceed upon good grounds, and give suitable and effectual advice. So shouldst thou, reader, in visiting the sick, inform thyself, either by conference with some serious Christians of their acquaintance beforehand, or by some searching, prudent questions to the sick, concerning the condition of their souls. The ignorance of a physician may occasion the death of the patient. Some practitioners in physic, who intend much good, do much hurt for want of judgment to find out the tempers and distempers of the sick. A mistake in soul-cases is of more hazard than in body-sickness. If I undertake to humble a person who is already cast down sufficiently, and wants a cordial, or to comfort one who is full of presumption already, and needs a corrosive, how good soever my meaning may be, my acting is evil ; and instead of relieving, I may destroy my brother. The eastern churches did not without cause enjoin the minister, or such as were appointed to visit the sick, to continue with them seven days together, that in that space they might discover the man before they applied themselves to him, either in a way of admonition, or counsel, or consolation. Job's friends, when they came to visit him, spake not a word, either reproving or advising him, till they heard him open his mouth and curse the tongue that told the news of his birth. The knowledge of the sick man's spiritual condition is, as it were, the foundation upon which we must build all our discourse with him, and prayers

to God for him ; or at least it is the rule by which we must build, and therefore it is very dangerous to mistake in it. If the foundation be laid ill, the superstructure will never stand well ; if the rule be crooked, the building cannot be straight. A blind archer may as soon hit the mark, as one ignorant of his neighbour's state advantage his soul.

SECTION IV.

2. Apply thyself to him suitably to his condition. As the conditions of men are several, so must the application be ; that which cures one may kill another. One medicine will as soon cure all diseased bodies, as one way all sick souls ; indeed the physic to be prescribed every patient is the same for substance—the blood of Christ ; ‘by his stripes we are healed.’ But there are several ways of tendering this to sinners, that they may be prepared for it, and give it all acceptation ; that physic which is given to one in a potion, is given to another in a powder, to a third in an electuary, to a fourth in a pill, according as it will be most profitable and most acceptable to them. It is not easy so to write the bill, that the sick may receive what is prescribed to his greatest content and advantage ; for as many perish *errore medici* as *vi morbi*, by the error of the physician, as by the power of the disease. Though I judge it next to impossible for me to set down, exactly and fully, directions answerable to the difference of sick persons' condition, disposition, education, calling, guilt, &c., yet I shall speak to the most ordinary cases, and be careful not to omit the main work, namely, that which concerneth the conversion of graceless and Christless persons, if, on a sick-bed, God peradventure will give them repentance.

If the sick person be judged carnal and unregenerate, (for the tree is known by its fruits ; besides, it is no breach of charity to fear the worst of them whose lives do not speak a positive holiness, especially whilst we are endeavouring their good,) then in general I would advise thee to speak,

(1.) To the depravation of man's nature, and the transgressions of life, with the sad aggravations thereof ; how holy man was by creation, how universally and desperately vicious he is by his fall from God, and what horrid unthankfulness he is guilty of in continuing in sin, notwithstanding the grace that is offered to him in the gospel. It is fit to speak to the purity and equity of the law of God, and to the difference and contrariety of his heart and life

to it ; to the sinfulness of sin, in its offensiveness and opposition to the nature and word of an infinitely holy, glorious, and gracious Majesty ; in its destructiveness to the present peace and future perfection of his own precious and immortal soul ; and in that the stain of it is so deep, and the venom of it so great, that nothing beneath the blood of God could wash out its spots, or be a sufficient antidote for its poison. Tell him of the folly of sinners in refusing heaven for earth, angelical delights for brutish pleasures, the blessed God for a base lust ; and of his own madness likewise in running on so eagerly upon his own ruin, against the counsels of men, the commands, threatenings, and entreaties of God, the convictions of his conscience, the calls and invitations of a loving Redeemer, and the motions of the Holy Spirit.

(2.) Speak to the merit of sin, how it being committed against an infinite Majesty, deserveth infinite wrath and severity. Tell him that the wages of sin is death, temporal, spiritual, eternal. Acquaint him with the justice, holiness, and jealousy of God ; how he will by no means clear the guilty, but hath threatened all manner of plagues and judgments on the workers of iniquity, and cannot fail in the least of accomplishing his word ; how he is resolved to make all the children of men feel sin to be an evil and bitter thing, either in broken bones on earth, or broken backs, and endless torments in hell. Let him know his own obnoxiousness, by reason of his many and grievous sins, to the curse of the law, the wrath of the Lord, and the vengeance of the eternal fire. Tell him that he is by nature a child of wrath, an enemy to God, and an heir of hell ; that it had been just to have cast him out of the womb into hell ; that God's patience in bearing with him thus long, will but increase his condemnation and endless misery, unless he prevent it by sincere conversion.

This is the first thing requisite in order to the recovery of his soul. Till sin be discovered in its heinous nature, and bloody colours, it will never be lamented, nor the Saviour esteemed according to the duty of the sinner. The first thing usually which the Spirit doth in the change of a sinner, is to convince him of sin, John xvi. 8 ; and this is also first in the minister's commission, Acts xxvi. 18. The great neglect of this, in ministers and others, is one reason that so few sinners are awakened ; the needful work of humiliation is so dangerously slighted, that poor souls go sleeping and dreaming all is well, till they come to be undeceived in hell.

(3.) Speak to his own inability to help himself, that no less than infinite power can recover him out of his miserable condition. Men

are prone to act like brutes, when they are wounded, to undertake the licking themselves whole, as if it were an easy thing to renew a carnal creature, and heal vitiated nature; but, alas! the work is not so soon done. It is another manner of work to open the blind eyes, and enliven the dead soul, than the secure careless worldling doth imagine. It is called a resurrection from the dead, a new creation, the work of God, because nothing less than a divine almighty power can effect it, Rev. xx. 6; Eph. ii. 10; John vi. 29; Eph. ii. 6.

(4.) Speak to the necessity of a change in him, both of his disposition by repentance, and of his condition by faith in Jesus Christ. That these are not works which may be done, or left undone, but such as must be done, or he is undone for ever. Tell him the necessity of a change,

[1.] Of his nature, by repentance; how God himself hath said, Except he repent he shall perish, and that it is not possible for the whole creation to make void God's word. That, as he is a corrupted, depraved creature, he is no way capable of heaven, for God hath shut him out, and barred the gate of bliss against him: 'Into it (*i.e.*, heaven) can in no wise enter anything that defileth, or is unclean,' Rev. xxi. 27; and he hath shut himself out by his vicious nature, for spiritual pleasures are not suitable, neither can be enjoyed by depraved and ungodly creatures. Let him know that swinish dispositions cannot relish heavenly delights, and therefore, if it were possible for him to get to heaven in a carnal estate, heaven would be no heaven, that is, no place of joy or pleasure to him. Acquaint him especially wherein the nature of repentance consisteth, not in a few sighs or sobs for sin, or in crying God mercy, or saying, I am sorry I ever sinned, but in a real change of the heart and nature; that his mind must be changed to see the ugliness and deformity of sin, his will to refuse it as the greatest evil, his affections to loathe it and hate it above all things whatsoever; that he must abhor himself, and loathe himself, and bemoan himself, for all his abominations, if ever he would find mercy, Job xlii. 3; Jer. xxxi. 18; Ezek. xlvii.; that he must in his whole man be altered, turned upside down, be contrary to what he is by nature, be converted and born again, or he can never see the kingdom of God, Mat. xviii. 3; John iii. 3. Forget not also to discover the necessity of a change,

[2.] Of his state, by faith in Jesus Christ; how the Son of God can alone deliver him from the wrath of God; that there is no name under heaven by which he can be saved, but the name of Christ;

that all his prayers, and tears, and duties, cannot satisfy the divine justice for the least of his sins, or deserve the least favour on the behalf of his soul ; that he must of necessity be united by faith to Christ, and submit to his guidance, and give up himself to his government, or perish eternally ; that though Christ died for him without his will, yet he will not save him against or without his will, but he must be heartily willing to accept Christ as his Saviour and sovereign, as ever he looks for salvation by him. Here it may not be amiss to acquaint him with the fulness of Christ's merits, and the freeness of God's mercy to them that do sincerely repent and believe. How God commands, entreats, threatens, promiseth, and all to draw men to mind the things of their peace.

(5.) Speak to the shortness of his time to do this weighty and necessary work in ; that now there is no dallying, no delaying, for within a few hours it may be too late ; that grace must be got now or never ; that Christ, and pardon, and life must be obtained now or never ; that no sin shall be forgiven, no person shall be justified, no soul renewed or cleansed in the other world, that is not pardoned and sanctified in this ; that heaven and hell are before him, and within a short time the matter will be determined which of the two he shall be in for ever ; that he must now get a title to bliss, or miss it for ever ; now prevent the unquenchable fire, or burn in it for ever ; that he is now upon the shore, just stepping into the ocean either of honey or wormwood, joy or horror, and therefore it concerns him nearly to consider what he doth, and to be diligent to the utmost, if he would escape the endless company and torments of devils and damned spirits. Take heed of giving him hopes of recovery, which many do to please the sick or their friends ; for hereby thou mayest exceedingly injure his soul, frustrating all the means used for his spiritual health. Think not much to be often with the sick person in case thou hast opportunity. Let his misery move thee, and the love of Christ draw thee. When we fell an oak, thirty or forty of the first strokes seem to be lost, because the tree stirs not ; yet if we continue, it comes at last down, and sheweth the effects of the first as well as the last strokes. If he be converted thou wilt be satisfied ; however, thy reward is with God. If this unconverted person be scandalous, then it may be sometimes convenient to hint at the horrid nature of such sins, being committed against common light, and abhorred by many of the very heathen, and marked particularly for vengeance by the jealous God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 ; Gal. v. 19-21 ; Eph. v. 5, 6. Thou mayest have the more hopes of success in visiting such a one, because conscience in

this sinner will probably prove thy friend, and join with thee in terrifying him for those sins from which it could not (though it frequently attempted) dissuade him.

If the unconverted person be one that lived civilly and orderly in his outward conversation—paying every man his own, keeping his church, forbearing enormous crimes, &c.—it will be then needful to commend his civility; Jesus looked on such a man and loved him. But also to discover its defects and insufficiency, that there is one thing lacking; how his nature is universally polluted, and it must be thoroughly purified, or he is a lost man; that it is one thing to have a wound hid, and another thing to have it healed; that many infidels have been unblameable in their outward carriages, who yet perished, being without Christ; that the scribes and pharisees went farther than most civil men, for they had not only a negative holiness in denying gross sins, but a positive holiness, (in show at least,) they prayed, fasted, &c.; yet he, to whom it is impossible to lie, tells us, Mat. v. 20, ‘Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.’ It will be good also, in dealing with such a person, to insist much upon the latitude and purity of the law of God; how it forbiddeth (and condemneth for) the least sinful thought, and how nothing less than perfect obedience can answer its demands, or satisfy the law-giver; because such men are apt to judge themselves righteous, comparing themselves with those that are notoriously vicious. They think all is well, their minds being darkened, and unable to discern and discover the secret lusts which are hugged in their hearts; besides, their consciences being defiled as well as other faculties, are not so true to them as to convince them powerfully of that pride, hypocrisy, unbelief, impenitency, atheism, and ungodliness which they are guilty of. And Satan hath a strict watch over them to keep them asleep in sin, not caring, so men go to hell, whether they go thither in the dirty road of scandalous and crying crimes, or in the cleanly path, and through the fair meadows of civility. Whether the person be scandalous or civil, it will be needful to let in light at some crevice, and not to leave the sinner wholly in the darkness of despair. The good Samaritan poured oil as well as wine into the wounds of him that fell among thieves. A little hope may melt that heart which despair would harden. Sturdy thieves have wept at the news of a reprieve, that have stormed and raged at the sentence of condemnation; but this is wisely to be done, lest the sinner be encouraged to presume. Lenity is to be joined with severity. Let there be love,

but not emboldening them to sloth; let there be terror, but not driving them into a fury, saith Gregory.¹

If the sick person be one that is judged a true member of Christ, then speak to the excellency of grace, and Christ, and heaven; to the certainty and worth of those promises that are entailed on believers, to make his passage into the other world as comfortable as thou canst. It will be fit also to speak to those graces of faith, patience, love, heavenly-mindedness, and joy in God, which should be minded and exercised in a time of sickness; how the time of affliction is the spring, the special time wherein those graces should shoot up and shew themselves; that God expecteth some service from him under his sickness; and that his last works should be better than his first. If he be under doubts and fears—for Satan will take the advantage of his sickness to assault him with his fiery darts, and saints are too apt to question God's love when they feel his hand, the weakness of the body discomposing the mind, and denying it the free exercise of spiritual judgment—then advise him to review his former experiences of divine goodness, and trials of divine grace within him; to hold fast on Jesus Christ, and to consider that sickness is common to men, good as well as bad; that though they differ vastly in the other world, yet not at all in their passage thither. Singular saints have been afflicted with the sorest sickness; Job was a non-such for sanctity, yet full of sores. It is a question whether he were more eminent for corporal distempers or spiritual health; Hezekiah, David, Asa, Paul, Epaphroditus, were all thus chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world.

Whatsoever the sick person be, whether gracious or graceless, it will not be amiss to mention the three great lessons which God would teach every one by affliction.

First, The emptiness of the world, appearing in its inability to afford the least ease to the body, or comfort to the soul, of the sick. How little worth is that which fails a man in his greatest need!

Second, The preciousness of Christ, and grace, and the promises of the gospel, which can enliven and encourage a dying person; that can cause light in darkness, joy in sorrow, and life in death; that can enable a Christian to rejoice in tribulation, and to welcome pain and sickness, nay, and the very king of terrors, and to look into the other world with comfort and confidence.

Third, The sinfulness of sin, which is the original of all diseases,

¹ *Miscenda est lenitas cum severitate; sit amor, sed non emolliens; sit rigor, sed non exasperans.*—*Greg. Mor.*, 10.

and aches, and grief, and separation of friends, and losses, and miseries whatsoever. The rabbis say, that when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit his head ached. It is clear sin is the original of sickness. The body is the instrument of unrighteousness, therefore the subject of diseases; 'for this cause many are weak and sick,' 1 Cor. xi. 30. All the evil in this and the other world are the issue and offspring of sin. Ah! what a root of bitterness is that, which brings forth such bitter fruit! Be sure to take the thoughts of the sick off from resting in physicians, or any means used for their cure; this was the fault of good Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 12. Let them know that it is God that wounds, and he only that can heal, and therefore he must not be tempted, either by despising those helps which his providence giveth, or by relying on them. Hippocrates gave this counsel to all physicians, that when they went upon any occasion to visit their patients, they should consider, first of all, whether there was not *divinum aliquod in morbo*, something of God in the disease. If so, he held the patient to be desperate, and his recovery impossible: *Cujus contrarium verum est*. If it were the hand of God that smote them, the same hand can help them, for with him nothing is impossible. Let them understand that sickness hath a supernatural as well as a natural cause. That all diseases are, like the centurion's servants, at the command of God: He saith to one, Go, and it goeth; to another, Come, and it cometh; to a third, Do this, and it doeth it. God would have the Israelites know that not only sword, and famine, and captivity, but also pestilence, consumptions, fevers, and burning agues, are sent from heaven, Deut. xxviii. 21, 22. He causeth those storms, and tempests, and quarrels, and contentions that are between the humours in our bodies, to their disturbance and destruction. Therefore Moses, beholding the whole body of the Jews (except two renowned members) corrupted—for he lived to see all that came out of Egypt besides to die—cried out, 'Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.'

SECTION V.

3. Deal closely and faithfully with him; let not fear of giving distaste, or hope of some advantage to thyself, make thee false to the soul of the sick. Do not play the part of a mountebank, in using palliating medicines to allay the distemper, or anodynes to stupefy the patient, and neglect the root of the malady. Alas! carnal wretches are prone enough of themselves to deceive and

flatter their own souls, till it be too late for second thoughts, and the wicked one will be at their bed-sides, to hinder, if it be possible, all means from awakening and undeceiving them. Be careful, therefore, lest thou shouldst be any way accessory to Satan's design. Sin is like the little serpent aspis, which stings men, whereby they fall into a pleasant sleep, and in that sleep die. Sinners need all the rousing and affrighting considerations that may be. He that gives a potion, which, instead of furthering health, procureth death, is a murderer. The flatterer is like the worm *teredo*, mentioned by Pliny, (in Nat. Hist.,) as soft as silk in the feeling of the hand, but it biteth so hard with the teeth, that it eateth out the heart of the strongest timber. Flattery is to sin, what oil to fire; it makes it flame the more. Oh it is dangerous to speak peace where God speaks war! shouldst thou do so, the blood of such a soul would be required at thy hands, Ezek. xxxiii. 8; Jer. xxiii. Faithful dealing will bring thee in most comfort at present, and most credit hereafter, as also be most advantageous to the sick person. When the great day comes, the man that hated flattery, and scorned, for a little profit or favour, to disown his duty, or prove false to the soul of his neighbour, will hold up his head with courage, but the cowardly and fearful will hang down their heads with shame, Rev. xxi. 8.

4. Pray with him, and for him. Sick persons are often full of pain and grief, and are more than usually assaulted by Satan, whereby they are the less able to pray for themselves, and have the more need of the prayers of others. It is observable that though the Holy Ghost commandeth men in other afflictions to pray themselves—'Is any afflicted? let him pray'—yet when he mentioneth sickness, he saith not, Is any sick? let him pray; but, 'Is any sick? let him send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,' James v. 14—*i.e.*, A sick man is not so fit to pray himself; he wanteth others to pray for him, and with him. The soul sympathiseth in the sufferings of the body, and the inner man is seldom at rest, if the outward man be distempered and disquieted. The mind is unfitted for duties by the diseases of the flesh. Paul calls his bodily weaknesses a temptation, Gal. iv. 13, 14. Afflictions on the flesh are temptations to the spirit, and sickness is a piercing arrow in Satan's quiver of temptations.

If the person be carnal, what motives hast thou, from his misery, to quicken thee to the duty! The poor creature is going to hell, and knoweth it not. His destruction is near, and he is not aware. How should the thoughts of that extremity and eternity of torments

which he is every moment liable to, stir thee up to be earnest and instant with God on his behalf ! It may be thou wouldst sit up a whole night to watch with him for the comfort of his body ; dost thou not know that the soul is infinitely more worth ? Oh watch and pray, that he enter not into eternal condemnation ! Thou art not ignorant that God hath made promises of grace, as well as promises to grace, and canst not tell but that grace waiteth in heaven for the sick person, only thy prayer must be the messenger to fetch it thence. God hath shewn mercy at the last ; he can do it to this man, therefore thou mayest have the more hopes. Besides, it may be his sickness shall not be unto death, but only to heal his diseased soul, and so to give him a new life, both natural and spiritual. The question before thee is, whether that poor sick creature's soul shall be Christ's or the devil's for ever ; and wilt thou not plead hard with God that it may be thrown in to Christ, whose title is unquestionable, and that the grand and arch-enemy of Christ and men may be frustrated and disappointed in his expectation ? Zeal to the advancement of thy Redeemer's interest, and love to the soul of thy neighbour, should actuate and animate thy requests, and put life and fervency into thy petitions.

If the sick man be godly, thou hast the more encouragement to pray. God hath promised as much to him as thou canst rationally desire for him. He hath hopes to speed, that goeth to an honest, able man, and sheweth him his bond for what he demands. God is infinite, both in righteousness and power, so that there is no fear of a repulse, if you can shew his hand for your request. He delights to hear his promises pleaded in prayer, and to see his children so full of affection, as to be fervent in their petitions for each other. Thou mayest send the same message by prayer to Jesus, that the sister of Lazarus did, ' Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick,' and mayest be confident of the like gracious answer : ' This sickness is not unto death (eternal) but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.'

Next to thy endeavours for the good of thy sick neighbour's spiritual estate, it will be fit to advise him about his temporal estate, that he may dispose of his worldly affairs, and his wealth, if God have given him any, with wisdom, and settle things so firmly, that his relations may not be wrangling for his goods, when his body is at rest in his grave.

Secondly, The exercising ourselves to godliness in visiting the sick, consisteth in getting good to our own souls by it. Though it be forbidden us to inquire of the dead, and ask their counsel, yet it

is commanded us to inquire of the dying, and to learn of them, Deut. xviii. 11 ; Eccles. v. 1, 2. Sick men may teach them that are in health many excellent lessons. Some say that ground covered with ashes, is made thereby the more fruitful. The dust of the dead, falling upon a right soil, an honest heart, will make it the more abundant in holiness. A Christian findeth walking in hospitals or churchyards, among the sick or dying, much conducing to the health and life of his soul. He that was cast dead into his grave, by touching the bones of dead Elisha, was ravished to life. That which Elias said to Elisha, when he begged a double portion of his spirit, ' If thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee,' may fitly be alluded to in this place. The sight of others' sickness and death, and their departures from us, is a great means to increase the spirit in us, and to double our care and diligence in preparing for such an hour.

1. In laying to heart thine own frailty. He is but a cold clod of clay, and dead already, who doth not see his own death in the death of others. Sickness is but one remove from death ; the sick-bed is the way to the coffin ; therefore, when thou visitest the sick or dying, reflect upon thyself, and consider : This will be my case, or a worse, a violent stroke. The same enemy that encountered my neighbour, is upon his march towards me, and will certainly overtake me. The feet of them that carry my friend to his grave, are ready to carry me also ; what need have I to be always in a dying frame, and ready for death ! The very next arrow that death shoots, may be levelled at me ; and shall not I stand always upon my guard in expectation of it, and armed for it ! Oh how deep will the head of that arrow pierce me, if it find me naked.

2. In considering God's mercy to thee, and blessing him for the health thou enjoyest. The pain of others will tell thee that ease is a mercy ; the racking sickness, and restless nights of others, do speak aloud in thine ears, that health and rest are mercies.¹ Oh how shouldst thou adore that God who distinguisheth thee thus graciously from others. Mayest thou not think with thyself, here is a person full of pain, the day is full of darkness to him, and wearisome nights are appointed to him. Lo, his wife, and children, and friends are weeping about him, but cannot relieve or redress him ; all the comforts of this life are unsavoury to him. His aches, and grief, and diseases, hinder him much in spiritual performances, and in the prosecution of a better life ; how much am I bound to the Lord, that it is not so with me ! I can relish outward mercies,

¹ Carendo potius quam fruendo sapimus.

and am refreshed with bodily comforts. I have no such distemper or pain to take me off from prayer or Scripture, but I may be as frequent and as urgent as I will about my soul and eternal concerns. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me praise his holy name. Surely health is the prince, the first-born, of outward blessings. Though foolish men deprive themselves frequently of it, for the satisfaction of a sensual, wanton appetite, yet it is more worth than a thousand of those brutish transitory delights. A stomach is of more value than meat, and a good digestion than raiment. Men think not much to part with much of their wealth in their sickness for a little health. Oh, it deserves thy prayers to God for it, with submission to his will, when thou wantest it, and thy praising of God for it, with enlarged affections, when thou hast it !

3. In observing the necessity of a timely repentance, and its difficulty on a dying bed. How unfit is a man to begin to live, when he is racked with pain, and going to die. The dolour and trouble of his body are great impediments to the good of his soul. When the outward man is in great distress, and the inner man sympathising with it, the best words are often wasted and thrown away, and the mind is unfit either to receive counsel or comfort. Further, how irrational is it to give Satan our prime, our health, our strength, and God our weak, and consumptionate, and dying parts; to present our enemy with our quick, and nimble, and active faculties and members, and to put off our best friend with a body full of sores, and a soul full of sin. Besides, the longer men continue in sin, the more difficult their conversion will be. He that hath wandered or travelled out of the right way all day, will hardly be persuaded to go back all the way, and set out again at night. Where Satan hath dwelt long, he will hardly be removed. A ship, the longer it leaketh, the harder it is to be emptied. The farther a nail is driven in, the more trouble to get it out. The longer my soul continueth in disobedience, the harder it will be to bring it to repentance. The more sin is riveted and habituated in me, the more pains, and toil, and grief, it will cost to get it subdued and slain.

4. In learning more the excellency of grace, and an interest in Christ and God, which will do a man good in a day of sickness, and an hour of death. He is a friend indeed that is a friend in a day of adversity. The sinner's folly in neglecting durable riches, teacheth the Christian wherein true wisdom consisteth, and the worth of it ; that it consisteth not in heaping up such treasures, or getting such

friends as will be useless and unprofitable in a time of need, but in laying up a treasure in heaven, and insuring eternal comforts. Cold sharp weather sheweth the value of a healthy constitution. A storm will speak the worth of a sure anchor and a skilful pilot. The excellency of grace, and holiness, and Christ, and God, are not fully known till we come into the other world, where all sublunary comforts are wanting ; but the more any condition in this world resembleth that, and the nearer we approach that, the more visible is the value of divine and lasting blessings. A cordial is not esteemed till we come to fainting fits. A soul that in time of health, and wealth, and outward prosperity, made the fear and ways of God, and the estate of the godly, the object of his scorn and contempt, when he comes to be awakened by the alarum of death, and to look into the other world, will make them the object of his choice, and give a world, if he had it, for them.

A good wish about the visitation of the sick, wherein the former heads are applied.

The righteous Lord, and God of all grace, who for sin afflicteth man with sickness, yet in the midst of judgment remembereth mercy, intending his instruction, not his destruction, by it—having designed such afflictions, as rods to whip men to himself, to make them out of love with sin, the spring of all their sufferings and sorrows, and to wean them from the earth, who otherwise would make it their heaven ; and hath also appointed men to be the means through which these mercies shall be conveyed, and sicknesses sanctified to them ; I wish, in general, that I may never omit to visit those neighbours with pity, whom God hath visited in fury ; much less insult, as the Edomites over the afflicted Israelites, and persecute them whom God hath smitten, drawing blood from those wounds which are already blue with the blows of the Almighty ; but may be faithful to the precept and purpose of my God in this particular, and adopt my second table duties into the family of the first table, by visiting the sick, not out of common civility, but out of charity, and in obedience to the God of my health. It is my privilege that my alms may become sacrifice, my courtesies worship, and in paying that debt of love which I owe to my neighbour, I may pay that duty which I owe to my Maker. Oh that in all my common transactions I might move upon principles of reason, and,

especially in works that have a tendency God-ward, act upon grounds of religion. Lord, thou hast an eye to my good in all thy providences and dealings; why should not I have an eye to thy glory in all my practices and actings? Cause thy fear so to possess my heart, that I may visit the sick out of conscience, and let thy grace so assist and accompany my endeavours, that thou mayest visit them to their eternal comfort.

I wish that the command of my God may be a sufficient motive and warrant to make me set about the practice of this work. It is my duty to visit them that are sick, as I am the Lord's servant. I disown his authority, I deny his image, if I do not sympathise with others in misery. Nature itself commandeth me to be affected with the conditions of such as are afflicted. All creatures will commiserate those of their rank and order that are in misery. Bees will rather stay and starve with those of their kind that are unable to fly to their hives, by reason of the weakness of their wings, than stir from them or forsake them. The swine are so sensible of their fellows' sufferings, that if one of the company be lugged, all the rest will after their manner condole it. If a beast be slain, and its blood spilt, others of that sort will shew their love and pity by scraping earth on the blood, burying their fellow, and solemnising his funeral with a kind of lamentation. Grace doth much more enjoin me to be sick in others' sickness, poor in others' poverty, and to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being myself also in the body. David, speaking of his enemies that sought his destruction, saith, 'But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother,' Ps. xxxv. 13, 14. My God hath said, 'To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewn.' Sickness is one of the greatest outward afflictions; it renders all the comforts of this life uncomfortable. The largest houses, revenues, honours, the most loving acquaintance, friends, relations, are all unsavoury to them that are under great sickness. To visit the prosperous and healthy is courtesy, but to visit the distressed and sick is charity. The sweetest showers should fall on the lower grounds. Lord, thou art the Father of mercies, and art afflicted in all the afflictions of thy children; thy soul is grieved for the miseries of Israel. How suitable is it for them who expect mercy another day, to shew mercy at this day! Make me a follower of thee, as a dear child, to put on bowels of compassion, and

to be merciful in heart, tongue, and hand, as thou my Father in heaven art merciful.

I wish that, as a wise merchant, I may make the use of this price, which is put into my hand, for the furtherance of my own and my neighbours' peace. Sickness is a special opportunity, wherein I may advantage others' souls; the most poisonous viper is at such a season benumbed with cold, and so may be handled without much danger. The strength of the body of sin is much abated, at least in regard of act and exercise, by the weakness of the natural body. They who counted holiness a fancy, and holy ones fanatics, in their health and power, will beg hard for purity, and desire the saints' prayers in their sickness. The waters of those passions, which in a summer of prosperity did overflow their bounds, and threatened to overwhelm and overthrow all that was near, are frozen up in a winter of adversity, and kept within their banks; there are many nicks in time, as we see in a clock, which, if they hit, the work goeth on well. The hardened hearts of sinners are often melted, when their persons are confined to their warm chambers; as tinder when dry easily takes fire, by the least spark that falls on it, so when the souls of ungodly men are made soft by sickness, and their thoughts of the evil of sin in the pain it brings on their bodies, makes their affections combustible, it will be much the easier to kindle the fire of repentance in them. Affliction boreth or openeth the ear, and then it is seasonable to drop some wholesome counsel into it. Though a load on the ground be hard to be stirred, yet a load on the wheels is easy to be drawn. The illness, and aches, and distempers of sinners' bodies do, as it were, set the work of conversion, and minding the good of their souls, upon the wheel, and therefore such opportunities ought to be diligently improved. Sickness is a good time when charity is in season. It is a grace to have an opportunity for the service of my God, but a greater to improve it. The eastern people do plough and sow their grounds, when the former rain hath softened it; and why should not I endeavour to plough up the fallow-ground of my neighbour's heart, and to sow in it the seeds of savoury instructions, when it is made tender by sickness? Lord, thou layest hold of every opportunity to bless me with mercy answerable to my necessities; make me both wise to discern time and judgment, and faithful to make use of all such seasons to do thee service.

I wish that the opportunity I have thereby of doing good to my own soul, may move me to be the more careful and conscientious in visiting the sick. It is the wise man's speech, 'It is better to go

into the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.' It is better, as it is most suitable to my present state. It is not proper for pilgrims to spend their time in pleasure. Sorrow is becoming in a valley of tears. A house of mourning agrees well with the mourners in Zion. This world is a sea, I am a mariner, and mariners rejoice in the haven, not in the tempestuous ocean. This life is a warfare, I am a soldier; it is too soon to be joyful whilst I am fighting; it will be time enough when all my enemies are foiled. Oh how harsh is it for a child to be jocund, when he is far from home! Weeping is good language for them that sit down by the river of Babylon; how can I sing the Lord's songs in a strange land? Again, it is better to go into the house of mourning, as it is most profitable to my precious soul. Grace thrives best in a wet soul; 'by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' The inner man is best when clad in mourning. Trees planted by the water-side hang with clusters, and bring forth fruit in due season. The sick-bed is a pulpit, and though there be a wicked man in it, he may teach me rare instructions; if he be wholly silent, his condition preacheth to me that sin is the greatest evil, that the world is a cheat and imposture, and that grace is the most desirable created good. His dark chamber, weeping friends, watered couch, aching head, trembling heart, pale lips, quivering loins, all call aloud to me to consider of and prepare for such an hour. Abel, being dead, yet speaketh; my sick, my dead neighbour speaketh, Prepared be to follow me. Some have been raised to life by beholding the dead. Oh that I were wise to observe and improve the opportunities which free grace affordeth me, for my own and others' welfare! If I lose a good market for the furtherance of my outward estate, I befool and bewail myself. Ah, why should I not be as much affected with the loss of opportunities for my inner man! Sinners observe their seasons for the gratifying their loves, and the satisfying their lusts. The thief waiteth for the full purse till the market is over, and commodities be sold. The adulterer makes use of the dark night for his deeds of darkness. Satan watcheth every opportunity to ensnare and destroy me; if I give him the least advantage, by idleness or carnal security, or running into occasions of sin, he doth presently lay hold on it to pollute me. All men indeed may shame me. The mariner doth spread his sails when the winds blow. The merchant observes his exchange hours, when he may meet with many friends, and despatch much business in a little time. The lawyer minds his terms.

There is a time when kings go out to battle, 2 Sam. xi. 1, which soldiers will not neglect. The husbandman makes hay whilst the sun shines; yet, ah, how foolish am I to let slip those golden seasons which my God giveth me, for working out my own salvation! Lord, thou hast made everything beautiful in its season; but poor silly man knoweth not his time, Eccles. iii. 11, and ix. 12. Grant me so much prudence, that, as the men of Issachar, I may have understanding of the times, 1 Chron. xii. 32, and so much piety as to serve the times, not as worldlings, in altering my course according to the fashions and customs of men, but in embracing what is tendered in due time, for my own and others' good, always adhering to the commands of thee my God.

I wish that the uncertainty of my sick neighbour's outward recovery, may make me the more careful and solicitous about his spiritual health. If he die, he is stated and fixed for ever and ever, and I am for ever deprived of all opportunities of profiting or advantaging his soul. Now he is sick, he is nigh death, but one step from it. The sick stand upon the borders of the grave, upon the brink of the pit, nay, of eternity. Those that are in most perfect health, are inclining towards death; but they that are sick, are approaching the chambers of darkness. Such a man may speak, in the language of Haman, 'My life draweth nigh unto the grave,' Ps. lxxxviii. 3. Should he depart this life in a natural estate, he falleth into the jaws of eternal death. All prayers for him will then be fruitless, and there is no giving counsel to him after death. I must now advise, exhort, persuade, beseech him to mind faith and repentance, or never do it; I must now put up hearty cries and groans to God on his behalf, or never do it. The loving-kindness of God cannot be declared in the grave, nor his faithfulness in destruction, Ps. lxxxviii. 11. When he is wailing in hell for the ungodliness of his heart and life, I may be weeping on earth for my neglect of him, or unfaithfulness to him, but both our tears will be ineffectual, and our cries comfortless. Oh that the love of my Saviour, the command of my God, the worth of a soul, the weight of an eternal estate, the fear of losing such a season, and the impossibility of recalling or recovering it, may all provoke me to be instant with the sick, to turn to God, and abhor and bewail their sins, and to be fervent with God, that he would crown my endeavours with success! Lord, I may speak thy mind and will to men, but thou alone, who didst make the ear, canst enable them to hear; let it please thy Majesty so to affect my heart with a due sense of others' misery, so to direct my tongue what to

speak in order to their recovery, and so to prosper the undertakings of thy servant, that as often as I visit any unconverted person in his sickness, I may turn a sinner from the error of his ways, save a soul alive, and hide a multitude of sins.

I wish that I may be solicitous to understand the spiritual conditions of the sick, that my prescriptions may be profitable, being suitable to their several sores. The knowledge of the disease must necessarily precede directions for its cure. It is folly to undertake their recovery, whose estates I am ignorant of. He works at the labour-in-vain who goeth about to heal a wounded patient, when he knoweth not the place or nature of his pain. The mistake of the physician may be as mortal and dangerous as the disease itself. It will be no wonder if a blind man shoot awry, and miss the mark. This was the cause that Job's friends, though holy men, and designing a good end, wandered exceedingly; and instead of administering comfort by their visitation, wounded him to the quick, and proved his greatest cross. The Sabeans and Chaldeans robbed him of his cattle, Satan wronged him in his body, but his three friends vexed his soul, and did break him in pieces with words. Their ignorance was the ground of the hurt they offered, instead of the help they intended, Job xix. 2. A friend may do that mischief upon a false supposition, which an enemy doth out of malice. Though the doctrine be true and right, if the application of it be wrong, I may kill sooner than cure the person to whom I apply it. The husbandman must know the nature of his ground before he casteth in his seed, or otherwise he will miss of his expected crop. Lord, thou knowest the conditions and dispositions of all men by immediate intuition, and needest not that any should testify of man; thou knowest how needful it is for me to understand by rational discourse who and what those sick persons are, how things stand betwixt thy Majesty and their souls, whose recovery I go about. Oh help me to find out their sickness, and to give such advice out of thy word, that thou mayest work their cure!

I wish that, when the condition of the sick person is found out, neither fear nor flattery may make me unfaithful to his soul. Those prescriptions cannot be profitable that are not answerable to his estate. I am unfaithful to God, my neighbour, and myself, if my application be not suitable to his condition. My God commandeth me to proclaim war against the presumptuous, to preach peace to the penitent; and if I act otherwise out of fear or affection, I act contrary to my commission; I am false to my trust if I keep not close to the will of my Lord. He that takes not his

master's precepts for his rule, will at last be counted and punished as an unfaithful servant. I hinder also my neighbour's good, whilst I give him counsel unsuitable to his case. I may pretend love and respect, but it is real hatred to flatter him who is hastening to the unquenchable fire. How dreadful will his fall be, from the high turret of presumption into the infernal pit of perdition ! and how little thanks will he give me in the other world for cozening his soul, by telling him all was well, till he came to see his own and my mistake in hell ! Again, the guilt of such a crime would make a deep gash in my own conscience. It is ill slighting or tampering with inestimable souls. His blood will be required at my hands ; and if the blood of a slain body cry so loud for vengeance, what will the blood of a murdered soul do ? Why should I, to humour any man's lust, injure his soul, hinder my own peace, and incur the anger of the Lord ? Oh that no foolish pretences whatsoever may keep me off from acquainting sinners with the evil and end, the nature and danger of their sins. It is God's order, first to cast the soul down, and then to lift it up. The ground must feel the plough before it receive the seed. Sorrow must precede comfort ; and they must sow in tears who would reap in joy. God must shake all nations before the desired of all nations will come to him. We come to Sinai, the mount that burneth with fire, and to blackness and darkness, and a tempest which makes even a Moses to fear and quake exceedingly, before we come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The law is a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ. Austere John, with his axe laid to the root of the tree, threatening the fire to those that bring not forth fruit, prepareth the way for the sweet alluring Jesus. Mourning and grief is the midwife of true mirth ; penitential tears are the streams that lead to the rivers of pleasures. Even the doleful sound of the trumpet attendeth the judge when he is going to acquit a prisoner by public proclamation. Violence must be offered to corruption, or there will be no acceptance of the Lord Christ. The building of holiness is the more strong for having its foundation of humiliation laid deep. The safety of the soul doth depend, like Jonah's, upon his being cast overboard, and utterly lost in his own apprehension.

The blessed Jesus himself is brought into a desolate wilderness, before angels are sent from heaven to comfort him. Oh that I might follow my God in his usual way, and never prophesy smooth

things to rugged and wicked men, but endeavour to break their hearts on earth, who have persisted in the breach of his holy laws, that their backs may not be broken in hell. Yet I would not, instead of beating down the rotten paper walls of presumption, drive any into the dungeon of desperation; but, as the good nurse, have the breast of consolation, as well as the rod of correction, in readiness for such children. Moses and Christ met together upon Mount Tabor. The gospel must be preached to heal those wounds which are opened and discovered by the law. The Lord sendeth me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Lord, thou killest and makest alive, bringest down to the grave, and bringest up. It is easy and ordinary with thee to break those bones which thou intendest to rejoice, and to perplex those rams in briers and thorns which thou intendest to accept of as a sacrifice. Teach thy servant to know how to speak a word in season, both to the wicked and to the godly; how to divide thy word aright, both in its minatory and consolatory parts, that, as occasion shall be, I may awaken the wicked out of their deadly slumbers, and quicken the godly to their spiritual watchfulness, and help to sweeten that bitter cup which thou hast put into their hands. Oh that thy blessing might water my labours for both their welfares! Alas! poor sick unregenerate ones are dropping into boundless and endless sorrows, and yet are without sense. Though they are dying, they know not what they are doing, nor whither they are going. Their eyes are shut by the god of this world, that they see not that unspeakable misery to which they are liable every moment; their hearts are hardened through custom in sin, that neither threatenings nor promises prevail with them to feel their wounds and sores. O thou great physician, thou Lord of life, thou God of health, open their eyes; send some Ananias to them, that they might receive their sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost; enable them so to mourn now, that they may be comforted when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and help thy servant to deal so faithfully with those whom thou callest me to visit, that I may never give thy Majesty cause to say of me, as once of the prophets of Israel, 'They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'

I wish that I may be close and home in my applications to sick persons, and speak what is proper to their estates, with ardency and affection, to their very hearts. It is ill dallying with edged tools. Oh, how sad is it to toy and trifle, to be formal or customary, in

counsel, or reproof, or comfort to immortal souls that are launching into the ocean of eternity! Death is a serious thing, and that which they never did before, nor shall ever do again. Sin is a serious thing, as the damned find in hell by woeful experience. Though there they are in blackness of darkness, yet they have light enough to see sin to be the evil of evils, and altogether sinful. Christ was serious when he took upon him my nature, and therein did offer up himself a sacrifice for sin. God is serious in commanding faith and repentance, and in promising heaven to the faithful and holy, and hell to unbelievers and atheists; and shall not I be serious and in earnest when I am dealing about matters of eternal life and death, and about the concernments of God and Christ, and souls and eternity? Oh, with what earnestness should I persuade the wicked to turn from their wickedness and live! If ever their souls would draw near to the Lord of life, it concerns them to do it when their bodies are drawing nigh to the chambers of death. It is but a very few hours, and their condition will be past all amendment, all alteration. In this poor pittance of time, all must be done upon which the scales must turn for their salvation or damnation. They are going to make that change which will admit them into endless joy or torment, and render their estates unchangeable. Their time is hastening that they must struggle with dreadful pains, and strong distempers, and death, the king of terrors, and must review that life which is ending, and look back upon all that they have done, and judge their persons and actions impartially, whether they will or no; that they must take their leave of all their friends, and food, and sleep, and lands, and houses, and honours, and pleasures, and riches, and step into eternity, and appear before God, without their relations, or possessions, or any worldly comforts to help or encourage them; that they must be tried by a holy law, and a holy judge, for their everlasting lives or deaths; and can my expressions be too full of weight and reason, or my affections too full of bowels and pity, in my dealing and discourse with such men? Lord, thou knowest the poor silly children of men are unable to judge of eternal affairs according to their weight; they are quickly lost, when in their thoughts they begin to launch into that boundless sea. The ponderousness of the subject is ready to affright and press them down, being so much beyond and above their shallow understandings. But wouldst thou please to enable them, though it were but to peep into the other world, and to behold, through some crevice, what is doing and enjoyed there, both by thy friends and thine enemies, they would soon have

other thoughts of thee and thy service, and other carriages when they are about thy work. The greatest seriousness would then be too little, the greatest ardour would not be thought enough for thy worship. They would then, indeed, be fervent in spirit when they are serving the Lord. Oh teach thy servant, though he cannot see into the other world with the eye of sense, yet so to look into it with an eye of faith, that he may transact the concerns thereof with that diligence, faithfulness, and fervency which thou acceptest, and whilst he liveth be zealous of good works !

I wish that my heart may be so affected with pity towards sick and afflicted persons, that I may often and earnestly remember them in my prayers. A little captive, considering the leprosy of her master, was instrumental for his cure, by crying out, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria ! for he would recover him of his leprosy.' I have more reason, when I behold a leprous soul, near its last gasp, to look up to heaven with, Would to God that poor creature were with Jesus Christ, that great prophet of his church, who is able and willing to enliven, and pardon, and sanctify, and save ! would to God he would be persuaded to come to Christ, to cling to Christ, to close with Christ ! for he would recover him. And what do I know but my prayers may be prevalent on his behalf ? Christ, when dying, prayed for his enemies, for them that imbrued their hands in his blood ; and shall not I pray for my friends when they are dying, and possibly ignorant whither they are going ? My prayers are a cheap courtesy, and diminish nothing of my estate, either spiritual or temporal. Their misery is an awakening motive to the duty. Never did they stand in such need of help from others, and wrestling with God on their behalves, as now that they are taking their journey into a far country, and entering upon an unchangeable condition. They may say to me, as Nehemiah to Geshem, I am doing a great work, &c. I am going to die, to bid adieu to all the folly, and vanity, and comforts of this world, to take possession of my long home, of the place wherein I must abide for ever. Oh pray for us, that we may be pardoned and saved, that we may repent and believe, that we may die in the faith, and obtain the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal. They have many distractions upon their own spirits, by reason of pains and bodily distempers, and the loss and lamentation of their kindred and relations, that they cannot pour out their hearts to God with that freeness, and seriousness, and earnestness which probably they desire. Their enemies, and assaults, and temptations at such a time are more quick, and strong, and

violent, and full of rage, having but a short time. I must now pray for them, or never pray for them; now beg mercy for them, or never beg mercy for them. When their life is gone, all tears, and cries, and groans for them are in vain. David's greatest passions for dead Absalom were to no purpose. They are then gone the way they shall not return, and fixed in that place whence they shall never remove. Lord, I confess that my narrow heart hath not pity enough for afflicted, and sick, and dying souls, and my weak hands have not power enough to supply or support them in their sad estates; but thou hast both. Oh be pleased to look down from heaven, the habitation where thine holiness dwelleth; behold their miseries, hide thy face from all their iniquities, out of thine infiniteness relieve their necessities! Let the eyes of their souls be opened to see their sins and their Saviour, before the eyes of their bodies be closed. Give them patience and strength answerable to the burden thou layest on their backs; enable them to do their last works well, and let them be better than their first. Open thou their lips, and let their mouths shew forth thy praise, before they go to the place of silence. Stand by them in their last conflict with their enemies, death and devils, that they may overcome both—be more than conquerors through him that loves them, and pass through the jaws of death to the joys of a blessed eternal life!

I wish that my soul may be the more sound for every visit I bestow on sick bodies. There is not so much danger of catching their outward diseases, as there is hope of increasing my spiritual health, if I am not wanting to myself. The sick and dying bed is a pulpit, out of which I may be instructed more fully in many serious truths, though the sick or dying man be speechless. King Joash obtained three famous victories over the Syrians, by visiting sick Elisha, and might have gotten a complete conquest over them, if it had not been his own fault, 2 Kings xiii. 14–20. The fight of sick and dying men may assist me in my conflicts with the three great enemies of my present purity, and future comfort and bliss. It teacheth me how vain it is to make provision for that flesh which will itself ere long be provision for worms. Ah, how foolish am I to pamper and please that which, instead of relieving or refreshing, will in my extremity pierce and pain me! It teacheth me that the world itself is the greatest cheat and impostor in the world. That though it laughs and smiles on men, dandling them on her knees, and hugging them in her arms, whilst they are in health, and promising all sorts of comforts and pleasures; yet in their sickness and misery she turns them off and leaves them, as Absalom's mule did

him, to be shot through with the heart-cutting arrows of eternal death. By discovering the emptiness and falseness of these two seeming ends, the flesh and the world, it helpeth me to overcome my third enemy, and to repel the fiery darts of the devil. The cup of temptation, which hath so often bewitched me to drink down his deadly poison, had its prevalency from the worldly profit with which the outside was gilded, or the fleshly pleasure with which the inside was sweetened. Ah, could I but bid a hearty defiance to the world and the flesh, and conquer them, I need not fear the wicked one. They are the powerful advocates by which Satan pleads, and too often prevails with the soul; by these handmaids he wooeth the mistress. But the sick-bed is a book in which I may read their deceitfulness and treachery, their perfidiousness and fallacies, and thereby learn to avoid them.

Further, I may read the sinfulness of sin in others' sickness. That parent must needs be a deformed monster, that begets such uncomely and ill-favoured children. In the dreadful effects I may behold the poisonous cause. Man had never known sickness in his body, if he had not known sin experimentally in his soul. It is the plague and stone of the heart that causeth those in the flesh. When I behold the sick man labouring under his distemper, how he is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat; how his flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones stick out; he is filled with tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day; when I behold his eyes sinking, his heart panting, his wife and children wailing and wringing their hands, his friends weeping, his tongue faltering, his throat rattling, his breath failing, his strength languishing, his whole body in a cold clammy sweat, wrestling with his pain and disease, may I not well cry out, Oh what an evil is sin, which bringeth all this upon the poor children of men! My Redeemer is therefore said to bear our sicknesses, because he bare our sins in his body on the tree, 1 Peter ii. 24; Mat. viii. 17; and in all his applications for the cure of the diseased, he had an eye to the root of the malady. To one that was diseased he said, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;' to another, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' When the angel was smiting Israel with a pestilence, holy David's thoughts ran upon the procuring cause, 'I have sinned, I have done very wickedly.' My God teacheth Israel the grievous nature of their defilement in the greatness of those judgments which they brought upon them. Speaking of his severity towards

them, he tells them, 'Thy way and thy doings have procured those things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart,' Jer. iv. 18. Our bodies are full of natural corruption, because our souls are full of moral corruption. Oh how fitly may I therefore, when I behold the evil of affliction on others, abhor and bewail the evil of sin in myself!

Once more, I may be instructed in the necessity of a timely preparation for such an hour of affliction. Can I think a sick-bed a fit place, an hour of pain and grief a meet season, to begin that great business of turning from sin, of loathing myself for all my abominations, and working out my own salvation? Is it rationally to be imagined that trembling joints, dazzled eyes, a fainting heart, failing limbs, a body full of aches and diseases, a soul sympathising with it, and full of vexation and grief, should be fit instruments about such a work, which an angelical strength, and agility, and freedom, is little enough for? Ah, what wise man would build his eternal making and welfare upon such a tottering and sandy foundation! The greatest strength, and longest time, and most vigorous health, is not in the least degree too much for this needful and weighty business; and shall I put it off till my strength fails, my health is gone, and my time near its last sand? Lord, beside all these, I may learn the excellency of thine image and thy favour. Sickness cannot waste them, nor death itself destroy them. Where the curtains are drawn, and the windows close, in the darkest chamber of the dying man, the comeliness of thy likeness, and the sweetness of thy love, are most sparkling and glorious. The want of outward comforts doth convince the unbelieving world of the worth of eternal blessings. When the flesh and world, that made show of such love to their deluded favourites, turn them off in their extremity, as the Jews did Judas, complaining to them of his folly and wickedness, 'What is that to us? see thou to that.' Thou standest by and ownest thy servants, thou knowest their souls in their days of adversity; and, however thou dealest with them in their health, wilt be sure to tend and look to, to be both nurse and physician to thy sick children. Thy grace is a reviving cordial, and thy love will make even death itself a sweet and desirable dish. Oh help thy poor servant to gain much spiritual good by those natural evils which others suffer! As others' sickness speaketh these things to mine ears, and their conditions make them visible to mine eyes, do thou write them in my heart, that all such providences of thine towards others may make sin more ugly, the world more empty, thy graces and favour more comely and desir-

able, and that, furthering my purity at present, they may further my eternal peace hereafter.

Finally, I wish that the sickness of others may cause me to be the more industrious in a faithful improvement of my health, and take me wholly off from priding, and pampering, and making provision for that flesh, which is so apt to breed diseases, and in its greatest beauty and strength is so near to death. The goodliest structure of body is but earth a little better wrought, or more curiously than usually moulded up, and with an ordinary disease is marred and defaced, and so calleth on me to be humble rather than lifted up. The flesh that I provide for my flesh, is not more subject to corruption, or more perishing, than the flesh for which it is provided. Within a few days I shall have an end both of food and feeding. Oh that I might waste that body in God's service, which will ere long waste with sickness! spend and be spent in his work, who gives me my health, and strength, and hath promised a bountiful reward! Sure I am, I can never bring them to a better market, nor put them off at a higher price. Is it not better to consume my flesh in doing good, in glorifying my God, than with idleness and ease, or with distempers and diseases? Satan's servants do not grudge to give their prime and chief, their health and strength, to their lusts; and shall not I give mine to my Lord? Ah, Lord, an unthankful, selfish, unbelieving heart, hath too much hindered me from, and disturbed me in, those excellent duties which thou callest me to. Oh deliver me from it, for thy mercies' sake! Strengthen me by thy good Spirit, both to do good to, and receive good by, such as thou chastenest with sickness; so to consider the poor and afflicted, and to visit others in my health, that thou mayest visit me with thy saving health. Strengthen me upon my bed of languishing, and make all my bed in my sickness, that my most mortal sickness may not be unto death (eternal), but for thy glory, and my passage into endless bliss; yea, that in the other world, I may stand among thy sheep on thy right hand, and hear that blessed heart-cheering voice, 'Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee before the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and thou gavest me meat; I was thirsty, and thou gavest me drink; I was a stranger, and thou didst take me in; I was sick, and thou visitedst me;' when my soul shall be above all sin, and my body above all sickness, and both blessed in thy favour and fruition, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness on a dying bed.

Sixthly, and lastly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness, if God give thee opportunity, on a dying bed. The work of a saint is to glorify God, not only in his life, but also in his death. The silk-worm stretcheth out herself before she spin, and ends her life in her long-wrought clew. The Christian must stretch out himself on his dying bed, and end his life in the work of his Lord. Every man by his death payeth his debt to nature. He is earth in regard of his original creation, and must be earth in regard of his ultimate resolution: 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,' Gen. iii. 19. The sinner, when he dieth, payeth his debt to sin, Satan, and the law. To sin, as he is the servant of unrighteousness, and so must receive its wages, which is death; to Satan, as he hath sold himself to work wickedness at his will, and so must have his tempter to be his eternal tormentor; to the law, as he hath violated its precepts and commands, and therefore must undergo its punishment and curse. The saint, when he dieth, payeth his debt to God, for he oweth him honour as well by his death as by his life. Hence we read, not only of their living in the Lord, and to the Lord, but also of their dying in the Lord, and to the Lord, Rom. xiv. 8; Rev. xiv. 13. Which, though some expound, in that place of the Revelation, to the cause for which they died,—they did not die out of humour, or obstinacy, or any carnal, selfish interest, but purely as martyrs at God's call, and for God's cause; they loved not their lives to the death for the testimony of Jesus;—yet the words may as clearly speak—

1. The state in which they died. They died in the favour of God, reconciled to him through the death of the Mediator. The castle of their souls was not taken by storm, or in a state of enmity and opposition, but by a quiet voluntary surrender, or in a state of peace and amity.

2. The manner of their deaths. They died in the fear of God; they exercised grace as well in sickness as in health, and when dying as when living; their spiritual motions were quick, when their natural motions were slow.

Plutarch reports of Lucius Metellus, high priest of Rome, that though he lived to a great old age, his voice did not fail him, nor

his hand shake in his sacrificing to the gods. It is said of Moses, when he was a hundred and twenty years old and died, that his natural sight did not fail him, neither was his heat abated. So it may be said of the Christian, that though he die old, his spiritual sight doth not fail him, nor his divine heat abate. As Caleb, he is as strong in regard of grace, his inward strength, when he is entering into the promised Canaan, as he was when he first went forth as a spy by faith, to search the land flowing with milk and honey. The heathen counted him happy that died either in the midst of the goods of fortune—hence they say, if Priamus had died a little before the loss of his town, he had died the greatest prince in all Asia—or in the exercise of their moral virtues. Hence they so highly extol Seneca and Socrates, who seemed to dare even death itself, out of resolution and fortitude. Though those seeming virtues were but, as Augustine terms them, *splendida flagitia*, famous vices, and their confidence arose not from any grounded knowledge of their good estates, but from their blindness and ignorance of their depraved, wicked, and woeful estates. He is the happy man indeed that dieth in the faith, that sleepeth in Jesus, that goeth to his grave in the exercise of grace. The master of moral philosophy commendeth that pilot whom a shipwreck swalloweth up at the stern, with the rudder in his hand. The most high God commendeth that person whom death seizeth, doing the work for which he was sent into the world. Even the blind mole, if naturalists may be credited, opens his eyes when he comes to die; and the crooked serpent stretcheth out herself straight, when she is going to fetch her last breath: and shall not the saint be best at last?

Reader, observe how careful the saints have been to do their last work well, and to go out of the world like some sweet spices, perfuming the room in which they fetch their last breath with holiness, and leaving a sweet savour behind them. Jacob, when dying, worshipped, leaning on his staff, Heb. xi. 21. What a character doth he give of the angel of the covenant! and what blessings doth he pray for, and prophesy to come on his children, when he was going from them! How was his heart enlarged in pantings after the Lord Christ! Gen. xlviii. 16, and xlix. *per tot.* The living waters of his graces ran with the greater strength, when they were emptying themselves into the ocean of glory. Moses, like the dying swan, sings most sweetly, being to go up to Mount Nebo to die there. What excellent doctrines, reproofs, instructions, doth he deliver to the Israelites! How pathetically, rhetorically, divinely, doth he dictate his last legacies to his political children! Who can read,

and not be ravished with wonder and delight, Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii. Joshua, like the morning star, shines brightest at last; he gives his people so strict a charge to serve the Lord, such gracious counsel, when he was going the way of all the earth, that it could not but be remembered many days after. Dying Joseph will lay his bones at stake for God's faithfulness, and that he will visit Israel and deliver them out of Egypt. Samson did the church of God more service, in slaying more of her enemies at his death, than in his life. Julius Cæsar among the Romans, and Olympia, the mother of Alexander, among the Grecians, were famous for their care to die handsomely, and not to commit at last any ill-beseeming action, whereby their memories should have been rendered inglorious; but the Christians' care hath always been, to die holily, and to do their God most service when they are going to that place, where they shall do him no more in a proper sense. Philosophers¹ tell us that the soul, upon death's approach, is more divine and supernaturally inclined; certain it is, the soul of a saint only doth then more aspire heavenward, when it is returning *πρὸς τὸ πρόγονον θεῖον*, to its original divinity, according to Plotinus's phrase of death. As his Saviour, he brings out his best wine at last, and his last works are more than his first, Rev. ii. 19.

The blessed Prince, and Lord of life, should be our pattern at death. He got his Father most glory, he did his church most good, by his death, though he was eminently serviceable to both all his lifetime. It is said of him, he was obedient, Phil. ii. 7, to the death; which may import,

1. His continuance in well-doing. His obedience lasted to the last moment of his life; so should ours. Elisha would not leave his master, till taken from him into heaven; and we should not leave our Lord, till taken to him into heaven. Polycarp, in his old age being urged by the proconsul to deny Christ, answered, I have served him eighty-six years, and he never once hurt me, and shall I now deny him?

2. His obedience in his death. His death was a free-will offering, in obedience to his Father's command. Not only his birth and life was an answer to his Father's call, 'A body hast thou prepared,' &c. 'Then said I, Lo, I come (to put on that body, to take upon me that nature, and thereby and therein) to do thy will, O God;' but also his death was in pursuance of his duty: 'This commandment received I of my Father.' Thus the Christian's death must be offered up as a sacrifice to God, in obedience to his command.

¹ Xen., lib. viii., Plut., Apol.

The sinner's soul is pressed to this war, in which there is no discharge: 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.' The saint, understanding the orders from the Lord of hosts, is a volunteer; he gives up the ghost: 'Into thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.'

3. The gracious manner of his dying. The Sun of righteousness, when setting, did shine most gloriously. Though at his death he had such infinite disadvantage, being to wrestle with the frowns of an incensed God, the fury of earth and hell, and met with clouds, black and thick enough to have obscured the graces, and hindered the holiness of any but himself from shining at all, yet how brightly did they break forth in the midst of all those fogs, and mists, and darkness! What holy counsel and comfort did he give his disciples to prepare them for his departure, in his last (and one of his longest) sermon! John xiv., xv., xvi. What a heavenly prayer doth he put up to his Father for them, and all his elect! to give them both a taste and a pledge of that intercession which he was going to heaven to make for them. When he was hanging on the cross, under such a heavy weight as the sins of the whole world, grace was not depressed. His love to his mother is observable: 'Woman, behold thy son! And from that hour that disciple took her to his own house,' John xix. 26. But his love to his members, though enemies, was wonderful: 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' His faith in his Father: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' His pity to one of the thieves. His patience in bearing the scoffing words and taunts, more bitter than wormwood, of them that passed by, reviling him, as well as in suffering the racking of his bones, and whole body, and the anger of an infinite God in his soul, without any murmuring, may well call for our admiration. Reader, he hath set thee a pattern, that thou shouldst follow his steps. Some tell us the phoenix of Saba, in Arabia Fælix, (so called from Phœnicea, or the purple colour of her wings,) liveth six hundred and sixty years, at the end of which time she buildeth her a nest of cassia, calamus, cinnamon, and other precious spices and gums, which the sun, by the extremity of his heat, and the wavering of her wings, fires, and she, taking delight in the sweetness of the savour, hovers so long over it, that she burns herself in her own nest.¹ Thus did the blessed Jesus, and thus ought his followers, to expire in a nest of sweet spices, the exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit. It was a poor farewell to the world, which even Octavius Augustus gave

¹ Plin., lib. ix. cap. 35.

when at the point of death he called for his looking-glass, commanded to have his head and beard combed, and his shrivelled cheeks smoothed up; then asking his friends if he had acted his part well; *Cum ita responderint, Vos omnes igitur, inquit, plaudite.*¹ It is a dreadful conclusion which Pliny relates the Hyperboreans to make, who, when they have lived to one hundred years or more, make a great feast, to which they invite all their friends, and after their jollity and mirth, throw themselves down a steep rock, and so perish.

Ungodly men are always worst at last; when they come to the bottom, they are flat and dead, and nothing but grounds and dregs. How often, in the eyes of the world, do wicked persons go out like a lamp, leaving a stench behind them! The scandalous sinner usually, like the goat's beard, or star of Jerusalem, closeth up the flower of his presumptuous hope at high noon; he is cast in his own conscience long before his death. The hypocrite ordinarily, as the daisy and dandelion, declares the approach of the evening by shutting up before its approach. If he be gold in the morning, and silver at noon, yet (as we say of butter) he is lead at night. What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul! As it is storied of the Pandora, a people in India, that in their youth they have silver hairs, but in their age their hairs are quite black; or as the she-wolf hath a yearly defect in generation—the first time she hath five, the second time four, then three, then two, then one, then barren ever after; so the hypocrite declines and decreaseth in goodness, faster than the moon in its last quarter, and is commonly worst at last. But the sincere Christian hath his best at the bottom, and hath his daintiest dish reserved to be served in at the last course. Naturalists tell us of honey, that that is the thickest and best honey which is squeezed last out of the comb. Oh, what excellent periods and endings, both in regard of the exercise of grace and comfort, have many of the children of God made! The death-bed to some saints hath been like Tharah to the Israelites in the wilderness, where, after many journeys, growing near to the land of Canaan, they rested themselves, and it was called Tharah, from Roah and Tarah, which signifieth a breathing time. The sun, when it declines into the west, hath even then much more light than any of the stars. The meanest upright Christian, when he is near setting, hath more joy and comfort than a specious hypocrite any day of his life. When some asked Æcolampadius, lying on his death-bed, whether the light did not offend him, he

¹ Suetonius.

answered, pointing to his breast, *Hic sat lucis*, Here is abundance of light, of joy. He asked one of his friends, What news? His friend told him, None. Then, saith he, I will tell you some news—I shall presently be with my Lord Christ!

I shall give thee two or three quickening motives, and then direct thee about the work of exercising thyself to godliness on a dying bed; and because it is the last time of a Christian's working for his God, I shall in the third place annex some brief helps to this duty.

In reference to the motives, consider—

First, What a serious thing death will be to every man and woman in the world. It is ill and dangerous for any to cozen themselves, and undertake to mock God in their health and life; but it is worst of all and desperate for any to do this on a sick and dying bed. The heathen, hardened in sin, and wholly under the power of Satan, ignorant of the evil of their hearts and lives, and of the sad consequence of a wicked end, made light of death. Flavius Vespasian, none of the worst of the Roman emperors, died, as Sir Thomas Moore, with a jest in his mouth: *Ut puto, Deus fio*; Methinks I am going and growing to be a god. Augustus Cæsar, esteemed the best of them, whose death the people so much lamented, that they said, *Utinam aut non nasceretur, aut non moreretur*, Would he had never been born, or never died, went off the stage of the world with a compliment, *Livia, nostri conjugii memor vive, et vale*, Farewell, and live, wife, mindful of our marriage. Galba died desperately, crying out, *Feri, si ex re sit populi Romani*, Strike, if it be for the common good. Tiberius died dissemblingly, of whose death Tacitus wittily, *Jam Tiberium vires et corpus, non dissimulatio, deserebant*, Now strength and life hath left Tiberius, but not dissimulation.¹ But Christians, who understand the holiness and justice of God, the infinite demerit of sin, the certainty of an unchangeable condition in the other world, either in joy or torment, know that death is no jesting matter; that to die is one of the most serious, searching things that they can possibly do.

Two or three particulars will shew what a serious thing death is.

1. Death will try men. When the bridegroom comes, it will appear who have oil in their vessels, and who have none. As soon as ever thou takest thy leave of temporal good things, thy spiritual riches will be known. A scorching summer discovers what streams are fed with ponds, and what with springs. The wind sheweth which clouds have rain in them, and which have none. Death will anatomise every soul, and reveal all that is in it. Conscience will

¹ Seuton., Aurel., Victor.

then bring in a true verdict, in despite of all those bribes and frights which formerly kept the bill in suspense, or caused it to write on it an *ignoramus*. There are marks by which saints and sinners may be distinguished whilst they live, as great men's servants are by the liveries that they wear ; but these characters, being most inward, and known to none but themselves, and the Lord they serve, it is their dying only that will reveal infallibly what they are, and to whom they belong. This world is as a common inn, wherein all are lodged, and no difference is made between the good and bad, only that the worst men have the best usage ; but the very moment of men's dissolution makes a plain and vast distinction. Death is the way of all the earth, according to Joshua's periphrasis of it ; but this way hath two turnings, one on the right hand, to joy and bliss, another on the left hand, to misery and horror. Now, as when the attendants of two lords travel together on the road, their servants cannot easily be distinguished, especially if the servants of the one counterfeit the livery of the other ; but when they come to the *bivium*, the parting way, then it is clearly known who belong to the one, and who to the other, for each then followeth his own master, waits on him to his house, stayeth and abideth there with him. So, though whilst men live, all professing themselves Christians, and most, for a show at least, putting on the livery of Christ, it is not known who belong to the Prince of life, and who to the prince of the powers of the air ; but death will discover it to themselves and the elect angels.

2. It will appear that death is a serious thing, in that it stateth the creature for eternity. When thou diest, thy condition will be like the law of the Medes and Persians, such as cannot be altered. At death thou goest the way that thou shalt never return. David, speaking of his dead child, saith, ' I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me ; ' and Job, by asking the question, denieth it : ' If a man die, shall he live again ? ' God will never trust thee with a second life, or give thee leave for second thoughts, or better purposes, or more serious and sober actions, when thou art once landed in the other world. He will not offer thee a Christ, and grace, and heaven, when thou art gone from this earth. Think of it seriously, is not that work to be done well, which can be done but once ? Shouldst thou not use thine utmost care, and strength, and diligence to die well, when thy everlasting making or marring dependeth on it ? Ah, friend, if thou failest now, thou failest for ever ; if thou dalliest now, thou art undone eternally : ' There is no wisdom nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou art going,' Eccles. ix. 10.

3. Death will appear to be a serious thing, in that all the powers of hell will then assault thee. Thou mayest say of it, in some respects, as Christ did to wicked men, and the wicked one, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' The devil, it is observable, is most busy at the conclusion of a duty, as of prayer, that the Christian might be hindered and distracted, when he closeth up all in the name of Christ, and so all his desires be frustrated; so he is most busy in the conclusion of our days, adding fearful dreams to our slumbers, strong distractions to our fancies, increasing our pains with terrors, driving the good, if possible, to despair, and intoxicating the bad with presumptuous conceits, and all because his time is little: 'The devil is come down, having great rage, knowing that his time is short,' Rev. xii. 12. At the approach of death, through pain of body, and perplexity of mind, men are least able to resist, and therefore this cowardly enemy will then be most ready and fierce to assault. When the Christian is down, then, if possible, he will trample upon him. The last persecutions of the church, under Dioclesian and Maximinian, were the sorest. The last messenger the devil sent to Job, concerning the sudden violent death of all his children, pierced his heart deepest. The subtle serpent reserved that great ordnance for the last, hoping the former small guns, of the loss of his cattle, and estate, and servants, would have done some execution, in making some breach upon his faith and patience; and this great gun playing, when he was before tired in defending, must needs shatter him in pieces. He may fitly be called the wolf of the evening, Jer. v. 6, that devoureth. This roaring lion walketh in the night to seek his prey. There have been few eminent saints but have found their death-bed a bed of thorns, in regard of temptations. Mr Knox said, when he came to die, In my lifetime the devil tempted me to despair, casting my sins in my teeth; but now, in my sickness, he tells me, I have been faithful in the ministry, and so have merited heaven; but blessed be God, who brought those texts into my mind, 'Not I, but the grace of God in me:' 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' The Israelites never met with so much opposition as when they were to take possession of the land of Canaan; then all the kings of Canaan combined together, and came out and fought them. When Satan was to be cast out of the possessed person, and never to enter into him more, he rent him and tore him, that the people thought he was dead.

Now, reader, what need hast thou to be serious and holy on a dying bed, to the utmost of thine ability, and to fetch in all the

strength thou canst from heaven, when thou hast such cruel powerful enemies to encounter with ! It was one of the most quickening, prevalent arguments, that Alexander used to the Macedonians, before their third and last fatal battle with Darius, that they were to fight with all the strength of Persia at once. What an awakening argument should it be to thee, that thou art to fight with all the powers of hell at once !

Secondly, Consider, it is a special season wherein thou mayest glorify God. A saint by his death may bring God more honour than by all his life. The actions and speeches of dying men make a deep impression on the hearts of those that are about them. The wicked themselves, who have mocked at the purity and strictness of the saints' lives, have admired their patience and cheerfulness in their deaths. Though they look on the believer's words in health as savouring of self and sinister ends and humour, and so neglect them ; yet when they hear a dying saint commend the love and faithfulness of God, the pleasantness and excellency of his ways and worship, and to bless the time, and pains, and strength, that ever they spent in his service, they esteem his language, and begin to have other thoughts of holiness and heaven ; for they consider, that surely now the man is entering upon the borders of eternity, he is serious and in earnest. Hence the patriarchs, knowing the prevalence of such words, urge Joseph with Jacob's dying charge : ' Thy father, when dying, said, Forgive, I pray thee, the iniquity of thy servants,' Gen. l. 16. That Russian that would live with his fellow-rioters, beholding the holy behaviour of Ambrose on his death-bed, would choose to die with Ambrose. The enemies of Christ, beholding at the death of Christ how the rocks were rent, darkness covered the face of the earth ; how the veil of the temple was torn in sunder, the graves were opened, the dead raised, were forced to cry out, Doubtless this man was the Son of God. So when the adversaries of God's people see them on their death-beds, and behold their patience in bearing their sickness, their faith in relying on their Saviour, their charity in forgiving their enemies, their zeal for the honour and interest of their Master, their constancy in defending the gospel they did before profess, they are compelled in their consciences to acknowledge, Doubtless these are the servants, the sons and daughters of God. Much more will a holy behaviour on a dying bed benefit such as fear God. It convinceth sinners, that they, whether they will or no, must have other thoughts of holiness and holy men than formerly, and it confirmeth saints in their gracious practices, and makes them more diligent in their preparation.

Mr Bilney, the day before he suffered death, being told that, though the fire was hot, God's Spirit would cool it, to his everlasting refreshing, answered, putting his hand in the flame of the candle, I feel by experience, and have known by philosophy, that fire by God's ordinance is very hot ; but yet I am persuaded, by God's holy word, and by the experience of some spoken of therein, that in the flame they felt no heat, and in the fire no consumption ; and I constantly believe, howsoever the stubble of this my body shall be wasted by it, yet my soul and spirit shall be purged thereby ; a pain for the time, whereon followeth joy unspeakable. And then he most comfortably treated on Isa. xliii. 1, 2, ' But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' Which words he applied both to himself and his friends then present ; of which some reaped such fruit that they caused the words to be fair written on tables. The comfort whereof, in several that were with him, was never taken from them to their dying day. Oh, it is very profitable to others, when a saint so behaveth himself on his death-bed, that he may say to his friends and relations, as Sir Robert Harleigh did to his children, I have formerly taught you how to live, and now I teach you how to die.¹

Thirdly, Consider, it is the last opportunity that thou shalt ever have to do any work for thy God and Saviour, and thy own soul. When thou diest, thou goest to the place where thou shalt receive thy reward, and shalt never, never more have any season to sow to the Spirit in, to serve thy Redeemer in, and to manifest thy thankfulness to him for his love to thee : ' I must work the work of him that sent me, whilst it is day,' saith Christ, ' for the night cometh, wherein no man can work,' John ix. 4. Thou mayest, when dying, say to thy friends, as the crier of the *Ludi seculares*, which happened but once in a hundred years, did at Rome, Come see that which ye never saw before, nor shall ever see again. He that hath but one arrow to shoot, but one throw to cast, but one opportunity left him to work out his salvation in, may well improve it to the utmost. A certain martyr going to suffer, expressed his sorrow that he was going thither, where he should do his God no more service. Our God is so good, that his work is desirable ; and were it possible for any grief in heaven, saith Dr Sibbes, it would arise from a Chris-

¹ Woodriff, Simeon's Song., Epist. Dedicat.

tian's consideration, that he did no more for his God, and that it cost him so little pains and labour to be saved. When Samson was nigh his death, and should have no more opportunities to exalt his God, and advantage his church, he lifted up his heart to heaven, ' Assist me this once, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.' So, reader, when thou enterest thy chamber, and art betaking thyself to thy dying bed, what weighty reasons hast thou to pour out thy soul, and wrestle with God for divine strength! Lord, I am now come, in my own apprehension, to the close of my days, after which, I shall never more enjoy a season to glorify thy Majesty, or further my own account. I am going to do a great work, which I never did before, nor shall ever do again. I acknowledge that I have been guilty of too much slothfulness, and unfaithfulness, in my life, and have given these Philistines, that are enemies to my soul, too much advantage against me, and occasion to mock and deride me. Oh assist me now this once, that I may do thee and thy church some eminent service, that I may be strong in faith, an example of patience, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and charity, and be the death of those uncircumcised ones, my cursed corruptions, and be avenged on them, for all the dishonour they have done to thee, though I die with them.

I come now to shew wherein thou oughtest to exercise thyself to godliness, on a dying bed..

First, In commending God and his ways to others. The words of dying men are living oracles, and do not die with them. It is the unhappiness of worldlings and wicked men, that when they come to die, they cannot commend the work that they have followed, the wages which they have merited, or the master whom they have served; but it is the privilege of Christians, that they have cause to praise the sweetness of that love which they have tasted, the equity of those laws which they have obeyed, the grace, and mercy, and bounty, and faithfulness of that Lord whom they have prayed to, and delighted in, and worshipped, and the vastness, and richness, and certainty, and eternity of that reward which they are going to possess. The men of this earth, when they are dying, do often cry out and complain of the falseness and unfaithfulness of the world, and the flesh, how they have cozened, and cheated, and deceived them; and of their own folly and madness, in toiling and moiling, and drudging night and day, to please and gratify that which now in their extremity turns them off. Oh how should the children of God extol their Father, and his care of them, and kindness to them, magnify their Redeemer, and his passion for them,

and affection to them, exalt the word and ways of the Lord, as those which they have found by experience to be the most comfortable and gainful ways. The last breath of a saint should be spent in his God's service. *Oportet imperatorem stantem mori*, was Vespasian's motto. *Oportet episcopum, concionantem mori*, was holy Jewel's motto. *Oportet Christianum glorificantem Deum mori*, should be every saint's motto.

Dying Jacob will speak highly of God's providence, though he bring it in, as it were, in a parenthesis: 'The God which fed me all my life long to this day,' Gen. xlviii. 15. Dying Joseph will praise the Lord's faithfulness to his promise, and pawn his body for its performance: 'I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence,' Gen. l. 24, 25. Dying Moses ascribes greatness to his God, tells the Israelites, 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgments; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he,' Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. Dying Joshua will appeal to the consciences of his hearers, whether God had not kept touch with them to the least tittle: 'I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath spoken,' Joshua xxiii. 14. As Moses and Joshua did sound forth the praises of their God, so also, when dying, they did persuade and exhort the Jews to godliness, Deut. xxxii. 23; Joshua xxiii. *per tot*. So Paul, meeting with those Ephesian elders, that should see his face no more, doth solemnly charge them to take heed to the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.

I remember, saith Senarclæus, concerning Alphonsus Diazus, his friend and bed-fellow, when he and I were at Neuberg, the night before he was murdered, he prayed before he went to bed more ardently, and somewhat longer than ordinary; after which he spent a good part of the night in discourse concerning the works of God, and exhorting me to the practice of true piety; and truly, I found myself so inflamed, when I heard him, that I thought I heard the Spirit of God speaking to me.

Mr Knox gave good advice to all his visitors; among the rest, the Earl of Morton came to see him, to whom he thus spake: My lord, God hath given you many blessings—wisdom, riches, and many great friends, and now is about to prefer you to the government of the realm. (The Earl of Mar, the late regent, being newly dead.)

In his name I charge you, use these blessings better than formerly you have done; seeking first the glory of God, the furtherance of the gospel, the good of his church and ministers. Be careful of the king, to procure his good, and the welfare of his realm. If you do thus, God will be with you, and honour you; if otherwise, he will deprive you of all these honours, and your end shall be shame and ignominy. These words the earl called to mind nine years after, at the time of his execution, saying, that he had found John Knox a true prophet.

Mr Ignatius Jordan, of Exeter,¹ one famous in his generation for godliness, was observed, in his sickness, to take all occasions to exhort others to constancy in the truth, zeal for God, and to make sure of heaven; and when the mayor of the city sent to visit him, he said to the messenger, Remember me to Mr Mayor, and tell him from me, that he make sure of heaven, be careful to do justice, and provide for the poor.

We should, when dying, in a special manner mind this work of commending God and godliness to our relations, 1 Chron. xxviii. 1, 8, 9, *vide*; they are more affected than others with our sickness, and so also with our sayings. Our counsel may probably do them good, when we are turned into corruption. Jacob calleth his children together to bless them; David layeth a strict command on his son Solomon: 'And thou, Solomon my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' Cyrus, upon his death-bed, conjures his sons to peace, lest they should lose the kingdom he left his heir. The saint must conjure his children to purity in the first place, lest they lose their souls and the kingdom of heaven. Mr Robert Bolton, on his death-bed, called his children together, wished them to remember the counsel he had formerly given them, and he verily believed none of them durst meet him at the great tribunal in an unregenerate estate.

Mr Sanders, a little before his death, in a letter to his wife, writeth thus: Dear wife, riches I have none to leave behind me, wherewith to endow thee, after this world's manner, but the treasure of tasting how sweet Christ is unto hungry consciences (whereof I thank my Christ I feel part, and would feel more) I bequeath to thee, and to the rest of my beloved in Christ, to retain the same in sense of heart always.² Oh, how pathetically, how earnestly, should dying Christians, who know somewhat of the worth of grace and holiness, and of the evil and end of sin and sinners, persuade

¹ Mr Nicols in his relation of the life and death of Ignatius Jordan.

² Foxe, Martyr., vol. iii. p. 138.

their children and relations to love, and fear, and serve the Lord, when it is the last time that ever they shall advise or counsel them. How hard should they woo, that the souls of their kindred may be married to Christ.

Secondly, In commending thyself and others to God by prayer. When the body breathes shortest, it breathes quickest. Though the Christian on his death-bed may want strength for long solemn devotion, his short ejaculations should be both fervent and frequent. The first thing a child of God doth, when new born, is to breathe, to pray, Acts ix. 11. And it is one of the last things he doth, Acts vii. 60. He entereth praying into the place of praise. Paul the hermit was found dead, saith Jerome,¹ with his hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, that the dead corpse seemed to pray. *Demus operam ut moriamur in precatone*; Let us endeavour to die at prayer, saith Augustine.²

1. The sick man should pray especially for himself. Lord Jesus receive my spirit, saith Stephen; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, saith Christ; Lord, saith dying Beza, perfect that which thou hast begun, that I suffer not shipwreck in the haven. Children desire to die in their father's bosom, or on their mother's lap. Mr Perkins died begging remission of sin, and entreating mercy at God's hands. Bishop Usher was often heard to desire the like end that Mr Perkins had; which he obtained; for the last words which he was heard to utter were, But, Lord, in special forgive my sins of omission; not long after which he expired. Luther's prayer, a little before his death, or rather thanksgiving, was, *Pater mi caelestis, Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ago tibi gratias quod filium tuum Jesum Christum mihi revelasti, cui credidi, quem sum professus, quem amavi*,³ &c.; My heavenly Father, the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, I thank thee for revealing thy Son Jesus Christ to me, whom I have believed, whom I have professed, whom I have loved.

Others must not be forgotten by us, but our own souls must in a special manner be remembered. Bellarmine tells us⁴ of a desperate advocate in the court of Rome, who, being exhorted on his death-bed to pray to God for mercy, made this speech, Lord, I have a word to say to thee, not for myself—*Ego enim propero ad inferos: neque enim est ut aliquid pro me agas*—for I am hastening to hell, neither is there anything that I would beg on my own behalf, but for my wife and children. This he spake, saith Bellarmine, who

¹ Jer. in Vit.

² Melc. Adam.

³ Aug. de re. invo., cap. 33.

⁴ Bellar. de Arte Mor., lib. ii. cap. 19.

was then present, as boldly as if he had been taking his journey only to some neighbouring village.

2. For his relations. The more hot our affection is to any, the more fervent our petitions should be for them.¹ Praying parents are the most loving parents. When dying, chiefly they should bless their children in the name of the Lord. So Isaac did, Gen. xxviii. 1; thus Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. Godly parents may plead the covenant made to them and theirs, unto God, on their dying beds with comfort. They are best acquainted with their children's conditions, conversations, wants, weaknesses, and so fittest to open their cases to God, and to beseech grace on their behalves, that they may be a holy seed, a generation arising to shew forth his praise. Christ, when nigh death, committed his spiritual children to his Father, and earnestly begged his care of them, and favour for them: 'Holy Father, I come to thee; I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; keep them through thy name, keep them from evil, sanctify them through thy truth.' So should a godly father, or mother, when dying: Lord, I am leaving my poor children in the midst of snares, and temptations, and miseries, Ruth i. 8, and ii. 19; 2 Tim. i. 18. I am coming out of the world to thy Majesty, where I shall be above all frights and fears, and beyond all malice and mischief; but my children are in the world, and will daily be environed with allurements and affrightments, with assaults and batteries, from their spiritual enemies; thou knowest the power and policy of the world and the wicked one, the treachery and deceitfulness of the flesh within them, and their weakness and inability to wrestle with, and overcome the flatteries of the world, and the suggestions of the devil. Oh, keep them through thy name, that they may look beyond the world, live above the world, and expect and eye their portion and happiness in a better world. Though they live in the world, let them not live as the world, but walk all their days as heirs of another world. Keep them from the evil of sin, however it please thy Majesty to deal with them about the evil of suffering. Give them the shield of faith, whereby they may quench the fiery darts of the devil. Let thy covenant of grace be their portion, thy love their cordial, and thy mansion-house their eternal possession. Be thou their Father, to direct, protect, govern, and provide for them, and give them a name in thy house, better than of sons and daughters. Oh sanctify

¹ I have read of one that used to pray, God bless my father and mother, brethren and sisters, and none else; to whom one that heard him answered, It were better the devil had thy father and mother, and brethren and sisters, and none else.

them through thy truth, that they may be saved, and may meet me with joy at the great day ! Luther, when dying, made this will for his wife, great with child, and his little sons : O Lord God, I thank thee, that thou wouldst have me to be poor in this world ; I have no house, land, or money that I should leave them. Thou hast given me wife and children, I restore them to thee. Do thou, O Father of orphans, and judge of widows, nourish, teach, keep them, as thou hast hitherto me.

3. For the whole church of God. It is good to pray by ourselves, but it is ill to pray only for ourselves.¹ When we are dying, and going to the church triumphant, we should be sure to put up some requests for the poor members of Christ, and the church militant. Calvin was heard before his death often to sigh out, How long, Lord, how long will it be ere thou avenge the blood of thy servants ? The people of God are the purchase of Christ, and of the same family and body with the dying Christian, and therefore must needs be dear to him.

4. For his benefactors, and those that have done good to him and his, Ruth i. 8, and ii. 19. Paul had received some kindness from Onesimus ;² he refreshed him in his bonds, and in 2 Tim. i. 18, which was the last of his epistles, and thought to be written but a little before his death, for he tells us in it, ' I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' how pathetically doth he pray for him ! ' The Lord grant that he may find mercy at that day.'

5. For our enemies. This is to follow God's pattern, who doth good for evil, and to obey his precept, who commandeth us to pray for them that despitefully use us. Stephen, when departing out of the world, entreats mercy for them who were cruel to him : ' Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' Acts vii. 60. Our blessed Saviour dying, begs hard for their eternal lives who were the instruments and authors of his bloody death : ' Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do,' Luke xxiii. 34.

Thirdly, In a holy exercise of faith, courage, repentance, charity, and patience.

1. Faith. It is the character of God's children that they live by faith, and they die in the faith, Hab. ii. 6 ; Heb. xi. 31. The water, say some, of the pool of Bethesda (wherein the priest washed the sacrifices before he offered them) was of a reddish colour, to note that men must be washed by faith in the blood of Christ, be-

¹ Si pro te solo oras, pro te solus orabis ; si pro omnibus rogas, omnes pro te rogabunt.—*Amb.*

² Onesiphorus.—*Ed.*

fore they are ready to be offered a peace-offering to God by death. The dying Christian must expect strong assaults against the bulwark of his faith; but whatever he let go, he must keep his hold on Christ. I know no grace that the devil is such a sworn enemy to as faith, and I know no season that he is more diligent in to overthrow their faith, than when they are under some dangerous sickness; therefore it is the observation of a good man, that he seldom seeth a sick saint, followed close with temptations, to recover of that sickness; for Satan, knowing he hath but a little time, useth all his craft and strength to separate the soul from the Rock of his salvation. Upon a dying bed, reflect upon former experiences of God's love to thy soul, and recollect the former evidences of thy title to Christ, and thereby to heaven. I must tell thee, though the certainty of thy salvation depend upon the truth of thy faith, the comfort of thy dissolution will depend on the strength of thy faith. Faith is the shield of the soul, and therefore, above all, in thy encounter with thy great enemy Satan, and thy last enemy death, take the shield of faith, Eph. vi. 14. Epaminondas, after his victory at Leuctrum, wherein he was mortally wounded, understanding that his buckler was safe, bade his chirurgeon boldly to pluck out the dart that stuck in his side, and died cheerfully. The saint, the soldier of Christ, who is wounded even to death, and keepeth his shield of faith safe, may leave the world with courage. The apostle Paul, who knew whom he had believed, 2 Tim. i. 12, rings a challenge in the ears of death: 'O death, where is thy sting?' and sings a triumphant ditty at the approach of death: 'The time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. When Jacob had believed the report of Joseph's life, his heart was revived. 'Is Joseph yet alive?' saith he; 'I will go down and see him before I die.' When the true Israelite can firmly credit the testimony which God hath given of Jesus, the son of Joseph, how he, being an enemy, was reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and shall much more, being reconciled, be saved by his life, and by faith can cling on him, his heart, though dying, is then enlivened. Oh with what comfort can he take his journey into the other world! When Philip viewed his young son Alexander, Now, saith he, I am content to die. Old Simeon springs young again at a sight of Christ; and having embraced his Saviour in the arms of faith, as well as in the arms of his body, he begs a dismissal out of this valley of tears, being assured thereby of an admission into fulness of joy:

'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (*ἀπολύεις*), according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' Having with an eye of faith beheld Christ, he counts his life but a bondage, and desires to depart or be loosed from fetters, as the word signifieth, and is taken, Mat. xxvii. 17. We read of the Lord's worthies, that by faith they stopped the mouths of lions. Death is a fierce and cruel lion, but faith will pull out its teeth, that it cannot hurt us; or stop its mouth, that it shall not devour us. This grace, like the angel sent from heaven when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, will save the Christian from being torn in pieces.

O friend, the robes of Christ's righteousness is the only coat of mail which can defend thy soul against the shot of death. If thou canst with Moses go up to Pisgah, and take a view by faith of the land of promise, thou wilt comfortably, with him, lay down thine earthly tabernacle. Job desired death as eagerly as the labourer in a hot summer's day desires the shadow; Paul longed for it as vehemently as the apprentice for the expiration of his indentures; and all because they had first beheld Christ by faith. It is no wonder that many of God's children have called earnestly to be laid to bed, knowing that it would prove their everlasting happy rest; and when their bodies are carried by mortal men to their mother earth, their souls should be conveyed by glorious angels to their Father in heaven.

2. Courage. A Christian should be a volunteer in death. Many of the martyrs were as willing to die as to dine; went to the fire as cheerfully as to a feast, and courted its pale and ghastly countenance as if it had been a beautiful bride. When King Lysimachus threatened Cyrenæus Theodorus with hanging:¹ *Istis quæso (inquit) ista horribilia minitare purpuratis tuis; Theodori quidem nihil interest, humine an sublime putrescat*: Threaten these terrible things to thy brave courtiers; Theodorus cares not whether he rot in the air or on the earth. Cyprian said amen to his own sentence of martyrdom. Jerome reports of Nepotianus, that he gave up his life so cheerfully, that one would have thought he rather walked forth than died. When Ignatius was led from Syria to Rome, to be torn in pieces of wild beasts, he often wished by the way that he were in the midst of those beasts that were to devour him, and that their appetites might be whetted to despatch him; fearing lest it should happen to him, as to some others, that the lions, out of a kind of reverence, would not dare to approach them, being ready, he said, rather to provoke them to fight, than that they should

¹ Cic. Quæst. Tusc., lib. i.

suffer him to escape. Bradford being told by his keeper's wife that his chain was a-buying, and he was to die the next day, pulled off his hat, and thanked God for it. When some wondered that Adam Damply could eat his food so well, when his end was so near, he told them, Ah, masters, do you think that I have been God's prisoner so long in the Marshalsea, and have not yet learned to die? Yes, yes, and I doubt not but God will strengthen me therein. Anne Askew subscribed her confession in Newgate thus: Written by me, Anne Askew, that neither wisheth for death, nor feareth his might, and as merry as one that is bound towards heaven. Indeed it is said of a wicked man that his soul is required of him, and that God takes away his soul, Luke xii. ; Job xxvii. 10; but of a godly man, that he giveth up the ghost, and he cometh to his grave, Gen. xxv. 8; Job iv. 21. Nature will teach the heathen that death is the end of all outward miseries to all men, hence some of them drank of its cup with as much constancy and courage as if it had been the most pleasant julep; but grace will teach the Christian that death is not only a remedy against all his bodily and spiritual maladies—as Sir Walter Raleigh said of the sharp axe that should behead him, This will cure all my infirmities—but also an inlet into fulness of joy and felicity. Reverend Deering said on his death-bed, I feel such joy in my spirit, that if I should have the sentence of life on the one side, and the sentence of death on the other side, I had rather a thousand times choose the sentence of death, since God hath appointed a separation, than the sentence of life. Titus Vespasian, the mirror of mankind, being a stranger to Christ, was very unwilling to leave the world; being carried in a horse litter, and knowing that he must die, looked up to heaven, and complained pitifully that his life should be taken from him, who had not desired¹ to die, having never committed any sin, as he said, but only one. Socrates, and some of the wiser heathen, comforted themselves against the fear of death with this weak cordial, that it is common to men, the way of all the earth. Hence it was, when the Athenians condemned Socrates to die, he received the sentence with an undaunted spirit, and told them they did nothing but what nature had before ordained for him. But the Christian hath a greater ground for a holy resolution, and a stronger cordial against the fear of death, even his hopes of eternal life; and surely, if he that exceeds others in his cordials be excelled by them in courage, he disgraceth his physician. Aristippus told the sailors, who wondered that he was not, as well as they, afraid in the storm,

¹ Qu., 'deserved'?—ED.

Ye fear the torments due to a wicked life, and I expect the reward of a good one. It is no marvel that they who lived wickedly should die unwillingly, being frightened with the guilt of their past sins, and with the fears of their future torments. Therefore the Holy Ghost saith of such a one, 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,' Prov. xiv. 32, as a beast that is driven out of his den to the slaughter, or as a debtor driven by the officers out of his house, wherein he lay warm, and was surrounded with all sorts of comfort, to a nasty, loathsome prison; but that the righteous, who hath hope in his death, should even die almost with fear of it beforehand, is matter of wonder. Lot's soul is exceedingly vexed with Sodom, yet he is not loath to leave it. This world is a wilderness, a purgatory, a step-mother, a persecutor to all the saints, and yet some of them, when called to leave it, sing loath to depart, and would linger behind; partly from nature, which dreads a dissolution, and partly from the weakness of grace. To fear death much argueth sometimes wickedness, always weakness.

3. Repentance. It is said of St Augustine, that he died with tears in his eyes, in the practice of repentance; and Posidonius saith of him, that he heard him often say in his health, that it was the fittest disposition for dying Christians and ministers.¹ *Laudatos*, saith he, *Christianos et sacerdotes absque digna et competentī pœnitentia exire de corpore non debere*. We die groaning in regard of our bodies, why should not our souls sigh that ever they sinned against so good a God? Beasts bite their enemies with more venom and indignation, when they are ready to die; *Maximè mortiferi solent esse morsus morientium animalium*. The Christian should give sin his most deadly bite, his greatest abhorrency, and grief, and shame, when he is dying, and shall never see sin, or sorrow, or shame more. As it is noble and excellent to die forgiving sinners, so also taking revenge upon sin. Moses, a little before his death, is commanded to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, and then he is gathered to his people, Num. xxxi. 1, 2. Samuel takes vengeance on Agag, when he was old, and knew not the day of his death; David could not die with comfort, till he had charged Solomon to execute that justice on Joab which he had omitted. The last time the judge seeth the felon, he passeth sentence of death upon him. Oh, how should the soul of a dying saint be inflamed with anger against sin, when he considers the rich love that it abuseth, the glorious name that it dishonoureth, the blessed Saviour that it pierceth, and that vast happiness which he is going

¹ Posidon. in Vit. Augustini.

to possess, of which, without infinite grace and mercy, it had deprived him. Some persons, when they have been to take their last revenge on their enemies, have done it to purpose. The believer, on his dying bed, takes his last revenge on sin; he shall never have another opportunity to shew his love to his God and Saviour in his spite at, and hatred of, sin; therefore then he should do it to purpose, as dying Samson put forth all his strength, and beg divine help, that he may utterly destroy it, and be avenged on it, for all the defilement and bondage it hath brought on his soul, and dishonour to his Saviour. Dying Jacob cursed the sins of his own sons: 'Cursed be their wrath, for it was fierce; and their anger, for it was cruel; O my soul, enter not thou into their secrets.' The dying child of God should curse his passions, his pride, his unbelief, his selfishness, even all his lusts, for disobeying such righteous laws, and displeasing such a gracious Lord. When David Chrytæus lay a-dying, he lift up his head from his pillow to hear the discourses of his friends that sat by him, saying, I shall die with the more comfort, if I can die learning something. The Christian, both by his painful sickness, and approaching death, may learn something of the evil of sin, and certainly he may die with the more comfort, (for godly sorrow and joy may be contemporaries, as the heaven shine and shower at the same time,) if he die in a flood of tears for his unkindness to Christ.

4. Charity in a double respect.

(1.) In forgiving them that have wronged thee. If the natural sun should not go down upon our wrath, much less should the sun of our lives. It is bad to bear anger or malice one hour in our hearts against any, but it is worst of all to carry it with us into the other world. How can he expect to die in peace with God, who dieth in war with men, when God himself hath said, 'Except ye forgive others their trespasses against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses?' Amilcar, the father of Hannibal, when he was dying, made his son take a solemn oath to maintain a perpetual war with the Romans. Edward the First adjured his son and nobles, that if he died in his expedition against Bruce, king of Scotland, they should not inter his corpse, but carry it about with them till they had avenged him on that usurper. But certainly it is a desperate thing to leave children heirs to the parent's wrath and rage, as well as to his riches. Oh how dreadful is his estate, who takes his enemy by the throat, when God by death is taking him by the throat, and ready to throttle him for ever. If thou hast wronged others, either in name, or goods, or body,

seek reconciliation, and make satisfaction ; for this is righteous and just. If thy brother hath aught against thee, thou hast never more need of reconciling thyself to him, than when thou art approaching the altar of death, there to offer up the last sacrifice to God in this world. If thy brother have wronged thee in any sort, remit it—this is charity ; to do otherwise, is to give place to the devil, Eph. iv. 16, 17, and thou hast least cause to give him ground when his rage is greatest, and his batteries strongest, in thy last conflict with him. Oh imitate that blessed martyr Stephen, and the incomparable Saviour, in begging God's love for them who hate thee ! Acts vii. 60 ; Luke xxiii. 34.

(2.) In remembering the poor and afflicted, if God hath made thee able. It is best to be merciful in our lifetime, to make our own hand our executors, and our own eyes our overseers, for the payment of our gifts and legacies to our spiritual kindred ; for such have a particular promise that God will make all their bed in their sickness. But it is good to be charitable when we are dying ; true friends shew most love at parting. Though justice must be blind, not to see persons, yet charity must be quick-sighted, to pick out the fittest objects, viz., the poor, and the pious poor in the first place. Our goods will not extend to God, therefore they must to the saints. When Jonathan was beyond the reach of David's charity, he doth for his sake manifest it to his son. God is beyond all our gifts, therefore for his sake we must bestow them on the godly, that are his children : 'Make you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when that faileth, ye may be received into the everlasting habitations.' Hereby men lay up a good foundation against the time of need. Godly parents are ignorant how their children may employ the estate they leave, whether as fuel for corruption, or as oil to keep the lamps in God's sanctuary burning. It is good therefore for themselves with prudence to dispose of what they may to God's servants and service.

Some men have estates dropping on them out of the clouds, as it were ; large inheritances, fair patrimonies, like Canaan, both in regard of their fruitfulness, and abounding with all sorts of comforts, and in regard of their easiness of obtaining them without sweat or labour. They inherit, as the Israelites, houses which they built not, wells which they digged not, and vineyards which they planted not ; upon both these accounts, such persons are engaged to do good, and distribute, and to be rich in good works. God expects a return of his talents with advantage. How liberal, nay, lavish, have many papists been upon their death-beds, to friars and

monks, even to the wronging their wives and children, that some states, as Venice, have been forced to make laws to restrain men, lest the church should in time swallow up all the revenues of the commonwealth, and all this upon a foolish, vain conceit, that they should the sooner pass through purgatory. It is certainly a great disgrace to the disciples of Christ, and no mean dishonour to Christ himself, that so many, and such large gifts, have proceeded from the false faith of merit-mongers, when the faith of his most glorious gospel doth not work the like in true believers. How will Christians answer it, that an idle dream, and fancied fear of an imaginary purgatory, should do more than the sure persuasion of the love of God, and the certain hope of eternal life?

(4.) Patience and submission to the will of God, both as to our death or life, and also as to our pain or ease in sickness. As to our life and death, we must know God is wise, and will never gather his fruit but in the best season. None, unless a fool, but will be willing God should choose for him. It is excellent for a sick person to be wholly at God's disposal, as knowing that whilst he is here God will refresh him with the first-fruits, and when he goeth hence, receive him into that place where he shall enjoy the whole harvest. It was the speech of dying Julian, He that would not die when he must, and he that would die when he must not, are both of them cowards alike. To desire to live, when one is called to die, is a sign of cowardice; for such a one is afraid to enter the list with the king of terrors. To desire to die, when one is called to live, speaks a faint-hearted creature; for such a man dares not look an affliction or disaster in the face, therefore would take shelter in death. Cato, Cleombrotus, Lucretia, shewed more cowardice than courage in being their own executioners. The Romans commended Terentius for his resolution to live after his army was routed by Hannibal. He is the most valiant person that can die willingly when God would have him die, and live as willingly when God would have him live. He that is weary of his work before the evening is an unprofitable servant, and is either infected with idleness or with diseases. When Dr Whitaker was told death was approaching, he answered, Life or death is welcome to me, which God pleaseth. Mr Robert Bolton being told that it would be better for the church of God if God pleased to spare his life, said, If I shall find favour in the eyes of God, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation; if not, lo here I am, let him do with me what he pleaseth. Another pious soul in his sickness cried out, *Domine, si tibi sim necessarius, non recuso*

vivere, Lord, if I may be further serviceable to thee, I am willing to live. Lucius Cornelius, lieutenant in Portugal under Fabius the consul, was infamous to following ages for his impatience in complaining of his physician, and railing at Æsculapius for not accepting his vow and passionate desire of having his life spun out to a longer thread.¹ We cannot blame them who have their portion in this life for their unwillingness to leave it, and to become beggars in hell for ever. *Mori timeat qui ad secundam mortem de hac morte transibit*, saith Cyprian, de Moral., Let him fear death who must pass from this death to the second death. To such a one, indeed, death is a murderer; like Jehorani's messenger, comes to take away the life of his soul and all his happiness, and therefore he may well call, as Elisha did, Shut the door, and keep him out.

Many saints who died violent and cruel deaths yet gave their very enemies cause to admire their patience. They wearied out their bloody persecutors by their meekness and patience. Bonner said of the martyrs in Queen Mary's days, A vengeance on them; I think they love to burn. When that old disciple, Polycarp, came to the stake at which he was burnt to death, he desired to stand untied, saying, Let me alone; for he that gave me strength to come to the fire will give me patience to endure the flame without your tying. Cassianus, with admirable meekness, suffered a cruel martyrdom from his own scholars, who, at the command of the barbarous tyrant, became his executioners, some with their pen-knives pricking and lancing his flesh, others casting stones at him, till they had killed him. Eulalia, a chaste virgin of a noble family in Portugal, being for a time kept close by her parents, for fear her bold profession should cause her death, one night getting from them, and appearing before the tribunal of Maximinus, she was, for refusing to sacrifice to his idols, executed in this manner: first, two hangmen, with all their might, rent her joints in sunder, then her flesh was scratched from her sides with the talons of wild beasts, and hot burning torches were set to her sides, which ended her life.

A Christian should also exercise patience and submission to God's will under his pain. It is the rule of Hippocrates, that that sickness is most dangerous in which the sick man alters his countenance. Undoubtedly it is ill and unbecoming Christianity, when men who in health are mild and meek, in sickness are altered to be peevish

¹ L. Cornelius, legatus sub Fabio Consule. Vividam naturam et virilem animam servavi, quoad animam efflavi; et tandem desertus ope medicorum et Æsculapii Dei ingrati, cui me voveram, sodalem perpetuo futurum, si fila aliquantulum optata protulisset.—*Epitaph.*

and passionate; that their relations and attendants, who pity their pain, and pray for their ease, and watch and work night and day to serve them, are requited with harsh words and fretful returns. Caius Marius suffered the veins of his legs to be cut out for the cure of his gout, and never shrunk for it. The Grecians were cowardly in their encounters with men, but valiant and patient in their conflicts with diseases. Master Jeremiah Whitaker, who on his death-bed had dreadful fits of the stone, bore them with marvellous patience, often turning up his eyes to heaven, and saying, Blessed be God this is not hell. The saint who is in covenant with God, and hath engaged himself to God to submit to all his providences, and hath God engaged to him to lay no more upon him than he will enable him to bear, may well with patience endure the divine pleasure.

Vincentius, a Spaniard, who was martyred at Valence under Dacianus, the president of the cruel tyrant Dioclesian, was used in this manner: first he was laid upon the rack, and all the joints of his body distended till they cracked again; then all the members of his body were pierced and indented with deadly wounds; then they vexed and tore his flesh with iron combs sharply filed; then they laid his body on an iron grate, and when they had opened his flesh with iron hooks, they seared it with fiery plates, sprinkling the same with hot burning salt; last of all, they cast him into a vile dungeon, the floor whereof was first thick spread with the sharpest shells that might be gotten, his feet then being fast locked in the stocks, there he was left alone till he died—all which he endured without murmuring or complaining—and, according to his name, (Vincentius,) was over all a conqueror. And shall not Christians, who die in their beds in peace, with much less pain, be patient! Many who knew not God did look on death as a favour, and one of the greatest which their gods could bestow on them. Agamedes and Trophonius, having built the temple of Apollo, asked of that god a reward for their services.¹ They were answered, that within seven days they should be bountifully paid for their pains; at the end of which time they died in a sleep. One of Cæsar's crazed soldiers desired the favour of the emperor to have leave to kill himself.

Especially, the thoughts of the happy issue of the most painful sickness and death to a child of God may, as the wood thrown into the bitter waters of Marah, make them sweet unto him. Some choose to be cut rather than to be daily tortured with the stone,

¹ Plut. ad Apol.

though they know that cutting will put them to much pain, because they hope that cutting will cure them of their distemper. When a jailer knocks off a prisoner's fetters and bolts, though it puts him to much more pain than the constant wearing them, though every blow goeth to his heart, yet he flincheth not, he complaineth not, because he knoweth his future ease will make amends for his present pain. Christians are here fettered with sin and misery, which constantly grate upon their spirits. Death is the jailer to knock off their shackles, and let them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What though it put them to much pain; they may bear it with much patience, knowing that it will end in eternal pleasures.

Though a hypocrite, like a piece of brass, when stricken with the hammer of sickness or death, maketh a sharp and irksome noise with impatience, and breaketh in pieces, is undone for ever, yet the sincere soul, as a piece of gold, when so smitten, may sound sweetly and be pliable. True gold may be stretched out in length and breadth, in thin and fine leaves, as you please.

Now, reader, that thou mayest thus glorify thy God, credit thy profession, further thine account, and advantage others by thy death; it is requisite that thou be always ready for it. The quarter-day never comes amiss to him that hath always his rent ready by him. The loving husband, let him come when he will, is ever welcome to a faithful spouse. The actual unpreparedness of some holy persons hath caused their petitions for a longer stay when God seemed to call them hence, Ps. xxxix. 13. As a nobleman who is a loyal subject, and affectionately desires his prince's presence and company at his house, may wish that it may be deferred when his house is out of repairs, till it is in a better order. The habitual unpreparedness of sinners—I mean, their predominant impenitency and unbelief—hath made death cutting to them indeed. The pismire fears not the winter, having laid in her provision against that season; but the grasshopper, being unprepared, is starved therein.

Let thy whole life be but a preparation for death. He that would die but once—I mean, escape the second death—must die daily, live in a constant expectation of it, and preparation for it. Pliny calleth a sudden death the greatest fortune of a man's life. Julius Cæsar, the day before his death, in discourse with Marius Lepidus upon that point, what was the best end of a man's life, preferred that which was sudden and unlooked for, which was his fate the next day. Augustus, his successor, was of the same judgment, and desired *mortem celerem, et insperatam*; but the Christian findeth by experience that death to be the best which was most expected

and prepared for. *Meditatio mortis, vita perfectissima*, The meditation of death is the holiest life, saith the father. *Tota vita, meditatio mortis, et descendum est mori*, The whole life is but a learning to die, saith the philosopher. Wise princes lay up ten years for one day's battle. A wise Christian will lay up every day somewhat for his last day, knowing that if he win that combat, he is made for ever. Invasions or insurrections, like a sudden breach of the sea, carry all before them, when pitched battles give equal advantage, and cause less terror on each side. Evils premeditated are often prevented, always mitigated, the mind gathering reason and strength together wherewith to encounter them. But unthought-of troubles, like fire in the night, are most frightful, starting the secure sinner from his quiet repose.

In order to this preparation, I shall mention two or three particulars, but briefly, having spoken to them elsewhere.

1. Keep a clear conscience in thy health. Remember that sin is the sting of death; therefore be afraid of sin, if thou wouldst not be afraid of death. It was Nero's answer to Seneca, when he advised him to desist his wicked courses, that he might please the gods, *Vereor ego deos, cum talia facio*, Do you think I fear the gods, who dare run upon such actions! But he who did not dread the gods found death dreadful to him; for the historian observeth that he cried pitifully, like a child, when he was called forth to be killed. It is the righteous only that is bold as a lion, because the righteous only hath a conscience sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, and a conscience void of offence towards God and man. When Hilarion was nigh death, Depart, my soul, saith he, depart; what dost thou fear? Thou hast served Christ almost seventy years, and art thou afraid of death?¹ Bernard observeth of Gerard, I beheld him, *exultantem in morte hominem, et insultantem morti*, exulting in death, and insulting over death. St Ambrose undauntedly encountered his last enemy, saying, I have not so lived that I am afraid to live any longer, neither do I fear to die, because we have a good Lord. The testimony of a good conscience was the great apostle's comfort in the midst of his trials and troubles, 2 Cor. i. 12. It is guilt which makes us shy of a severe and holy God's presence.

It is no marvel that Alexander the Conqueror was struck almost dead at the sight of Cyrus's tomb; that Sigismund, when dying,

¹ Hilarion morti proximus dixisse fertur, Egredere anima mea, Egredere; quid dubitas? Septuaginta prope annos serviisti Christo, et mortem times?—*Jer. Epist. Fam.*, lib. iii., et in *Vit.*

should forbid his servants to mention the word death ; that Louis the Eleventh should, while in health, enjoin his courtiers not to speak of death, and when sick, prohibit the naming it upon pain of death. I do not wonder that Saul, upon the news of his approaching danger and death, falls grovelling on the ground, and hath no strength left in him ; nor that Belshazzar, upon the tidings of this sergent's coming to arrest him, fell into an ague, quaking and shivering so violently, that all the wine which he drank so plentifully in his golden bowls could not cheer his heart, nor fetch blood into his cheeks. The malefactor may well dread the thoughts, much more the approach, of an assize, knowing that he is bound over to it, and must appear to be arraigned, condemned, and executed. The entry of death may well be forcible upon them whom it ejects out of all their happiness, and whose lives have been made up of unholiness. It is vice that paints death with such a formidable countenance, with a whip and flames in its hand. Friend, let thy conversation be pious, if thou wouldst die in peace.

Such as a man's life is, usually such is his death. An unholy life is ordinarily followed with an unhappy end. A filthy adulterer, mentioned by Luther, expired in the arms of a harlot. So also Tigellinus, Cornelius, Gallus, Ladislaus, king of Naples. One of the popes died in the embraces of strange flesh. A great swearer, when he came to die, saith Mr Bolton, swore apace, and as if he had been already in hell, called upon the standers-by to help him, with oaths. King Henry the Second on his death-bed cursed his sons, the day wherein he was born, and in that distemper departed the world, saith the historian, which himself had so often distempered. We read of one who lived well, that died ill ; and of but one in the whole book of God who lived ill, that died well. A sinner may presume upon peace at death, and bespeak, in the language of Jehoram to Jehu, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' Is it peace, death ? Or as the elders to Samuel, 'Comest thou peaceably?' But the answer will be the same with that of Jehu to him, 'What peace can there be so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?' What peace can there be so long as thy lusts, and atheism, and ignorance, and profaneness abound, and thy abominations are so many ? It is no wonder that such persons, like owls, are never heard but at night, the close of their days, and then they screech horribly. What shall we call a mocking of God, saith a learned person,¹ if they do not mock him who think it enough to ask him forgiveness at leisure, with the last drawing of a malicious breath ?

¹ Sir W. Rawley's Ep. Hist. World.

These find out a new god, make one, a leaden one, like Louis the Eleventh of France. And again, let us not flatter our immortal souls to neglect God all our lives, and know that we neglect him, trusting upon the peace we think to make at parting; for this is no other than a rebellious presumption, and a contemptuous laughing to scorn, and a deriding of God, his laws, and precepts.¹ Unquestionably such will be grossly mistaken at last, in falling from their heights into hell. As the daughter of Polycrates dreamed that her father was lifted up, that Jupiter washed him, and the sun anointed him; but it proved to him but a sad prosperity; for, after a long life and large prosperity, he was surprised by his enemies, and hanged up till the dew of heaven wet his cheeks, and the sun melted his grease.

Reader, let me bespeak thee, as Jotham did the men of Shechem, 'Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you;' hearken unto me in this day of thy health and life, that God may hearken unto thee in the day of thy sickness and death. Make thy peace with God now, give a bill of divorce to sin, strike a hearty covenant with Christ, keep thy conscience clean every day; allow not thyself in any known sin, if thou wouldst leave this world in favour with God, in the love of good men, and to thy eternal gain. *Nihil est in morte quod metuamus, si nihil timendum vita commisit*, saith the ancient; Death hath nothing frightful, but what a profane life makes so. They who fly from the holiness of God in life, may well fear the justice of God at death. A sinner, indeed, is every day carrying more fagots to that pile in which he must burn for ever, and always twisting those cords with which devils will eternally scourge him; and therefore the guilt of his wicked life, and fear of his dreadful wages, may well represent death to him in a frightful vizard. But he who makes it his constant business to please his Maker, to mortify his earthly members, to crucify the flesh, to serve the will of God in his generation, and to dress his soul against the coming of the bridegroom, shall find his latter end comfortable, and the day of his death better than the day of his birth. O friend, if thou wouldst die comfortably, live conscientiously! A happy death is the conclusion of a holy life; God hath joined them together, and none can part them asunder. It is reported of the Dardani, that they never wash but three times, when they are born, when they marry, and when they die. The true Christian must be daily washing his soul by faith in the blood of his Saviour, and bathing himself in the tears of repentance, and hereby his soul

¹ Sir W. Rawley's Ep. Hist. World, lib. i. cap. 2.

will be fit to be commended into the hands of God by well dying.

2. Clear up thine evidences for heaven. Be not contented to leave thy salvation at uncertainty. They who walk in the dark, are full of frights and fears. The comfort of thy death will depend much upon the clearness of thy deeds and evidences for eternal life. The want of diligence about this, hath caused many of the children of God to go crying to bed, and wrangling to their eternal rest. They die, and know not how they shall speed in the other world; they fall into the hands of their enemy death, as the lepers into the hands of the Syrians, expecting nothing but cruelty and misery, trembling every step of the way, though they find good cheer, and all sorts of comforts.¹

3. Dwell much in the thoughts of death. Cicero said of fencing, *Fortissima adversus mortem, et dolorem disciplina*, it was the strongest fence against the fear of death; so I may say of entertaining death frequently in our meditations, it is a good guard against the terror of death; custom diminisheth the dread of things which to nature are so frightful. Marius, before he would bring out his soldiers to fight with the Cimbres, caused them to stand upon the trenches, to acquaint themselves with the terrible aspect of those savages, and so brought them to contemn them, which at first sight they so amazedly feared. When we are on a sudden surprised by an unexpected adversary, we want time to unite our strength to resist the assault; but what we expect we provide for, and so are the better able to encounter with it. The old people that lived near the Riphæan mountains, were taught to discourse much of death, and to converse with it, and to speak of it, as of a thing that will certainly come, and ought so to do; hence their resolutions were strengthened to undergo it with patience and courage. As cordials lose their virtue, so even poisons their venom, by frequent use. Mithridates, by constant use of it, made it so far from being mortal, that it was nourishing to him. Though death in its own nature be venomous, the Christian, by frequent meditation of it, and application of the blood of Christ to his soul, may make it profitable to him.

4. Wean thy heart from the earth. They who love the earth as their heaven, will be unwilling to leave it, though for heaven. Canst thou bear the loss of some worldly comforts, when God takes them from thee? If not, how wilt thou be able to bear the loss of all worldly comforts in a dying hour? If running with footmen

¹ Vide more of this in 'Fading of the Flesh,' pp. 85-87.

weary thee, how wilt thou be able to run with horsemen? If a little loss, a little load, be ready to break thy back, what wilt thou do under the weight of a great one? Paul was martyred in his affections, before he was martyred in his body; and dead to the world, before he was slain by the world; hence he came to dare even death itself, and to bid it do its worst: 'I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus, I die daily.' Should a messenger have come to Paul and told him, You must die to-morrow, and leave all the good things of this life; he might have said, That is not now to do, for I died yesterday, and this day, and every day, and I have already taken my leave of this world and all its vanities.¹ Those that, like eels, lie in the mud of worldly pleasures, are unfit to be sacrificed to God, as being unclean creatures, and unwilling to part with their present delights, though for those that are more excellent. The immoderate love of sublunary vanities makes men say, as Peter at Christ's transfiguration, 'It is good to be here;' albeit, like him, they know not what they say.

5. Set thy house in order. After the heart is set in order, the next work is to set the house in order, according to God's counsel, Isa. xxxviii. 1. Abraham was careful, before his death, to settle the affairs of his household, as appeareth by his providing a fit spouse for Isaac, and his giving gifts to the children of his second wife, and sending them away, Gen. xxiv. 1, 2, and xxv. 6. This ought to be done in the time of our health and strength, partly because we are uncertain whether we shall have time and ability in sickness to do it or no. How many have died suddenly; and why not thou and I as well as others? Some who had a mind to make their wills, have not had a tongue to do it with. Others who have had a tongue, have lost the use of their understandings. Partly because in sickness we should have as little as may be to do with the world. All occasions of disturbance or distraction to our souls should be prevented.

The disposition of what God hath given thee must be with prudence, for the maintenance of love among relations; with plainness, that thy meaning may not be mistaken; and with judgment and ability, for the preventing of all quarrels and lawsuits amongst such as are interested in it.

Reader, if thou art careful and faithful in the discharge of these particulars, thy funeral will prove a festival, and the sun of thy life will set, as the natural sun, in a clear evening, not in a cloud, but in such a red sky as to prognosticate the ensuing day to be fair—

¹ See more of this in 'Fading of the Flesh,' pp. 88, 89.

thy certain and comfortable resurrection to bliss and honour. Thy name will live when thou art dead, and thy memory be blessed amongst all that fear the Lord. Tacitus makes one of the Sempronii, not wholly to degenerate from the honour of his house, only for dying well : *Constantia mortis haud indigna Sempronio nomine*. Nero did tacitly wipe Claudius the emperor, though himself were the worst of the two, when, in an ambiguous phrase, he mentions his death : *Desinit morari¹ inter homines*. Every sinner goeth out like a snuff, but the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance. By practising these duties thou shalt come to die in the Lord, to rest from thy labours, and to have thy works following thee to thine endless blessed reward.

A good wish about the Christian's exercising himself to godliness on a dying bed ; wherein the former heads are applied.

The righteous God having appointed death to be the end of all the children of men, as the common road through which they pass into the other world, to receive according to what they have done in this life, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, I wish that I may be wise to consider of my latter end, and so live that I may rather desire than be afraid to die ; that my last days may be my best days, and I may imitate my Redeemer in bringing my God much honour, and doing his church much service, when I am entering into my Master's joy. The evening praiseth the day ; the last scene commends the act. The rivers, the nearer they draw to the sea, the sooner they are met by the tide. Though to guide a vessel safely along in the ocean argueth much skill, and such a pilot is worthy of praise ; yet at the very entrance into the haven, then to avoid the rocks, and to cast anchor in a safe road, argueth most skill, and deserveth most praise. Musicians reserve the sweetest strain for the close of their lesson. Orators, though in every part of their speech they use great care, yet in the close of their speech they use the utmost of their rhetoric, and put forth all their art and skill to stir up all the affections of their hearers, that they may leave at last the deepest impressions upon their hearts of

¹ *Morari*, having the first syllable short, signifieth to stay, and so the meaning is, Claudius ceased to stay amongst mortal men ; but take it as it is derived of the Greek *μωρός*, *stultus*, and hath the first syllable long, in which sense Nero spake it, it importeth, Claudius hath now made an end of playing the fool amongst men.

those things which they would persuade to. My whole life ought to be nothing else but a pleading with my God for mercy, and a walking according to his word; but when I come to the period of my days, how powerful should my prayers, how pious my practices be! how lively my graces! how holy my whole conversation! that my God may say of me, as once of Thyatira, 'I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.' Though violent motions are slowest at last, as being farthest from that strength which forced them contrary to their own inclinations; yet natural motions, proceeding from an inward principle, the nearer the centre, the swifter the motion. Though hypocrites, and such as have only a form of godliness, grow worse and worse, and fill up the measure of their lusts with the measure of their lives, yet gracious persons, and such as have the power of godliness, grow better and better, and complete their task with their time. Oh that the longings, the desires, the faith, the hope, the delight of my soul, like the approaches of a needle, may be so much the more quick, by how much they draw nearer to their loadstone, Jesus Christ. Lord, thou hast an absolute dominion over me, both living and dying. It is thy word, 'None of thine liveth to himself, or dieth to himself; but whether they live, they live unto the Lord, and whether they die, they die unto the Lord; and whether they live or die, they are the Lord's.' Oh help me to glorify thee, both by my life and by my death! Let thy Spirit be strong within me, when my flesh is weak. When the keepers of the house shall tremble, shew thyself the keeper and strength of my heart. When the grinders shall cease, because they are few or weak, give me to feed on the manna of thy promises, and that bread which came down from heaven. When the daughters of music shall be brought low, let me hear by faith the song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by the celestial choir. When they that look out at the window are darkened, let the eyes of my soul be opened, to behold, with thy dying martyr Stephen, Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. Let my hope and desire look out at the windows, and say, 'Why is his chariot (sent to fetch me to himself) so long of coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' 'Make haste, my beloved, be thou like the hart and roe upon the mountains of spices. Whether I perish in the field with Abel, or in the prison with the Baptist, or in my bed with Jacob, grant me thy gracious comforting presence, and then, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear none ill. Oh do thou undertake my conduct in my passage over the rough waters of this

Jordan, into Canaan, and then there will be no danger of drowning ! Assist me so to live by faith, that I may die in the faith ; and when my friends take my earthly body to their disposal, oh do thou receive my heaven-born soul into the arms of thine infinite mercy, for thou hast redeemed it, Lord God of truth.

I wish that I may frequently ponder what a serious, solemn thing it is to die. However light, or vain, or jesting my life hath been, my death will be in earnest. I cannot dally or trifle with it ; it will not dally or trifle with me. It can be done but once, and upon it my everlasting making or marring depends. It is so certain, that all must, willing or unwilling, ready or unready, undergo it. Neither the policy of Ahithophel, nor the strength of Samson, nor the wisdom of Solomon, nor the beauty of Absalom, nor the piety of Abraham, nor the wealth of the rich glutton, can prevail to avoid it. No time, no place, no company, no houses, no lands, no relations, no youth, no strength, no power, no preferments, can privilege me against the arrest of death. God hath decreed it, sin hath deserved it, and I must expect it. It is so searching that it will discover all the children of men, both to themselves and angels. Though ships are usually distinguished by their flags, yet that is no sure sign ; for mariners, when in sight and fear of their enemies, will ordinarily hang out the colours of other nations, and say they belong to them ; but when they come to their haven to unload their vessels, it appears to what country they belong. Though men are usually distinguished by their outward behaviours, yet many for their own ends put on Christ's livery, who are of Satan's family ; but when they come to be searched and unladen at the end of their lives, it will be known to whom they belong. When I come to die, then the great controversy between Christ and Satan concerning my soul will be determined, whose it shall be for ever. O my soul, that thou couldst but conceive what it will be to be sent by death into an unchangeable estate, either of bliss or misery ! If thou diest in thy sins, thou art killed with death. Shouldst thou now live without conscience, thou wilt die without comfort, and remain comfortless for ever. Ponder a little with thyself the fearful death of a sinner, that thou mayest fly his wicked acts, as thou wouldst his woeful end. In the midst of his jollity and mirth, when he is in an eager pursuit of carnal pleasures, and posting in the way of worldly delights, and running to all excess of riot, he is on a sudden, by death's harbinger, sickness, commanded to stand, and proceed no further. This cuts him to the very heart. His former prosperity, like oil, hath suppled his body, and makes him more

sensible of his present pain. And his immoderate love to those fleshly delights doth abundantly greaten his grief, and increase his loss. Now the man is thrown, whether he will or no, upon his sick-bed, that must be his death-bed. In this his extremity, his companions, and friends, and wife, and children, and honour, and places, and preferments, and silver, and gold, and houses, and lands, and costly attire, and dainty fare, are all dry things, and unsavoury to him; no creature can afford him the least comfort. If he look into his chamber, his wife is weeping and wringing her hands, his children are sighing, his friends are lamenting and wailing, but all this doth increase, not mitigate, his vexation and misery. If he looks into his conscience, he finds that taking courage, and telling him to his face, that though formerly he would not suffer it to speak, yet now it must tell him the truth, that death, and hell, and wrath, are the wages of his ungodly works. It will bring to his mind the time he hath misspent, the talents that he hath misimproved, the day of grace that he hath despised, the great salvation that he hath neglected; his secret, and private, and public sins, the sins of his childhood, of his youth, of his riper age, those sins which he had forgotten, and thought should never have been remembered, are all set in order before his eyes. His heart, which was before harder than the nether millstone, is now pierced, though not with an evangelical contrition, yet with legal terrors and torments. His sickness will allow no rest to his body, and his sins will afford no ease to his soul. In the evening he crieth, Would God it were morning; in the morning, Would God it were evening, because of the anguish of his spirit. His bones are filled with a painful disease, and his body with unquietness. The arrows of the Almighty are within him, the poison thereof drinks up his spirit; and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against him. His review of his past actions, his remembering of his slighting Christ for a brutish pleasure, or a little fading treasure, or a base lust, and provoking God, and continuance in sin, against mercies, judgments, warnings, the light of conscience, the motions of the Spirit, are as so many envenomed arrows sticking in his side, and piercing him through with many sorrows; but the thoughts of his necessity of dying, and his forethoughts of the consequence of death, how hell rides upon its back, and eternal torments attend it; how he must fry in unquenchable flames, and take up his everlasting lodging amongst roaring lions, frightful dragons, and the hellish crew, sink him quite down. To add some more gall and wormwood to his cup of bitterness, the devil now steps in, and sheweth him

his sins in their black hue, in their bloody colour and countenance, to make him hopeless and desperate. The poor creature, in this miserable plight and plunge, knoweth not what to do, whither to go for relief. Die he would not, but must; live he would, but cannot. Now he wisheth that he had prayed and served God, and minded his soul and salvation more, and gratified his flesh, and embraced the pleasures and honours of the world less. Now he desireth that he might live a little longer, and thinks, Oh how would I redeem time, and follow after holiness, and walk with God, what would I not do and suffer to lay up some comfort, some cordial against such an hour! But whilst he is thus in the midst of his vain wishes, death tells him, by the violence of his distemper, that the time of his departure is at hand. His eyes now begin to sink, his speech to falter, his breath to shorten, and his heart to fail him, and a cold sweat to seize on his whole body. He strives and struggleth with all his might to continue here, but death, like a cruel sergeant, drags him to the bar of God, whence he is immediately, with frowns and fury, dismissed, and hauled to the dreadful and eternal dungeon of hell. Oh the howlings, the screeching, the groans, the grief, which possesseth this poor soul, when he is attacked by devils, those merciless officers, and carried by them to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever! The spirit being now gone, the body remains a cold lump of clay, forsaken of its dearest friends, loathsome to its nearest relations, fit for no company but the worm-eaten congregation, amongst which it must abide till the last day, when it shall be joined to the soul, and partake with it in unconceivable and endless torments.

Ah, who can read such a soul's estate with dry eyes; or think of such a condition without sorrow! O my soul, what are thy thoughts of such a death? Wouldst thou, for the most prosperous worldling's life, die such a death? Doth not thine heart ache whilst thou art musing on it? If thou wouldst not meet with the end of such men, avoid their ways. Lord, I confess myself a great sinner, and thou mightst justly leave me to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and to go in the paths of the destroyer, that my feet should tend to death, and my steps take hold of hell; yet, for thy Son's sake, teach me thy way, and lead me in thy righteousness, that my soul may never be gathered with sinners, nor my life with bloody men, that I may die the death of the righteous, and my latter end may be like his.

I wish that I may look upon a dying bed as a fit pulpit in which I may preach my Maker's and Redeemer's praise. The speeches of

dying persons are often highly prized, as savouring of most sincerity, and least suspected of selfish ends. They who scorned my counsel, and rejected my advice, in my health and strength, as fearing it proceeded rather from interest than simplicity of heart, will, if they have the least grain of charity, believe me in earnest, and my words to be the language of my soul, when I am dying, and entering into my eternal estate. The worst of men have some reverence and respect for dying Christians. What thrusting and crowding, even to the prejudice of their bodies, hath there often been to hear the speeches and last words of dying men. The vilest malefactor, who is cut off by the sword of justice, is permitted with patience to speak, and attended to with diligence at the gallows. If enemies have some respect for dying felons, and will hearken to them with meekness, what hopes may a dying saint have of advantaging the souls of his friends ! Oh that I might greedily embrace such an opportunity of advantaging the interest and honour of my God, the service and good of my neighbours, and by my pious language and gracious carriage at my latter end, make others in love with holiness, holy men, and the Holy One of Israel ! Sinners catch hold of every season to propagate their ungodly seed, and commend Satan's rotten wares to the men of the world ; why should not saints be as vigilant, as diligent, for their God and Saviour ? Lord, I know not in what manner, by what distemper, it will please thee to call me to thyself. I beg, if it may seem good in thy sight, that nothing may befall me on my dying bed, which may render me incapable of commending thee, and thy ways and worship, to others. My cheerfulness in bearing thy will, and activeness to extol thy work and reward, may through thy blessing persuade Satan's drudges to forsake his slavery, and admit themselves thy servants. Oh that I might allure others to prepare for such a day, by lifting up my head with joy, when that day of redemption draweth nigh ! The apprentice makes merry when his time is expired, and he enjoyeth his freedom. The bride hath a feast and music when her marriage-day is come. This life is my time of service, death sets me at liberty. In this world I am contracted to my dearest Saviour ; my solemn marriage is in the other world, into which I pass through death. Why should I fear that messenger which brings such good news, and be troubled at that friend who will do me so great a courtesy ? Oh enable me to live every day according to thy gospel, that keeping my conscience clean, and my evidences clear, I may, in the day of my death, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Give me to savour the sweetness of thy love, the pleasantness of thy

paths, to feel the powerful influences of thy Spirit, the virtue and efficacy of thy word ; so to relish communion with thyself and thy dear Son all the days of my life, that when I am going out of the world and coming to thee, O Father, I may from my own experience quicken and encourage others to forsake earthly vanities, before earthly vanities forsake them, and to take thee for their chiefest good, and choicest happiness, who will never leave them nor forsake them.

I wish that the nearer I draw to my reward, the more zealous and industrious I may be about my work ; and that when my body droopeth and faileth most, my soul may be most vigorous and active in the exercise of grace. I am infinitely indebted to the blessed God, for his unspeakable grace to my precious soul ; my engagements to the dearest Redeemer, for loving me and washing me in his own blood, are far beyond my apprehension. This is the last opportunity that I shall ever enjoy to testify my thankfulness, and to do my God, my Saviour, my soul, any service ; oh how diligent should I be to promote their interest, and improve this season ! Nature, in its last conflict with a disease, puts forth itself to the utmost. It draweth in those spirits, which before were scattered in the outward parts, to guard and arm the heart ; it rallieth all those forces which are left, if possible, to win the day. Oh why should not grace, in its last encounter, muster up all its strength, and put forth itself to the utmost ! Lust is strong to the last. When nature is weak and spent, and the sinner disabled from his unclean or intemperate acts, even then he can hug them in his heart, and roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and commit them over and over again in his thoughts, and fancy, and affections. The dying thief on the cross, when his hands and feet were nailed, and by force kept in order, could yet find his tongue at liberty, before his death, to rail at and revile the Lord of life. Ah, is it not a thousand pities that grace should be outvied by lust, and that those that are paid with such lamentable wages as everlasting burnings, should die serving their cruel master, and enter into hell, belching out their blasphemies, and spitting their poison in the face of Heaven ! and that the children of God should do their Father so little service, when they are going to their blissful mansions, and can do him no more ! Love to myself, as well as to my God, may quicken me to labour with all my might, when I draw near my last hour. As I fall now, I lie for ever. My eternal estate dependeth more upon my death than my life. It is possible, though rare, that a profane life may be cor-

rected by a penitent death ; but a wicked death can never be amended. He that shoots off a piece, if he be not steady just at its going off, loseth his charge, and misseth his mark. He that dieth ill, dieth ever ; he is killed with death. He that goeth awry, when he goeth out of the world, shall never come back to recall or amend his steps. If I am a conqueror now, I am a conqueror for ever ; if I am foiled now, I am foiled for ever. Cowards will fight desperately when they are in extremity, and must either kill or be killed. The historian saith of Cn. Piso, a confederate of Cataline's, that though he had a heart like a hare, yet he could fight like a lion when he apprehended a necessity of fighting for his life. Oh that my pains, my diligence, may be answerable to my peril and my danger. Lord, when that day and hour draweth near, that I must go hence and be no more seen, do thou draw near in boundless mercy to my poor soul. When I must enter into the chambers of death, and make my bed in the grave, save me from the paws of Satan, and the power of hell, that the bottomless pit may not shut her mouth upon me ; and give me to triumph in that hour of tribulation, as knowing that neither tribulation, nor persecution, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, can separate me from thy love, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

I wish that, when I am going to the place of silence, I may speak the excellencies of my God, and make his praise glorious. It is the unhappiness of worldlings and wicked men that they cannot, when they die, commend the principles whence they have acted, nor the vain pleasures which they have minded and pursued. How many of them, whose lives have been nothing but a bundle of falsehood and lies, when God hath called them to leave the world, have spoken the truth, and told their friends and relations that sin is an evil and bitter thing, that carnal pleasures are gilded poisons, that the greatest and choicest of worldly comforts, though they may have honey in their mouths, have a sting in their tails ; and what a vain, empty nothing the whole creation is ! How often have they complained how the world hath deceived them, the flesh deluded them, and the devil beguiled and destroyed them ! It is my privilege, as well as my duty, to extol my Master whom I have served, to commend the sweetness of his ways, the pleasantness of his worship, the reasonableness of his precepts, the richness of his promises, and the vastness of that portion which he hath laid up for his children when they come to age. I have sometimes tasted his work and ways to be sweeter than the honey and the honey-

comb. I have viewed by faith his reward to be vastly glorious, and beyond all apprehensions excellent. Oh, why should I not dissuade others from their eager pursuit of foolish, fading shadows, and persuade and encourage them to earnest endeavours after real substance and durable riches! The sinner, who hath wallowed all his lifetime in the mire of filth and wickedness, will, when he comes to die, and begins to return to his wits, from his own experience of the emptiness and unprofitableness of his ungodly courses, and from the convictions of his natural conscience, acknowledge a sober, sanctified conversation to be safest, and the ways of God to be most gainful; and upon these accounts, advise his friends and relations to forsake and abandon the lusts of the world and flesh, and to follow after holiness, as they would be happy eternally. And have not I much more cause to shew my abhorrency of sin, and love to my Saviour and his image, when I am entering into my Father's house? The sinner hath only found at last a fleshly life to be vain and fruitless, and is like to pay dear for his learning; but I have known the paths of piety to be paths of pleasantness, and rejoiced more in them than in all riches. The sinner hath only the dim light of nature to shew him the loathsomeness of vice, and the loveliness of grace; but I have the Holy Spirit of my God to enlighten my mind in the knowledge of both. The sinner hath only a carnal love to his neighbours and kindred; he knoweth not what it is to love them in Christ, and for Christ. I have some knowledge of the love and law of Christ, of the worth of their souls, of the price paid for them by the Lord Jesus, and their unchangeable conditions in the other world. Oh that my language to them might be somewhat answerable to the love of Christ to me! Lord, it is unrighteousness to die in debt to man, and not to endeavour to make them satisfaction according to my power. I am sure to die in thy debt; for I am less than the least of all thy mercies, and unable to requite thee for the smallest of thy favours. It is my comfort that all the recompense thou expectest is a thankful acknowledgment and hearty acceptance of thy grace and goodwill. Oh what injustice and ingratitude were I guilty of, should I deny thee so small a request! Be pleased to help thy servant in his last hours, both to accept unfeignedly of thy grace for his own good, and to acknowledge thy goodwill, and bounty, and faithfulness, to thy glory, for the good of others.

I wish that my last breath may be drawn heavenward; I mean, that I may enter praying into the house of blessing and praise. I am no Christian, if I do not give myself to prayer whilst I live. It

is one choice piece of my spiritual armour, whereby I have often assaulted and conquered my soul-enemies. It is the ambassador which I have many a time sent to the heavenly court, that always received a favourable audience, and obtained his errand. It is the vessel which hath brought me food from far, and ever returned richly laden, if it were not my own fault. It is the element in which I live; the aliment by which I subsist; the pulse, the breath of my soul, without which it must needs die. On my death-bed I have as much need of its succour as at any season. My adversaries will then employ their greatest power and policy to rout and ruin me; I am but weak flesh and blood, altogether unable to combat with principalities and powers; and how can I expect supplies from the Lord of hosts, unless I send this messenger to entreat it? My wants and weaknesses at such a time will be more than ordinary. Faith must then be acted, in spite of all the frights and fears which a malicious devil, and an unbelieving heart, from the number and nature of my sins, the strictness of the law, and the justice of God, may put me to. Repentance must then be exercised, and my sins lie nearer my heart than my sharpest diseases. In patience I must possess my soul, under all the pains and pressures which the wise God shall lay upon me. I must then cheerfully submit to the divine pleasure, and by my willingness to leave all the world to go to Christ, shew that I hate father, mother, wife, child, house, lands, life, and all for Christ. Those graces, and many other, must be put forth at such a time, none of which I can do by my own power, and therefore have abundant cause to fetch help from heaven by prayer. Besides, the distempers of my body will discompose my soul, and unfit it in a great measure for all holy service. Again, my benefactors, my near friends and relations, the poor afflicted church of God, do all call aloud to me to pray for them, as the last kindness I shall ever do for them. I profess I love them, how can I manifest it better than by commending them to God in prayer? Should I leave them thousands of silver and gold, if I were able, it would not all amount to the price of one fervent prayer. My riches might wrong them through the deceitfulness of their hearts, and cause them to be contented short of heaven; but my prayers cannot prejudice them, but may much further their eternal welfares. Men whose natures are crabbed and cruel, have granted the requests of their dying children, when they have been contrary to their own humours; how much more will God, the Father of mercies, whose nature is love, whose bowels are infinite, satisfy the desire of his dying children, when they fall in with his own design and desire?

If Joab had hopes to speed in his supplication for Absalom, because he knew the king's heart was more for it than his own, may not I be confident to speed, when I beg that he would pay my debts in spirituals with interest to those who have bestowed carnals on me for his sake; when I ask that my children and relations may love, and fear, and worship his Majesty, and be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and when I entreat that he would accomplish all the great and good things which he hath promised to his church, the purchase of his Christ, knowing that his heart is infinitely more for these things than mine can be! Lord, when I die, I shall no more put up prayers for myself or other particular persons. My natural obligations to my kindred and relations, my civil engagements to my friends and benefactors, besides my spiritual bonds to them and thy whole Israel, may well provoke me to be fervent and instant with thy Majesty at such an hour on their behalf. My Redeemer, before his death, wrought hard at this duty: he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. Ah, how should I pray for myself and others, when I am taking my leave of prayer! Oh let thy Spirit of supplication be so poured down on me, that I may pour out my spirit in supplication unto thee for my own and other souls, through thy Son, with the greatest success.

I wish that the night of my death may shine gloriously with the sparkling stars of divine and heavenly graces. In particular, I desire that when the time of my combat with my last enemy, and my last combat with any enemy, shall come, I may above all take the shield of faith, whereby I shall be sheltered against the sting of death, and quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. The wise mariner, perceiving a storm approaching, makes haste to fasten his vessel with anchors, that it may be steady, and not altogether at the mercy of the winds. I must expect the greatest tempest when I am entering into my eternal haven; then all the powers of darkness will conjure up their strongest winds, if possible to shipwreck the vessel of my soul. Ah, how much doth it concern me to put forth this grace, the anchor of my soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, and thereby to fasten on the rock of ages! If I fail in this, I fall, I miscarry for ever. God is a severe judge to condemn all guilty malefactors. Without his Son, I am clothed with guilt, and so under his boundless wrath. When Adam had disrobed himself of original righteousness by disobeying the law, he fled from God, and dreaded the summons of offended justice. There is no appearing in the Father's

sight with acceptance, but in the garments of his Son. None can have boldness to enter into the holy of holies, but by the blood of Jesus. It is faith only that interesteth in this blood. I know that through the Red Sea of this blood I may pass safely, though enemies pursue me hard, into the land of promise. Lord, I confess, through an evil heart of unbelief, I have many a time departed away from the living God; yet, Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief. O Lord of life, be not far from me, when devils and death are near me; help me, with thy servant Stephen, to see heaven open, by faith, and the Son of man at thy right hand. Enable me to disclaim whatsoever duties I have performed, or graces I have exercised, and to rely alone on a crucified Christ for pardon and life. Though thou killest me, let me die trusting and clinging on, and cleaving to, Jesus Christ. Let this pilgrim's staff of faith be never out of my hand, till I come to my journey's end. Thou art the Lord of hosts, and the captain of my salvation. Oh help me to put on the whole armour of God; grant me such skill to use it, that I may be able to stand in the evil day. Teach thou my hands to war, and my fingers to fight, that through thee I may do valiantly, and through thee may tread down mine enemies. Grant me so to finish my course, to fight the good fight of faith, that at death I may receive the crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give to all that love his appearing.

I wish that my faith may ripen into full assurance, that thereby I may depart with joy, and an abundant entrance may be ministered unto me, into the kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moses and Simeon could sing at their own funerals. The great apostle could call to be put to bed, expecting thereby his sweetest eternal rest. How many martyrs have gone more joyfully to die than ever epicure did to dine, and leaped when they drew near the stake, believing that they drew near their home, their happiness, their heaven! What is it, O my soul, that makes thee start and flinch back at the sight of this bugbear? What is there in death that is so dreadful to thee? Is it the sweetness of life, or the pain of death, or thy future estate after death? Consider them all seriously, and then judge rationally whether any of these should make thee sigh, so loath to depart.

First, The love of life need not make thee so backward to obey the call of death. If all thy time were made up of holidays, death would bring thee greater advantage. The garlic and onions of Egypt are nothing comparable to the clusters of Canaan. But, alas! it is far otherwise; thy whole life is a civil death. Thou art

born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward. Thy days are few, but full of trouble. The earth to thee is a valley of tears; the cross is thy daily companion, which accompanieth thee wherever thou goest. The sufferings of the flesh are neither few nor small. How many diseases in thy body, losses in thy estate! how much disgrace, ignominy, slander, oppression, art thou liable to! The sufferings of thy spirit are more and greater. Thine own sins, the provocations of others, the dishonour of thy God, the wants, and weaknesses, and oppression, and persecution of the church of Christ, do all give thee daily occasion to mingle thy bread with ashes, and thy drink with weeping. What is this world, that thou art so fond of it? Thy God calls it a sea of glass, mingled with fire, Rev. xv. 2. A sea for its turbulency; it is never at rest, but ebbs and flows continually, though sometimes more, sometimes less. Its work is to bubble up mire and dirt, especially on them who are chosen out of the world. A sea of glass for its fragility; all its pomp and pride on a sudden vanisheth. Glass is both easily and irrecoverably broken in pieces. A sea of glass, mingled with fire, for the fiery and dreadful miseries that befall men in it. All its apparent comforts are mingled with real crosses. In heaven there is solace, without the least grain of sorrow; in hell there is mourning, without the smallest drachm of mirth; but on earth there is no estate without mixture. The saints have joy in God, but if need be they are in heaviness through manifold tribulations, 1 Pet. i. 6. The merry sinners, in the midst of their pleasures, have their hearts heavy. Some of the wiser heathen were so sensible of human miseries, that one of them, when ancient, told his scholar, that if it were offered him to be young again, he would not accept it. Saints, of all men, must expect a large draught of sufferings; the world is their enemy, and raiseth all its forces against them. If I be a disciple, I must look to follow my Master in bearing his cross. O my soul, why shouldst thou hug that which hates thee, and doat on this world, which is neither a fit match for thee, as being unsuitable to thy nature, nor, if she were, can be faithful to thee, being made up of wavering and inconstancy. Or, secondly, Is it the pain of death that thou art so frightened at? Surely the fear of it is the greatest torment. How many have felt greater pain in divers diseases, as in the stone, or strangury, or colic, than in a dying hour! Some of God's children have felt very little pain, in the judgment of those that have seen them dying. The waters of Jordan, though rough to others, have stood still when the ark was to pass over. But though I were sure my pain should be sharp,

yet I am sure it shall be short. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, I shall be transported over the gulf of misery into endless glory. My pangs will be almost as soon gone as come; sorrow will endure but for a short night, joy will come in the morning. If I were assured of a great purchase made for me in Spain or Turkey, which upon my first coming over I should enjoy, would I not adventure a passage through the boisterous ocean to take possession? My Saviour hath made a larger, a better purchase for me in heaven. He is gone before to prepare a place for me. My passage thither, though it may be more painful, is less perilous. It is impossible for me to miscarry in it. Oh, why am I so slothful to go in and possess the good land! Surely the pleasures of the end may well sweeten the ways to it, were they never so bitter. With what cheerfulness do some women undergo their sharp throes and hard labours, supported with this cordial, that a child shall thereby be born to them! Oh, how infinitely inferior is the joy of a man-child brought forth into this world, to the joy of a sanctified soul, brought out of this world into heaven!

Again, I have a tender Father, who knoweth my frame, and will lay no more upon me, living or dying, than he will enable me to bear. He hath said it, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' O my soul, thou hast little reason to dread a contest with this enemy for this cause! Thou mayest contentedly undergo a little pain to go to thy dearest Lord, when many a sinner hath suffered greater to satisfy his hellish lust.

Thirdly, Is it thy future condition that makes thee unwilling to die? Dost thou not know that death is thy portal, through which thou shalt pass into the true paradise? It is the strait gate through which thou shalt enter into life. Though it is the wicked man's shipwreck, which swalloweth him up in an ocean of wrath and torment, yet it is the saint's putting into harbour, where he is received with the greatest acclamation and richest welcome imaginable.

Travellers who have met with many dangers and troubles in their journeys, rejoice when they come near their own country. I am a pilgrim here, and used, or rather abused, as a stranger; shall I not be glad when I come near my blessed home, my eternal, happy habitation? Children in some parts, when they first behold the stork, the messenger of the spring, testify their joy with pleasant and loud shoutings. Oh, why shouldst not thou lift up thy head with joy, when sickness, the forerunner of death, is come to bring thee tidings that the winter of thy misery, and cold, and hardships, is

past, and the summer of thine eternal light, and joy, and pleasure is at hand? Thy death may well be a free-will offering, considering that though the ashes of the sacrifice (thy body) fall to the earth, yet that divine flame (thy immortal spirit) shall ascend to heaven. In death nothing dieth of thee but what thou mayest well spare, thy sin and sorrows. When the house is pulled to pieces, all those ivy roots in the wall shall be destroyed. The egg-shell must be broken, that the little chick may slip out. Thy body must be dissolved, that thy soul may be delivered; yet thy body doth not die, but sleep in the bed of the grave till the morning of the resurrection. That outward apparel shall not be utterly consumed by the moth of time, but locked up safe, as in a chest, to be new trimmed, and gloriously adorned above the sun in his greatest lustre, and put on again when thou shalt awake in the morning, never, never, to put off more. Oh that I could so live, that I might not only be always ready, but also, when God calls me, desirous to die. If I borrow anything of my neighbour, I pay it back with thanks. My life is God's; he lends it me for a time. Why should I not, when he calls for it, restore it with thanks, that he hath been pleased to lend it me so long? Lord, thy children love thee dearly, and believe that when they come home to thee thou wilt entertain them kindly; yet their flesh, like Lot's wife, is still hankering after the Sodom of this world, and loath they are to leave it, though it be for their exceeding gain. Give thy servant such true faith in thy Son, that I may neither love life nor fear death immoderately; but as the heart of Jacob revived when he saw the waggons which Joseph sent to fetch him to Egypt, so my heart may leap for joy to behold the heavenly chariot which the Son of Joseph shall send to convey me to the true Goshen.

I wish that I may with patience submit on my dying bed to the divine pleasure. It hath been far from some moralists to murmur, either at the extremity of their sickness, or the necessity of dying. By impatience I do not help, but rather kill myself beforehand. It is the general lot of mankind to sicken and die. Am I angry that I am a man, that I am mortal? Because I know that I must be sick and die, I know that I must submit. The knowledge of an approaching evil is no small good, if improved. Though it cannot teach me to prevent it by all my power or providence, yet it may teach me to prepare for it, and to bear it with courage and patience. Discontent and quarrelling are great arguments of guilt and a defiled conscience. The harmless sheep, conscious of their innocency, do quietly receive the knife, either on the altar or

in the shambles, and give death entrance with small reluctance, when the filthy, loathsome swine roar horribly at their first handling, and with hideous cries are haled and held to the fatal block. The children of God and members of Christ, who are perfect through their head, do often give up the ghost, and desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; when the souls of wicked men are required of them, they are strangely passionate at the approach of death, and with dreadful screeches salute its harbinger, sickness. Oh that patience might have its perfect work in me, when I am taking my leave of it, and its work is near an end! Lord, my heart is too prone to be impatient under thy hand, though thou art infinitely wise as well as gracious, and knowest what is best for me. In my sickness turn mine eyes upon my sins, that my discontent may be at myself, for that which is the original of all my sorrows; and then I shall never repine or murmur against thee.

I wish that I may daily think of death, and wait, believing and repenting, and working out my salvation, till my change shall come. My whole time is given me, that therein I might prepare and dress my soul for my blessed eternal estate. Why should it not be employed for that end? The child who hath all day been diligent about his duty, may expect his father's good word at night. But what master will give a reward to him in the evening, who hath all the day long served his enemy? My life is the seed which will yield a crop of horror, or comfort, in an hour of death. If that be good, my harvest will be glorious and joyful; if that be sinful, my harvest will be bitter and sorrowful. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' The grapes of comfort are not to be expected from the thistles of corruption; nor the figs of peace, from the thorns of impiety. I should blush to commit to the keeping of a cleanly and considerable person, a foul and filthy vessel. With what face can I commend to the holy and glorious God an impure and polluted soul? Oh how dreadful will it be to meet with my dying bed, before I have met with the Lord of life; and to be going out of the world, before I have seriously considered why I came into it! My great work in this world is to get my depraved nature healed by the blood and Spirit of Christ; if I forget my business when I have time to do it, and trifle away my days in doing evil, or doing nothing, I lose my soul, am unfaithful to my Master, and deepen my judgment by the number of my days. That traveller may well be aghast and perplexed, who hath a long journey to go upon pain of death in one day, for which the whole day is little enough, and seeth the sun near setting before he hath begun his

journey. How ill doth the evening of my time, and the morning of my task, accord together! How justly may God reserve the dregs of his wrath for me, if I reserve the dregs of my days for him! What folly am I guilty, of, in deferring my preparation for death! If he be a ridiculous person, that having choice of lusty horses, should let them all go empty, and lay an extraordinary heavy load upon a poor tired jade, that is hardly able to go, much more foolish is he that prodigally wasteth his youth, and health, and strength, in the service of the flesh and the world, and leaves the great and weighty affairs of his soul and eternity to be transacted on a sick or dying bed. O my soul, what little cause hast thou to future or delay thy solemn provision for the other world! First, thy life is uncertain; thou hast not another day at thy disposal. There are some creatures, they say, in Pontus,¹ whose life lasteth but one day: they are born in the morning, come to their full growth at noon, grow old in the evening, and die at night. What is thy life but a vapour, that soon passeth away? The first minute thou didst begin to live, thou didst begin to die. Death was born when thou wast born; the last act of life is but the completing of death. As on thy birthday thou didst begin to die, so on the day of thy death thou dost cease to live. How many outward accidents, and inward diseases, art thou every moment liable to! May I not say to thee, as Michal to David, 'Save thyself to-night, for to-morrow thou shalt be slain'? Others have died suddenly, by imposthumes, or the falling-sickness, or violent means; and if thou promisest thyself a fair warning, before the fatal stroke, thou dost but cozen and cheat thyself. But, secondly, If thou wert sure to see the evening star of sickness, before the night of death overtake thee, thou art not sure thy sickness shall not be such as may not incapacitate thee for the working out thy salvation. Extremity of pain, anguish of body, lack of sleep, the violence of a fever, may indispose thee, and distract thee, that thou canst not so much as think of God. Or thy distemper may be such, that the physician may charge thee not to trouble thyself with melancholy or sad thoughts, lest thou wrongest thy body, and yet the minister commandeth thee to pull up those sluices of sorrow, if thou wouldst not lose thy soul for ever. Or cold diseases, as the lethargy or palsy, may surprise thee, and incline thee to continual slumbers, till at last thou sleepest the sleep of death. Oh how sottish art thou, and how grossly doth the destroyer of souls delude thee to defer that work of absolute necessity, of conversion to God, upon which thine endless weal or woe

¹ Plut.

dependeth, to a dying bed, when thou art not sure to die in thy bed, but mayest as well die in thy shop or fields, or in the streets; when thou art uncertain what disease, if thou shouldst meet with a dying bed, should send thee to thy eternal home; when thou art neither master of thy time nor reason, nor of thy natural abilities, much less of supernatural grace, which is indispensably requisite to this great work! Oh that, since I must die once for sin, I might die daily to sin; and as the Philistines, that they might the better deal with Samson, cut off his hair, wherein his great strength lay; so that I may the better deal with death, I may by faith and repentance, daily cut off and destroy sin, wherein the strength of death lieth! May I not say to thee, O my soul, as Joshua to Israel? 'Prepare ye victuals, for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you.' Prepare the spiritual food, the flesh of Christ, which is meat indeed, and the blood of Christ, which is drink indeed; a heart weaned from the world, longing to be with God; for within a few days thou shalt go in, to possess the land of promise. Lord, I know nothing more certain than death. Sin hath deserved it, my brittle body enforceth it; thou hast decreed it, and none can prevent it. I know nothing more uncertain than the time when, or the manner how. Thou hast many ways and means to bring me to my grave; not only ordinary distempers of my body, but thousands of casual dangers. I cannot promise myself freedom from it, in any place or condition. Death may seize me abroad, at home, in company, in solitude, at bed, at board. Why should I not always provide for that extremity, that enemy, which I cannot avoid? Why should I not ever be ready for that which may come at any time, and will come at some time or other? Surely I do not hasten my death by preparing for it, but sweeten it exceedingly. I shall not die a moment the sooner, but infinitely the better. Should death overtake me in my sins, alas! where am I? What will become of me for ever? I may well salute it, as Ahab Elijah, with, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? For it will come to me, as the prophet to that king, with doleful, dreadful tidings. It will bring me news of a dismal dungeon of darkness, to be my habitation; of lions, and scorpions, and dragons, to be my companions; of a never dying worm, an unquenchable fire, pure wrath without mixture, full torments without measure, to be my portion for ever and ever. Oh teach me so to live above this vain empty life, so to be crucified to this world, so to make my peace with thy Majesty, through the great peacemaker, and Prince of peace, my Lord Jesus, so to set

my heart and house, my spiritual and temporal concernments in order, that I may be delivered from the paw of the lion, from the teeth of this monster, from the sting of this serpent ; and though my body be destroyed, yet my soul may escape, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and mount up to thyself, to enjoy that happy life which shall know no death.

I wish that all the days of my appointed time I may exercise myself herein, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards all men. There are but two which can afford me real comfort in a dying hour, which always take the same side, and join together, God and my conscience. Human friends often stand afar off, when they should be most near, and I have most need. Some of them are loath to come to a sick man's chamber. Mournful objects must not disturb their jollity and mirth. They are sworn enemies to sorrowful occasions, and banish such foes their quarters, or themselves from such coasts. Others, if they come to visit me, love not to see my ghastly countenance, like not to hear my deep and deadly groans. But be they never so full of pity, they can only sympathise with me, they cannot relieve, refresh me. The most they can do, is to accompany me to my grave, and there they leave me. But, oh the comfort which a loving God, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and purged from dead works, will afford me in a dying hour ! The smiles of a God, and cheerings of a good conscience, will be music indeed, to welcome me to the shore, after all my tumblings and tossings in this tempestuous ocean. They will make my bed in my sickness, help me to lie easy, hearten me in my sighs and groans, be my feast at my funeral, bid me be of good cheer, for my sins are forgiven me ; tell me that my Redeemer liveth, and because he liveth, I shall live also ; lodge my body in a grave, as in a bed of spices, and convey my soul into my Saviour's bosom and embraces ; when my houses, lands, honours, friends, wife, children, leave me, they will cleave to me ; nay, when my breath, life, heart, flesh forsake me, they will not fail me ; yea, when faith, hope, patience, repentance, shall bid me farewell, weeping, as Orpah did Ruth, these, like Naomi, will stick to me, go with me, and seek rest for me. Oh that my heart may be so upright in the service of my God, that when I shall receive the sentence of death, I may be able to say, with good Hezekiah, ' Remember now, I beseech thee, O Lord, how I have walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' O my soul, what a friend shouldst thou be to thy God, thy conscience, how faithful to their warnings,

now in life, if thou wouldst have them thy friends at death ! Hereby thou mayest be able to triumph in that hour of temptation, to defy death itself, and bid it do its worst. Though it be the common gate through which the sinner goeth into prison, where he meets with chains and fetters, and cold, and all sorts of miseries, yet thou shalt go through it, into the king's palace, where thou shalt have rivers of pleasures, and choice entertainment. If Jacob went down so joyfully into Egypt, when God had said to him, ' Fear not to go down, for I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again ; ' what needst thou fear to go down into the grave, when thy God hath undertaken to go down with thee thither, and to bring thee up again ? Thy body may be turned into dust, but thy God is in covenant with thy dust ; and thy head, the blessed Redeemer, will not suffer one muscle, or nerve, or artery, or vein of any of his members to be lost. With what cheerfulness mayest thou take thy leave of thy body. Farewell, sweet body, thou hast been in some measure faithful to thy soul, in the service of thy Lord. Farewell, I must bid thee good-night, till the morning of the resurrection. Be thou content to go to bed and sleep in the dust, and rest in hope ; ' For though after the skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.' Though thou art sown in dishonour, thou shalt be raised in glory ; though thou art sown in weakness, thou shalt be raised in power ; though thou art sown a natural body, thou shalt be raised a spiritual body, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ himself. Thy dust shall live, and thou shalt arise and be joined to this soul, and both join with the great assembly of the first-born, in singing the praises of thy Master and husband. The soldier is glad when he is called to receive his pay, though the ways be deep and dirty through which he travellet to the place of muster. The husbandman rejoiceth when his fields are white to the harvest, and with piping and shouting accompanieth his last load into the barn. Oh that my life might be so sanctified and devoted to my God, that at my death he may be my solace ! Ah, Lord, it matters not who be failing to visit me on my sick-bed, so thou be present with me. Nay, though mine enemies come and say, When shall he die, and his name perish ? An evil disease cleaveth to him ; now that he lieth down, he shall rise up no more. If thou pleasest to visit me with thy saving health, I shall not be afraid when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death. Oh, when the sun of my life shall be setting, let the Sun of righteousness so arise

upon me, that I may be delivered from the power, curse, and sting of death, and may find it, through his merits, to be my haven of rest, after all my foul weather ; a bed of ease, after my sore labour ; a release out of prison, and my jubilee to give me possession of an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible, that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for me. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

*Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness.
A good foundation. Living by faith. Setting God always
before our eyes.*

I come now to the second thing promised—namely, to lay down the means whereby Christians may come to make religion their business.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, be sure that thou layest a good foundation in a renewed heart and nature. I begin with this, because it is the chiefest requisite, and the basis of all. Godliness must first spring up in the heart, before it can overflow in the life. Other means are like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by others ; but this is like the heart, which if wanting, nothing can make up its want. A dead man will as soon arise and walk, as an unsanctified person make religion his business. Everything will act according to that principle which is predominant in it ; though for a time it may, by violence, work contrary to its natural inclination, yet it will endeavour the removal of that force, and return to its old course. Fire moveth upwards, and earth downwards, both striving to overturn what standeth in their way—because the place of fire is above, of earth, beneath. A river may be stopped and hindered in its current ; but it will never cease till it hath overborne the dam, and attained its former passage. Water that is naturally sweet, may be made brackish by the overflowing of salt water ; but it will not leave till it hath worked out that saltness, and returneth to his natural sweetness. So every man, whether good or bad, will act according to his nature, whether gracious or vicious. A good man may be hindered in his holy course by temptations, and the violence of the flesh ; but, because his nature is gracious, he will never be at rest till he hath forcibly broke through those impediments, and got into his former way of godliness. An evil man may step

into the path of piety through the example of others, or good education, or some slender convictions of a natural conscience ; but he will quickly be weary ; he will not hold out in it ; he will break through those obstacles, because his nature—the stream of his heart—runs another way.

The heart of man is like the spring of the clock, which causeth the wheels to move, right or wrong, well or ill. Hence it is that God's precept is to this, ' Make you a new heart, and a new spirit ;' and his promise of this, ' I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart away from me.' The fear of God in the heart will bind thee fast to God in thy life. If the heart be thoroughly drawn to him, the tongue and hand will not depart from him. If the heart once set forward for God, all the members will follow after : the mouth will praise, the ears will attend to him, the eye will watch him, the feet will go after him ; all the parts, like dutiful handmaids, in their places, will wait on their mistress. There was a great master among the Jews, which bid his scholars to consider and tell him, What was the best thing, or the best way, in which a man should always keep ? One said, A good companion was the best thing in the world. Another said, A good neighbour was the best thing he could wish. A third said, A wise man, or one that could foresee future things. A fourth said, A good eye, that is, a liberal disposition. At last came one Eleazer, and he said, A good heart is better than them all. True, said the master, thou hast comprehended in two words all that the rest have said ; for a good heart will make a man both contented, and a good companion, and a good neighbour, and help him to foresee things that are to come, that he may know what is on his part to be done. Indeed, without this there can be no godliness ; all professions and performances are but a show, a shadow ; and where there is this, there is all godliness in all manner of conversation. As the king of France said of Dover, that it was the key of England, and if his son, who then invaded the Britons, had not that, he had nothing ; so it may be said of the heart, it is the key of the whole man,—it opens and shuts the door to godliness and wickedness,—and if grace hath not this, it hath nothing. The philosopher, when he would persuade the king to settle his residence in the midst of his dominions, and thereby keep all his people the better in subjection, took a bull's hide ready tanned, upon which, when he stood on any side of it, still it rose up on the other ; but when he stood on the middle, he kept down all alike. The only way to subdue sin is to do it in the heart ; that commands all ;

otherwise, though one unruly passion may be kept down, another will rise up.

The heart is the great workhouse where all sin is wrought, before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where evil thoughts are coined, before they are current in our words or actions: 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,' Mat. xv. 19. That is the nest in which those hornets breed. The heart is the original of sinful words, as well as sinful thoughts: 'Out of the heart proceed false witness, blasphemies,' Mat. xv. 19. They were in the heart before ever they were in the tongue. It is said of the weasel, that it conceives at the ear, and brings forth at the mouth. Every sinner conceiveth at the heart, what he brings forth at the mouth. Such stinking breath comes from rotten inwards. The heart is the vessel of poisonous liquor, the tongue is but the tap to broach it: 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.' The heart is the forge also where all our evil works, as well as words, are hammered out: 'Out of the heart proceed murders, and thefts, and adulteries, and fornications,' Mat. xv. 19. You will say that murders and thefts are hand sins, and that adulteries and fornication belong to the eye and outward parts of the body; but, alas! the heart is the womb wherein they are conceived and bred. The outward parts are but the midwives to deliver the mother of those monsters, and to bring them into the world: 'An evil man, out of the evil treasure in his heart, bringeth forth evil things.' There is no sin but is dressed in the withdrawing-room of the heart, before it appear on the stage of the life.

Apollodorus dreamed one night that the Scythians had taken him and flayed off his skin, with an intent to boil him; and as he was lifting into the cauldron, his heart said unto him, It is I that have brought thee to all this.¹ There is a real truth in this, that the heart brings men both to all their sins, and all their sufferings. As the chaos had the seed of all creatures, and wanted nothing but the motion of the good Spirit to produce them; so the heart hath the seed of all evil, and wanteth nothing but the motion of the evil spirit, and a fit opportunity to bring it forth.

It is in vain to go about a holy life till the heart be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart, and the inward vital parts. Our earthly members can never be mortified, unless the body of sin and death be destroyed. The foul bird of sin must be killed in the nest, the heart, or it can never be thrown on the dunghill, die in the life. Therefore the

Holy Ghost calls on men to take away the cause, if they would have the effect to cease: 'O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness.' 'Cleanse your hearts ye sinners, and purify your hands ye double-minded;' first the heart cleansed, then the hands, Jer. iv. 14; James iv. 8. If the chinks of the ship are unstopped, it will be to no purpose to labour at the pump. It is not rubbing or scratching will cure the itch, but the blood, whose corruption is the cause of it, must be purified. When the water is foul at the bottom, no wonder that scum and filth appear at the top. There is no way to stop the issue of sin, but by drying up the matter that feeds it.

As Moses cast the tree into the bitter waters, and sweetened the springs; and as Elijah cast salt into the fountain, and thereby healed the waters; so the salt of grace must be cast into the spring, the fountain of the heart, or the streams of the life will never be sweet. Till trees are grafted, and their nature altered, all the fruit they bring forth is wild and harsh, and little worth; till the Christian is grafted into Christ, and a new and another nature be infused into him, all his fruit is unsavoury and unacceptable to God, vain and unprofitable to himself. Such a one is like a cypress tree, fair to look on, but barren. Like a painter, he may make a great stir about the colours and shadows of things, the form of godliness, and shew all his wit, and art, and skill in expressing the outside, but wholly neglecteth the substance, and contemneth the inward parts, the power thereof.

There be several things which may help to make the life fair in the eyes of men, but nothing will make it amiable in the eyes of God, unless the heart be changed and renewed. Indeed all the medicines which can be applied, without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, though they may cover, they can never cure, the corruption and diseases of the soul. The best man, without this, is like a serpent painted as it were without, but poisonous within; as the herb biscort, he may have smooth and plain leaves, but a crooked root; or as a pill, be gilded on the outside, when the whole mass and body of it is bitterness. It is one thing to be angry with sin upon a sudden discontent, as a man may be with his wife, whom he loves dearly, and another thing to hate sin, as that which we abhor to behold, and endeavour to destroy. A filthy heart, like a foul body, may seem for a while to be in good plight; but when the heats and colds of temptations appear, it will bewray itself. Some insects lie in a deep sleep all the winter, stir not, make no noise, that one would think them dead; but when the weather alters, and

the sun shines, they revive and shew themselves; so though lusts may seem dead in an unregenerate man, they are only laid asleep, and when opportunity is, will revive. Shame may hide sin, but it will not heal sin; corruption often lieth secret in the heart, when shame hindereth it from breaking out in scabs and blotches in the life. Some court holiness as hard in show, as Saul did Samuel, to be honoured before the people, when, like him, they hate it in their hearts.

Fear may do somewhat to curb a vitiated nature, but it cannot cure it. The bear dares hardly touch his desired honey, for fear of the stinging of the bees; the dog forbears the meat on the table, not because he doth not love it, but because he is afraid of the cudgel. Many leave some sin in their outward actions, as Jacob parted with Benjamin, for fear they should starve if they kept it, who are as fond of it as the patriarch of his child. This inward love of sin is indeed its life, and that which is most dangerous and deadly to the soul. As an imposthume is most perilous for being inward, and private rocks under water, split more vessels than those that appear above water; so sin, reigning only in the heart, is oftentimes more hurtful than when it rageth in the life. Such civil persons go to hell without much disturbance, being asleep in sin, yet not snoring to the disquieting of others; they are so far from being jogged or awaked, that they are many times praised and commended.

Example, custom, and education, may also help a man to make a fair show in the flesh, but not to walk after the Spirit. They may prune and lop sin, but never stub it up by the roots. All that these can do, is to make a man like a grave, green and flourishing on the surface and superficies, when within there is nothing but noisomeness and corruption. It hath often appeared that those means which the great moralists have used to bridle their lusts and passions, have rather, like strong scents to epileptic bodies, raised them than recovered them. Indeed, if the chief fault were not in the vital parts, then outward applications might be effectual; but when the heart, and lungs, and inwards, are all corrupted, plasters applied to the face, or hands, or thighs, or sides, will do little good. When the fault is in the foundation of a house, it cannot be mended by plastering or rough-cast. A leopard may be flayed, but he is spotted still, because the spots are not only in the skin, but in the flesh, and bones, and sinews, and most inward parts. When the disease is accidental, as to lose the sight by the small-pox, or the like, there the physic of morality may be advantageous; but where the disease is natural, as in the man that was born blind, there

physic will do no good—a miracle alone must restore such a one to sight.

Unsanctified persons at best act from themselves, and therefore for themselves. As the kite, they may spread their wings and soar aloft, as if they touched heaven, when at the highest their eyes are upon their prey upon earth. Lucullus told his guests, when he had feasted them liberally, and they had admired his bounty in their costly entertainment, Something, my friends, is for your sakes, but the greatest part is for Lucullus's own sake. An unconverted person may do something, some small matter for the sake of religion, from common gifts of illumination, &c., but the most that he doth is for his own sake, for that credit or profit which he expecteth thereby. If anything be enjoined which thwarteth his interest, he will reply with Ajax, when commanded to spare Ulysses, In other things I will obey the gods, but not in this.

Reader, make sure of this inward change; otherwise, though thy conversation may be specious, it can never be gracious, nor thy profession durable. If the house be built on loose earth, it will never stand long. When the principles are variable and uncertain, so will the practices be. If the arguments upon which thou takest upon thee the livery of Christ, and the grounds of thy engagement in his service, be not firm and constant, the love of God, and hope of eternal life, &c., such as the world and flesh cannot overtop, thou wilt throw up thy profession, and leave thy master, when thou art offered in thy blind judgment a better service, though it be but the pleasures of sin for a season, with eternal pains at the end of them, for thy soul, and Saviour, and eternal salvation. How well may he prove a bankrupt, who is worse than naught when he first sets up? I wonder not that many professors disown the Lord Jesus, when they were ignorant why they at any time owned him. He that takes up religion on trust, will lay it down when it brings him into trouble. As the celandine springeth and floweth at the coming of the summer birds, but withereth at their departure; and the corn, that promiseth a good harvest in the blade, is blasted in the ear, because its root is withered and naught; so the person that hath no sound foundation, though he seem to look high, will never hold out.

The turnsole makes a show for a time, with white velvet leaves, and yellow flowers, but fadeth away without bringing forth any fruit. Christ tells us, some which heard the word, though for a season they rejoiced in it, when tribulation came because of the word, were offended at it, because they had no root.

To prevent that sad apostasy which many are guilty of to their eternal undoing, friend, consider seriously beforehand, what it will cost thee to be a Christian indeed. A foolish builder, that undertakes to raise a structure as high as heaven, and pondereth not the charge thereof, gives over before he hath finished it, and so loseth all his expense and labour. As in marriage, one that is wise, and considereth the person, his portion, and his precepts, with the cares and burdens that are incident to that condition, for such must have trouble in the flesh, and after this, upon mature deliberation, accepteth him for a husband, will stick and cleave to him loyally and faithfully, whatever befalls him ; whereas a foolish maid, that huddlith up a match in haste, hand over head, promising herself nothing but delight and pleasure, when she comes to suffer poverty or imprisonment, or disgrace with her husband, repenteth of her bargain, and forsakes the guide of her youth. So, the Christian, that hath duly pondered the excellencies in Christ, his misery without Christ, absolute necessity of Christ ; what love, and joy, and peace, and endless bliss, God offereth with his Son ; what Christ expecteth from all that will be married to him, even the denial of themselves, the taking up of their cross, the contempt of father, mother, wife, children, estate, life, and all for him, and after he hath duly considered all this, gives himself up to Christ, will be faithful unto death, and own the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever it may cost him ; when the man that followeth Christ for the loaves, or for fashion, or on a sudden stikes a leagues with him, expecting nothing but comforts and joy in his contracts, will quickly leave him, if called to suffer with him. He that followeth Christ, he knoweth not why, will forsake him, he knoweth not how.

If thou art, reader, to begin this work of entering thyself into Christ's army, I would advise thee to bethink thyself upon what grounds thou engagest in his quarrel ; for Christians are not called to their spiritual war for love of fighting, as cocks, that fall to it upon sight of each other. Consider the enemies thou art to fight against, how potent, and crafty, and cruel they are, continually seeking thy destruction. The captain thou art to fight under, how wise he is to direct and command thee, how able to protect and defend thee, how faithful and bountiful to crown and reward thee. The excellency of the cause ; it is for thy soul, thy God, thy Saviour, thy salvation. The dangers thou must encounter, and hardships thou wilt be called to endure. The certainty of thy conquest ; how impossible it is to miscarry in so just a quarrel, under such an almighty captain, and then lift thyself to fight the good fight of

faith, and fear not but thou shalt be more than a conqueror through him that loves thee.

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, live by faith. The life of faith, it is the only life of holiness; and unbelief is the mother of all apostasy. When God would persuade Abraham to sincere and singular godliness, he doth it by offering him sure footing for his faith: 'I am God All-sufficient,' or the Almighty God; 'walk before me, and be thou perfect,' Gen. xvi. 1; knowing that, unless his faith were firm, his steps could never be even; if he had not believed God's power, he could not be evangelically perfect. And hence that father of the faithful became so eminent in obedience, from the strength of his faith. It is said of him, Isa. xli. 2, that he came to the foot of God. That child was dutiful indeed, that, when his father did but stamp with his foot, left whatever he was about, though it were never so delightful or gainful to him, and ran to his father to know and obey his commands. Thus truly did Abraham, when God called him to turn his back upon his relations, and the place of his nativity; nay, to sacrifice his Isaac, the child of the promise, as well as of his love; he did not question God's pleasure, nor quarrel with his precepts, but obeyed them presently, and all from his faith. His strong faith caused strong obedience, Heb. xi. It is observable that all the noble and heroic acts of obedience of the Lord's worthies, mentioned in that little Book of Martyrs, were performed under the conduct and command of faith.

Faith is one of the best antidotes against the poison of profaneness, and one of the greatest helps to holiness. None are more faithful to God than they who have most faith in God. They who believe, will be careful to maintain good works, Titus iii. 8. As the natural heat is the life of the body, and as that increaseth with the radical moisture, strength and health abound; so faith is the life of the soul—as that is strong or weak, his godliness is more or less. He that is highest in affiance is highest in obedience. This is the strength of the soul: according to man's strength, such is his walk, either straight or stumbling; according to a man's faith, such is his life, either even or crooked.

1. Faith destroyeth sin.

2. It enableth to live to God.

1. It killeth sin. If the pulse of a Christian's hand or life beat uneven, it is because his faith, which is his heart, doth falter. This is the shield of the soul, which secures it against all assaults and dangers. Other pieces of the Christian's armour are serviceable to

defend particular parts of the new man, as the girdle of truth, the loins; righteousness, the breast; the gospel of peace, the feet; but faith is a shield, moveable at pleasure, and surroundeth and guardeth the whole man: 'With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield,' Ps. v. 12. Faith secureth the head from evil principles. What sense denieth, and reason understandeth not, faith believeth. Aristotle, reading Moses, concerning the creation, is reported to say, *Egregie dicis, domine Moses, sed quomodo probas?* Thou speakest nobly, but how dost thou prove it? The answer to him is easy, 'By faith we believe that the worlds were made of God,' Heb. xi. 3.

Faith clears up the understanding, and scattereth the mists of error. The presence of this sun disperseth those clouds. Faith secureth the heart from evil purposes. It is the besom that sweepeth out such dust, and keeps the heart clean: 'Having their hearts purified by faith,' Acts xv. 9. Faith entertaineth the King of saints into the heart; it sets him on the throne, and these traitors fly before him. His presence makes these rebels to hide their heads. Who ever could find in his heart to hug sin, whilst he was viewing, by faith, his bleeding Saviour! Faith secureth the hand from evil practices. The martyrs chose the flames rather than the denial of their Master, and all because of their faith. Those worthies of the Lord, of whom the world was not worthy, through faith stopped the mouths of lion-like lusts, quenched the violence of hellish fires, were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, Heb. xi. 33-35. 'By faith we stand,' 2 Cor. i. 24. As a soldier, under the protection of his shield, stands his ground, and doth his duty, notwithstanding the shot that are made against him; so a Christian, under the protection of faith, keeps his place, and mindeth his work, whatsoever opposition he meets with. Faith, like Joab, stabbeth this Abner under the fifth rib; it wounds sin mortally. Hope, like Saul, hath slain its thousands, but faith, like David, its ten thousands. Whole armies of lusts have turned their backs at the sight of this warrior. By faith the walls of Jericho fall down. Whilst unbelief liveth, no sin will die. All iniquity sheltereth itself under the banner of infidelity. If once the banks of faith be broken down, a flood of wickedness will rush and flow in. What made Abraham deny his wife, and expose her to such temptations and wickedness, but unbelief? What made Isaac tread in his father's steps, and leave Rebekah to the heathen's lust, but unbelief? What made David dishonour his God, by his uncomely carriage before Achish, and injure his soul by

his unholy language, that he should one day perish by the hand of Saul, but unbelief? What made Peter deny and forswear his Master, but unbelief? These tares were sown by the enemy, when the husbandman, faith, was asleep: had they believed the power and faithfulness of God to defend them in their dangers and distresses, without their lies, and his grace and bounty to reward them largely, for all their sufferings for his sake; had they believed that God, when he called them to straits, would, without any sinful means, have brought them off safe on earth, or safe to heaven, they would never have used such sinful shifts for their own safety. Faith would secure the soul against all those temptations, and prevent such sinister and sinful doings. He that believeth, maketh not haste. He will patiently wait God's leisure, and submit to his pleasure, and not venture upon forbidden courses, and unlawful ways, to deliver himself out of distress.

Unbelief is the dung which makes the soil of corrupt nature so fruitful in the unfruitful works of darkness. Whence cometh such immoderate love of a perishing world, but from want of faith and belief of that transcendent glory that is to be revealed? Whence cometh such dulness and deadness in holy duties, but from unbelief, either of the holiness and jealousy of that God with whom we have to do, or of his goodness and mercy, that his reward will pay the charge of diligence in his work? Whence comes such cozening; and cheating, and overreaching in dealings with men, but from distrust of God's power and providence, as if he could not, or would not, spread a table for his children in the most barren wilderness? Whence comes that impatience and murmuring in adversity, but from want of faith, which would encourage the heart in the Lord his God, in the saddest estate, and when the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor the vine yield its fruit, enable the soul to rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the rock of his salvation? Whence cometh such pride and carnal confidence in prosperity, but because men believe not the meanness, and vanity, and emptiness of riches, and that divine mercy, not the merits of men, are the original of them? There is no sin so monstrous, but unbelief will venture upon it. He that believeth not, will never be allured by divine promises, nor affrighted at divine threatenings, nor obey divine precepts, nor submit to divine providences. As Cicero said of parricide, I may say of unbelief, It is a teeming vice, a well of wickedness; many sins are bound up in it. No wonder the apostle gives such a serious warning, and so strict a charge, against infidelity, as the mother and nurse of all apostasy: 'Take heed lest there be in any

of you an evil heart of unbelief, whereby ye depart away from the living God,' Heb. iii. 12. The superstitious pagans thought that their idol Vibilia kept them from erring out of their way; the religious Christian knoweth, by experience, that his faith keeps him within the limits of his duty. Faith ingrafts the soul into Christ, and into the fellowship of his death, by which 'the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,' Rom. vi. 5-8. For therefore did Christ bear our sins in his body on the tree, that we might become dead to sin, 1 Pet. ii. 24.

Faith enableth the soul to conquer sin, by enabling it to overcome the three grand provocations to sin: the world, the flesh, and the wicked one. There is neither of these enemies but faith hath wounded mortally.

(1.) Faith enableth to overcome the world. The world, indeed, hath conquered millions; the greatest soldiers have been slain by it. Alexander could subdue the nations in it, but could not subdue his affections to it. As great a conqueror as he was over it, he was its slave and vassal; for his ambition was still larger than his dominions. But faith, clothing the Christian with the sun, helps him to trample this moon under his feet: 'This is your victory over the world, even your faith,' 1 John v. 4.

The world hath two faces—the one ugly and deformed, to affright the saint; the other comely and painted, to allure him to sin; but faith seeth how pitiful, only touching the body, her threatenings are, and how poor, only skin deep, her promises are, and makes the soul to disdain both.

It was by faith that Luther could say, *Contemptus a me Romanus et favor, et furor*, I scorn both Rome's favour, and Rome's fury. The world's furnace and music are much alike to a believer; he is blind and deaf, nay, dead to both. The special object of faith is the cross of Christ, whereby, saith the apostle, I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. Tickle a dead man, or lance him, it is all one, he is sensible of neither. As Fabricius, the noble Roman, told Pyrrhus, who one day tempted him with gold, and the next day sought to terrify him with elephants, I was not yesterday moved with your money, nor to-day with your beasts. So Basil, when first offered preferment, and afterward threatened with imprisonment, if he would not deny Christ, and turn Arian, to this purpose answered the messenger, Such babies of preferment are fit to catch children with, and such bugbears of bonds and imprisonment may fright your tender gallants and courtiers. Faith

enableth the Christian to mount up to heaven, and thereby secures him from the baits and shots, the snares and lime-twigs, which attend him on earth. Homer saith Ulysses caused himself to be bound to the mast of the ship, and every one of his fellows' ears to be stopped with wax, that they might not hearken to the songs of the syrens, and so be drowned in the sea. Faith fastens the soul to Christ, and so ravisheth its ears with the glad tidings of pardon, and peace, and eternal life, that it is deaf to the world's music.

[1.] Faith enableth the soul to overcome the affrightments of the world. Faith, like blown bladders, keepeth the soul from sinking in deep waters. It is a target under which a soul is free from the hurt, though not from the smart, of evil. It is the ark wherein he rides triumphing, when the windows from above are opened, and pour down, and the floods from beneath are broken up. In this strong tower the soul finds shelter. Faith, like Joseph, layeth up in a time of plenty against a time of scarcity, in a day of prosperity against a day of adversity, and so feareth it the less.

Faith sheweth the Christian a place of refuge in the time of trouble. He shall hide thee, saith faith, in the secret of his presence, *i.e.*, cover thee with the warm wings of his providence. He shall keep thee secret in his pavilion—an allusion to princes' retiring rooms, which are sacred and secure places for their favourites. Nature teacheth all creatures to run in distress to that which they count their defence. The conies run to the rocks, the goats to the hills, the ravenous beasts to their dens, the child to his mother's arms. This grace discovereth to the soul a rock, a refuge, a fort, a fortress, a high tower, which makes him fearless of the world's threatenings and bugbears. The lame and the blind, those most shiftless creatures, when they had got the stronghold of Zion over their heads, scorned the host of David, 2 Sam. v. 6, 7. The Egyptians that dwell in the fens are much troubled with gnats, therefore they sleep in high towers, whither those insects cannot fly. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run unto it, and are safe,' Prov. xviii. 10. Such a soul is like a strong tree, which no wind can shake, or like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. Therefore he can sing when unbelievers quake and tremble: 'Though the earth be troubled, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters roar, and the mountains shake, yet we will not fear. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge,' Ps. xli. 2, 3, 7, and xci. 2. Faith is like the cork in the net; when the lead would sink the net, the cork keeps it above water. This faith is the anchor of the soul,

both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil, and so stayeth the saint against all the winds and waves of affliction. Faith or belief of the resurrection, and that happiness which then should be enjoyed, was that which enabled Paul to die daily, and to fight with beasts at Ephesus, 1 Cor. xv. 31, 32.

In the greatest distress, faith can see deliverance; and when it is at the greatest distance, salute it, as Abraham did Christ's day, afar off. When the weather is cloudy, it can see the heaven begin to clear, and notwithstanding his present pain and poverty, cause the Christian to rejoice in his hope of bliss and glory. The eye of faith, looking to the recompense of reward, seeth afflictions with the Israel of God, much more eligible than the pleasures of sin. Symphorianus,¹ a Christian young man, after he was almost scourged to death, being dragged to execution at Augustodunum, met his mother, not crying, or tearing her hair, but like a holy lady thus comforting him, Son, my son, I say, remember life eternal, look up to heaven. Life is not taken from thee, but exchanged for a better. At which words of his mother, he went on willingly to the block, and exposed his throat to the fatal axe. One of the Dutch martyrs, feeling the flame coming to him, said, Oh what a small pain is this, to heaven! Our blessed Saviour had an eye to the joy set before him, and thereby was encouraged to endure the cross, and despise the shame. Indeed, if faith spring a leak, then the waters break in, and the Christian sinks apace, as we see in Peter's denial of his Master.

As faith in the promises, so also faith in the threatenings, makes the Christian a conqueror over the world's affrightments: where the world threatens bonds, and whips, and dungeons, and death, if the Christian will not sin against God, and begins to stagger the soul: Take heed what thou dost, saith faith, for God threateneth fire, and brimstone, and chains, and blackness of darkness for ever, as the wages of all sin. Is the wrath of an infinite God not more to be feared than of weak dying men? Is the pains of a violent death, which will quickly be over, and the most the world can do against thee, comparable to the pains of eternal death? And thus faith, by the terror of this great ordnance, drowns the noise of those small pieces, that the soul is deaf to their report.

[2.] Faith enableth the soul to overcome the allurements of the world. If the world cannot terrify the saint with its fiery furnace to disown and deny his Saviour, it will seek to enchant him with its music, and thereby to make him deaf to the call and commands

¹ Drexel., Consid. Æternit.

of Christ: thus it served Joseph. When it could not prevail on the left hand, by selling him for a slave, it trieth him on the right hand, by setting a Delilah to tickle him with pleasure; but by faith he saw the hook under the bait, and durst not nibble at it, much less swallow it. Though the world, like Jezebel, painteth her face, and tireth her hair, to render her amiable and lovely, and as a strumpet, sheweth her naked breasts of pleasure and profit, to entice the believer to go a-whoring after her; yet he vieweth by faith the deformity of her person, under all her danbery, and the dregginess and deceitfulness of her pleasures, notwithstanding their show of clearness, and so rejects them with scorn and disdain. Pliny saith of Cato that he took as much pleasure in the honours he denied as in those that he enjoyed. The believer can glory more in his refusal of glory for Christ, than unbelievers in all their preferments. Indeed, if the Christian did consult with sense, or carnal reason, he would take the world's present money; but the believer doth not consult with flesh and blood, like wise Abigail. Knowing how much it will conduce to his advantage, he can part with his estate for God, and never make those Nabals privy to the design, lest they should hinder it.

Besides, faith discovers pure rivers of pleasures, more noble and excellent delights, to be the portion of those that refuse to grate their teeth with such kennel water. As man is a rational creature, he would sell his wares to them that will give most. Now faith sheweth how infinitely God outbids the world. Sense saith, The world offereth fair—it offereth comforts, suitable to thy flesh, such as they desire, and it offereth ready money, present possession: but saith faith, God offereth thee better; the comforts he offereth are more excellent, being suitable, not, as the world's, to a carnal, brutish nature, but to a heavenly, divine soul, and more durable, being eternal, when the pleasures of sin are but for a season. He that hopes for no better market, will take the present money offered him; but he that is assured of greater gains, will refuse the lesser. An unbeliever, who expects no better bargain than what this life affords him, may well take up with present pay, whatever it be; but the believer, who seeth the glory to be revealed, and fulness of joy in heaven, and is assured that if he be faithful unto death, he shall receive that eternal crown of life, turns his eyes off the honours and comforts of this beggarly world. Those stars of creature joys do all disappear in the presence of this sun. Gold bears little sway with the soul that knoweth his title to the new Jerusalem, that is paved with gold, in which gold is trampled under foot.

Those birds that fly aloft in the firmament, are not so easily snared by the fowler's gins. Though the things of this world were glorious in his eyes, during his estate of unbelief, yet now he hath discerned a world beyond the moon, and sent faith as a spy to search and coast that country, which hath brought word back, that it is a good land, flowing with milk and honey, and in it there is want of nothing, they have no glory, by reason of that glory that doth so infinitely exceed. When a man is below, things above seem small; the great stars, that are bigger than the earth, seem not so big as a bushel, and things below seem great: but when a man is above, as upon the top of a steeple, then things below seem little—he beholdeth men like grasshoppers. Were he conveyed to the highest hill in the world, men would not be discerned; great kingdoms would be but small cottages. Unbelief sets a man below, here on earth, and so the things of heaven are little in his eye; but faith soars aloft, it carrieth the Christian up to heaven, and then the whole earth is but a small spot in his eye. Joseph bids the patriarchs, 'Regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours:' so saith faith to the Christian, Regard not the lumber and rubbish of this world, for all the great and good things of the other world are thine. Faith gives the soul a taste, the first-fruits of heaven: 'And as no man having drunk old wine, desireth new, for he saith the old is better;' so no man, having tasted the wine of heaven's pleasures, desires carnal delights. A pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem, saith one, came to a city where he saw a goodly training and mustering; there he had a mind to stay, but that he remembered that was not Jerusalem. He came to another city, where he saw gallant sports and pastimes; there he had some good-will to abide, but that he remembered it was not Jerusalem. He came to a third, where were goodly buildings, fair ladies, curious music, &c., where also he had some thoughts of settling, but still he remembered it was not Jerusalem. So the believer, when the world offereth him great treasures, high honours, &c., may, through the subtlety of his flesh, have a mind to embrace them, only seeing by faith Jerusalem, where are greater treasures, higher honours, he slights and rejects them. By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had an eye to the recompense of reward.

Faith makes things future, present; it looketh into heaven and saith, as David, before he had conquered those places, Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; heaven is mine, eternal life is mine, ful-

ness of joy is mine, that kingdom in comparison of which this whole world is a dunghill is mine, because God hath sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto his David ; and whilst the soul by faith seeth and is assured of these felicities, for their sake it can trample under foot the world's largest offers.

(2.) Faith enableth the Christian to conquer Satan. Though the wicked one be full of power and policy, yet faith makes him flee like a coward. It is said of the crocodile, that he flieth if resisted, but followeth those that fear and flee from him ; truly so doth Satan : James iv. 7, ' Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' But how must he be resisted ? the apostle Peter answers that question, ' Whom resist steadfastly in the faith,' 1 Pet. v. 9. The crocodile cannot endure the sight or smell of saffron, therefore in Egypt they sow saffron to keep him away. Faith is this saffron, Cant. iv. 14, which drives away the devil. Faith, like little David, wounds the great Goliath of hell. ' They overcame him (meaning the devil) by the blood of the Lamb.' The wild bull, say naturalists, cannot endure a red colour, therefore the hunter putteth on red garments, and standeth before a tree, which the bull runneth against with all his might, and the hunter stepping aside, his horns stick fast in the tree, whereby he is taken. The Christian, by faith in the blood of Christ, overcometh those infernal spirits who thought to overcome him. This is the only holy water that will fright away the devil. Our blessed Saviour, in his speech to Peter, acquaints us how to subdue Satan : ' Peter, Peter, Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat is winnowed, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Which words imply, that whilst Peter's faith stood firm, he should not forsake Christ ; whilst that was up, he could not be down ; his faith flagged before his courage failed, or he himself fell so foully. A tree is soon felled when the root is once loosened ; faith roots the soul in Christ, and therein his safety consists ; but as his faith fails, so he is loosened from Christ, and thereby in danger of falling. The Christian's strength lieth in his faith, as Samson's in his hair ; if the uncircumcised one can deprive us of this, he may make sport enough with us. Hence it is that Satan's chiefest guns are shot against the royal fort of faith, knowing that that commandeth all ; and if he can make a breach there, he fears not but to enter with success. The first mine which he ever sprang, to blow up the first Adam and his wife, and in them the whole race of mankind, was by weakening their faith : ' Hath God said, In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall die ?' When he came to the second Adam, he endea-

voured to slay him with the same sword: 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones,' &c. And without question, his aim was more at Job's faith, than his cattle, or servants, or children; he had a greater intent to have blown down that house of Job's conscience, than that wherein his sons and daughters were feasting.

Therefore, reader, 'Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby thou mayest quench the fiery darts of the wicked one,' Eph. vi. 16. Goats in the island of Crete, when they are stricken with a dart, do seek for the herb dittany, which will cause the dart to fall out. Truly, such juice hath faith, that it makes all the darts which Satan shoots at the Christian ineffectual.

(3.) Faith enableth to conquer the flesh. The great apostle, who lived by faith, brought under his body, and crucified the flesh. Faith seeth the safety of the body to consist in its subordination to the soul, and that the only way to save the life, is at God's call to lose it. By faith Abraham left his kindred and country, and obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. Indeed, the flesh is the worst enemy of the three—partly in that it is so near us, always about us, so that we can as well fly from ourselves as from it. A traitor in the bedchamber, is much more dangerous than one in open arms against us in the field. A snake in the bosom, is like to do more hurt than one under the grass; partly in that it knoweth our minds exactly, and so can temper its poison suitable to our palates; but faith can discover its secret conspiracies, and prevent their execution. Though it dig its mines never so closely, and covertly, and craftily, faith will find them out, and countermine them.

2. Faith enableth, as to die to sin, so to live to God. The life of holiness doth so much depend on faith, that it is said to consist wholly in it. The just shall live by his faith. Though he cannot live by sense, that upon which he lives being invisible; nor by reason, because his food is supernatural; yet he can live by faith, and make a good living of it too. As the body lives by the soul, so religion lives by faith. A mortal wound in faith, lets out the heart blood of all holiness. It is faith that actuates and animates the new creature. Faith puts him upon high designs, and holy enterprises, for God and his own soul. David saith, 'I believe, therefore have I spoken.' It may be said of a Christian, he believeth, therefore he speaks so much of God, for God, and to God. He believeth the unquestionable certainty, incomparable excellency, and eternity of that reward which is set before him, and therefore

he prayeth, and watcheth, and readeth, and heareth, and denieth himself, and worketh night and day that he may attain it. Ferdinando of Arragon, believing the report of Columbus, concerning the richness of the Indian mines, and the likelihood of his possessing them, was at great cost and charge in sending out men in ships, and made them venture their lives, and labour hard to get those golden and silver veins. Faith believeth the report which the gospel makes of the glory to be revealed, and the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the likelihood, nay, certainty of his enjoying them, if he will but strive and labour, and use those means which God hath appointed; and this puts the soul upon its greatest industry and integrity, in the performance of what the word requireth, in order thereunto, and a resolution to obtain them, whatever it cost, or to die in the undertaking.

It is by the sap, which from the root is derived through the bark to the branches, that makes them fruitful; it is from the strength which faith derives from Christ, that the Christian becomes so abundant in holiness. Cut off the bark, and the tree withereth; take away faith, and no more good works. The extension of the branches, ariseth from the intension of the sap; and how shall that be conveyed but by the bark? Christ, like Joseph, keeps the granaries, wherein is abundance of soul-food, and faith unlocks those storehouses, and takes out supplies. As Pharaoh, when the Egyptians cried to him for bread, said, 'Go ye to Joseph, and what he saith to you, do;' so God saith to Christians that call on him for grace, Go ye to Christ by faith, and he will relieve you. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. Here is—

(1.) *Fulness*, abundance; not a drop, or a small degree of living water.

(2.) *All fulness*, a redundancy; the fulness of a spring, a fountain, not of a vessel.

(3.) *All fulness dwelling*, abiding there to eternity; running over, and running ever. But you will say, What is a Christian the better for it? I answer, Of his fulness, by faith, we all receive grace for grace. As a pipe from the river supplieth the house upon all occasions, and the several offices therein with water; so doth faith supply the Christian with grace from Christ, answerable to his several exigencies and necessities. Indeed, all the graces act valiantly in their several places, under the command of this general. Hence, though fear, and love, and heavenly-mindedness, were specially operative in many of the patriarchs' actions and passions for God, yet still the crown is set upon the head of faith, under

whose banner and conduct they fought, Heb. xi. *per tot.* When this champion, like Goliath, is vanquished, the other graces, as the Philistines, are put to the rout. As dark clouds obscure the glorious stars, so doth unbelief blemish the lustre of a Christian's graces. If this shepherd, faith, be smitten, other graces, like sheep, are scattered. If this grace keep the field, the rest always keep their ground. The length of the days depends upon the shining of the sun; as this shines more or less, so the days are longer or shorter. The degrees and measures of other graces depend exceedingly upon this grace. The branches blossom answerable to the sap which they receive from the root. * Other graces bud and blow according to the sap which they receive from faith.

For example sake;—

[1.] Repentance is more or less according to the degrees of faith. It is the fiducial apprehension of divine love that mollifieth the stony heart. None mourn so much as they who apprehend God a father. The hot beams of divine grace and favour, by faith united in the soul, thaw the most icy heart. They shall see him whom they have pierced, *i.e.*, with an eye of faith, and mourn for him as one that mourneth for his only child. Peter saw Christ's love in his look, and then went out and wept bitterly.

[2.] Humility. We are never lower in our own eyes than when faith assures us that we are high in God's favour. The centurion's humility seems to keep equal pace with his faith. Though Christ saith of his faith, 'I have not found so great, no, not in Israel;' 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.' When Nathan brought David word that God had a great respect for him, and would build him a sure house for ever, he presently crieth out, 'What am I? and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' &c., 2 Sam. vii. 18.

[3.] Love. The fire of love flames more or less according to the fuel which faith provides: 'To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.' The knowledge of a pardon granted by such a Lord, who hath all the reason in the world to loathe the soul, turns it into a lump of love.

[4.] Joy. Faith broacheth the pipe of the promises, and presenteth that wine which rejoiceth the heart of the new man: 'In whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8.

[5.] Patience. He that believeth his bonds are good, that his

estate is in safe hands, and that his forbearance doth abundantly increase it, will wait quietly for the day of payment. He that believeth, maketh not haste. None quarrel or fret, but from want of faith: 'Run with patience the race set before you, looking at Jesus.' If the Christian be weak, faith will give him the staff of the word to lean on; if he be weary, faith will shew him his journey's end. Lo, yonder is heaven, saith faith; hold out a little longer, your work is almost done. As the eagle by stretching herself towards the sun, through its heat hath her old feathers fallen off, new ones growing in their places, and her strength renewed; so the Christian cleaving to Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, by faith reneweth his strength, as the eagle, runneth and is not weary, walketh and is not faint. It is reported of the crystal, that there is a virtue in it to quicken all other precious stones; when it toucheth them, it puts a lustre and brightness on them. It is true of faith, it hath a virtue in it to enliven and quicken all other graces. These stars have the greatest influence, when in conjunction with this sun.

As the philosopher saith of water, *ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ*, It is of all things the best, most sovereign, and precious, because it is of universal influence in the life of man; so I may say of faith, it is of all graces most excellent, in regard of the universality of its influence upon all duties, graces, providences, ordinances.

It is by faith that prayer becomes so prevalent: 'Whatsoever ye ask of the Father, believing, ye shall receive,' John xvi. 23. An unbelieving prayer, is a messenger without a tongue; no wonder if he despatch not his errand, Heb. xi. 6.

It is by faith that Scripture is so powerful. This sword of the Spirit doth no execution, save in the hand of faith: 'The word did not profit them, not being mingled with faith in them that heard it,' Heb. iv. 2.

It is by faith that the Lord's supper becomes so nourishing and strengthening. This is the hand that receiveth that flesh which is meat indeed, this is the mouth that eats it, this is the stomach that digests it; without this thou mayest receive the elements, but not the sacrament, 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. Unbelievers, like wasps, may sit upon the tops of these flowers, and seem to gather honey, but, alas! they are far from any such thing.

It is by faith that crosses are turned into comforts, and afflictions into mercies. This, like Mithridates, can digest poison, and get strength from the wrath and rage of men and devils, Phil. i. 19; Heb. xi. 38.

It is by faith that water is turned into wine, temporal mercies into spiritual advantages ; faith worketh by love, and draweth men with the cords of love.

It is by faith that men are so fruitful in their lives, Heb xi. 32, 33 ; and so cheerful in their deaths, Rom. viii. 37-39. O reader, above all thy gettings, get faith, and above all thy keepings, keep faith ; for it must be faith that must keep thee from falling in an hour of temptation, and from fainting in an hour of persecution. The unbeliever is fitly called an unreasonable man, because it is unreasonable that the God of truth should not be credited, and that he, to whom it is impossible to lie, should be distrusted ; and also an absurd man, because it is absurd for a workman to go without his tools, which he shall every moment have need of. It is said of the serpent, that of all her parts, she is most careful of her head, well knowing that, though she be mangled and cut never so much in her body, yet if her head be whole, that will cure the wounds of all her other parts. Let thy great work be to secure thy faith ; if that be whole, all will be well ; whatever decays there may be in other graces, this will help them to shoot forth again.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, set God always before thine eyes. Subjects will carry themselves handsomely and loyally when they are before their sovereign : they who walk before God, will be upright. His eye is the best marshal to keep the soul in a comely order. Let thine eye be ever on him, whose eye is ever on thee : ' The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,' Prov. xv. 3. Seneca persuaded his friend Lucilius, for the keeping him within compass, to imagine that some grave man, as Lælius, did still look upon him. Reader, couldst thou walk ever as in God's presence, thou wouldst keep close to his precepts. Consider, therefore, that in all places, in all companies, at all times, the eye of God is on thee, and he takes exact notice of all thy thoughts, words, and actions ; that he knoweth thy natural parts : ' In his book were all thy members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was not one of them ;' that he knoweth all thy moral passages : ' Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways :' ' There is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.' There is no drawing a curtain between God and thee ; he seeth thee through and through, far more perfectly than thou canst the clearest crystal : ' Darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day ; to thee the darkness and the light are both alike.' The darkness of the air

may hide thee from men, and the darkness of thine understanding may hide thee from thyself; but there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from him. Neither the ring of Gyges, nor the helmet of Pluto, can hide thee from God's eye. Observe how strict God is in observing thy ways: 'Thou numberest my steps; dost thou not watch over my sin?' Job xiv. 16. By steps, is understood his inward motions, and outward actions; whatsoever is done either in the retiring room of the heart, or common hall of the life. To number the steps, notes an exact account; we say of a man that goeth very leisurely and softly, such a man telleth his steps. God is said to tell or number our steps, because he is so exact in his observation of, and so severe in his inquisition into, all our thoughts, words, and deeds. He is supposed to be void of shame, that doth not fear to sin before many witnesses. Though thou art in secret, consider, conscience is present, which is a thousand witnesses, and God, who is a thousand consciences. The Italian was somewhat conceited, who wrote a supplication to candle-light, to disclose to him the secrets of his kingdom. It is thought the light of the candle seeth more wickedness than the light of the sun; but to God the day and night, darkness and light, are both alike; he seeth all things, in all places, and at all times.

It was a pretty fancy of one that would have his chamber painted full of eyes, that which way soever he looked, he might still have some eyes upon him; and he fancying himself, according to the moralist's advice, always, *Sub custode et pædagogò*, under the eye of a keeper, might be the more careful of his carriage.¹ And it was a wise answer of Livius Drusus, when an artist offered him so to contrive his house, that he might do what he would, none should see him; No, saith Drusus, contrive it so rather that all may see me, for I am not ashamed to be seen.² If the eyes of men make even the vilest to forbear their beloved lusts for a while, that the adulterer watcheth for the twilight, and they that are drunk are drunk in the night, how powerful will the eye and presence of God be with those that fear his anger, and know the sweetness of his favour! Moses forsook the sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he saw him that was invisible. A good commander causeth good government in a town or city.

¹ A reverend divine had this written in his study, *Noli peccare, nam Deus videt; Angeli astant, Diabolus accusabit, Conscientia testabitur, Infernus cruciabit.*

² *Tu vero, si quid in te artis est, ita compone domum meam ut ab omnibus conspici possit.—Velleius Paterculus.*

This truth wrought home, and set close to the heart, would cause good orders, good government, in it.

The thought of this omnipresence of God will affrighten thee from sin. Gehazi durst not ask or receive any part of Naaman's presents in his master's presence; but when he had got out of Elisha's sight, then he tells his lie, and gives way to his lust. Men never sin more freely than when they presume upon secrecy.¹ 'They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless; yet they say, The Lord doth not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it,' Ps. xciv. 5-7. Eliphaz, though falsely, accuseth Job as guilty of the same crime, upon the same account, Job xxii. 5-7, 13, 14. They who shut God out of their hearts, shut him also out of the world, through their atheism, and then are at liberty for all manner of wickedness. They who abounded in abominations said, 'The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth,' Ezek. viii. 9-12.

The wise man dissuadeth from wickedness, upon the consideration of God's eye and omniscience: 'And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings,' Prov. v. 20, 21. Joseph saw God in the room, and therefore durst not yield; but his mistress saw none but Joseph, and so was impudently alluring and tempting him to folly. I have read of two religious men that took contrary courses with two lewd women, whom they were desirous to reclaim from their vicious course of life. One of the men told one of the women that he was desirous to enjoy her company, so it might be with secrecy, and when she had brought him into a close room that none could pry into, he told her, All the bars and bolts here cannot keep God out. The other desired the other woman to company with him openly in the streets, which, when she rejected as a mad request, he told her, It was better to do it in the eyes of a multitude than of God. How doth the adulterer, or drunkard, or thief, when they come abroad at midnight for the satisfaction of their lusts, sneak and steal away when they spy the watch, or any persons who would be witness of their vices! and shall not the presence of that God who hates sin, who is resolved to punish it with hell-flames, make us ashamed or afraid to sin, and dare him to his face?

¹ Turpe quid ausurus, te sine teste time. Magnum nescio quid majusque quam cogitari potest numen est, cui vivendo operam demus. Huic nos approbemus, nam nihil prodest inclusam esse conscientiam, patemus Deo.—*Senec.*

2. The thoughts of this omnipresence of God will quicken thee to holiness. The soldiers of Israel and Judah were prodigal of their blood in the presence of their two generals, 2 Sam. ii. 14. Servants will generally work hard whilst their master stands by and looks on. It is said of Alexander, that his presence caused such courage in his soldiers—*ut illo presente nullius hostium arma vel inermes timuerunt*—that when he was with them, though they were unarmed, they feared not the weapons of any of their enemies. Our blessed Redeemer exhorteth to prayer in secret, upon this consideration, that God seeth and heareth it, Mat. vi., and to charity in secret, because, though the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth, God knoweth what the right hand doeth: ‘Your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly.’

There is a story of Bishop Latimer, that he having in a sermon at court much displeased the king, (Henry VIII.,) was commanded to preach again the next Lord’s-day, and to recant his former sermon. According to appointment, he cometh up, and preface to his sermon in this manner: Hugh Latimer, dost thou know this day to whom thou art to speak? even to the high and mighty monarch, the king’s most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore take heed how thou speakest a word which may displease; but, (as if recalling himself, he proceeded,) Hugh, Hugh, dost thou know from whom thou comest, upon whose message thou art sent, and who it is that is present with thee, and beholdeth all thy ways? even that almighty God who can cast body and soul into hell for ever; therefore look about thee, and be sure thou deliverest thy message faithfully. And so he went to his text, and confirmed what he had spoken the day before, and urged it with more vehemency than ordinary. The eye of God, as of the sun, will call the Christian to his work. Those countries that are governed by viceroys seldom flourish or thrive so well as those kingdoms where the prince is present in person. Conscience, God’s viceroy, may much quicken a Christian to holiness; but God the prince himself much more. ‘I have kept thy precepts,’ saith David, ‘for all my ways are before thee.’

CHAPTER X.

*Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness :
A constant watchfulness, frequent meditation of death, daily
performance of sacred duties.*

Fourthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, watch over thyself continually. This spiritual watchfulness is the main-guard of the soul, which, if once called off, we lie open to the shot of every enemy. This, like one of the Nethinims, must stand continually porter at the door of our hearts, God's temple, to keep out whatsoever is unclean. Watchfulness is a diligent observation of ourselves in all things, and at all times, that we may please God always. He that watcheth hath his eyes in his head, according to the wise man's phrase, and seeth, as the Chinese say of themselves, with both eyes. David expresseth it fitly : ' I said, I will take heed to my ways,' Ps. xxxix. 1—i.e., I will ponder my paths, and consider where I set my feet, lest I should tread awry. Without this wariness there is no safe walking. Secure Laish is made a prey to their enemies, Judges xviii. 9, 10; and the secure soul is made a prey to his spiritual adversaries. Soul lethargies are most dangerous, most deadly. Those that slept in the sweating sickness generally died. He who watcheth not is led about, like one in his natural sleep, by any temptation, he knoweth not how nor whither. When the wolves in the fable once prevailed with the sheep to part with the dogs, they soon devoured them. If Satan can but get men to forego this means of their safety, he will soon make them his prey. The old world was drowned in sleep before they were drowned in water. Sodom and Gomorrah were secure when they were destroyed by fire.

It is reported of the dragon, that whilst he sleepeth, a jewel is taken out of his head. Noah lost the jewel of temperance, David the jewel of chastity, whilst they were fallen asleep. If this eye of watchfulness be once shut, the soul is open to all wickedness. When Argus, notwithstanding his hundred eyes, was by Mercury piped into a sleep, he was transformed into a cow.¹

Reader, hearken to God's watchword : ' Ye are all children of light, and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober,' 1 Thes. v. 6, 7. Sleep is not seasonable in the day of

¹ A pheasant or peacock.—Ed.

grace, nor suitable to a child of light: 'They that sleep, sleep in the night,' 1 Thes. v. 7. The night is for sleep, therefore in it God draweth a curtain of darkness about us; as the nurse, when she would lay her babe to sleep, throweth a cloth over the head of the cradle. But the day is for watching, for working.

He hath little reason to give himself to sleep, who is every moment surrounded with mortal enemies, which are neither few nor weak. Naturalists tell us that the bird *onocratulus* and the pelican take their rest with their beaks upright, expecting the hawk; and that the whale and dolphin sleep with their heads erected above water, for fear of hurt. Though there were but that one text of Scripture, 1 Pet. v. 8, relating to this duty, it were enough to alarm any wise man, and to call him to his arms: 'Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' If that voice among the ancient Romans, *Hannibal ad portas*, Hannibal is at the gates, were sufficient to make them leave whatsoever they were about, and run to their weapons, and stand upon their guard, what watchfulness should this voice of the Holy Ghost, 'The devil is at the door,' call thee to! Reader, take that verse a little in pieces, and see what a foe thou hast to fight with, and then tell me whether it doth not concern thee to watch. Consider,

1. His power: 'Your adversary the devil.' It is not a weak man, but a mighty devil. Thou art not called to wrestle with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Is man a match for a devil? or a stripling nodding fit to enter the lists with Goliath? What is a pigmy to a giant, or a dying creature to the prince of the powers of the air? Had David been asleep when the lion out of the wood came against him, the lion had sooner tore him by the throat than he had taken the lion by the beard. The cobweb may as soon withstand the broom in the maid's hand, and the dust oppose the force of a violent wind, as a nodding, secure Christian the temptations of Satan.

2. His policy: 'Seeking whom he may devour.' Had our enemy strength without craft, there were not so much danger, nor cause of vigilancy; but when he hath seven heads, as well as ten horns, and exceeds us in subtlety as much as in power, it concerneth us to be watchful. He that playeth with a cunning fencer will heed his wards the more. Reader, the devil hath a shrewd guess what Delilah is most likely to entice thee, and deprive thee of thy spiritual strength; and if amongst all the uncircumcised there be any that will fit thee, thou shalt not want her. He hath not walked to and

fro in the earth so long for nothing ; but he knoweth what weeds will take best and thrive most in the soil of thy heart ; and be confident he will help thee both to the seeds and plants of them. The subtle serpent, that could wind himself into paradise, knoweth surely how to wind himself into thee. If he were too crafty for man when he was perfect, much more is he for man polluted. And can such a strong politic foe be resisted when thou art lazing upon thy bed of security ?

3. His industry : ' Your adversary the devil goeth about.' He is a diligent servant, never from your elbow. As Joseph's mistress, when denied, still solicited, and Samson's harlot pressed him with continual importunity night and day, that his very soul was vexed unto death ; so the devil serveth men ; he will never forsake them, but follow them with his darts and assaults, till they are safe in heaven from him, or safe in hell with him. He is called the prince of the powers of the air, and his angels spiritual wickednesses in high places ; the air is the seat of his empire, and truly, as ravenous fowl hover up and down in the air, to catch and kill little chickens ; and though they be frightened away by any one, yet they lie near at the catch, and the person is no sooner gone, but they are descending to destroy them ; so those infernal spirits are hovering up and down, walking to and fro, to defile and destroy souls ; and though they are resisted and foiled, yet they impudently continue their former endeavours to undo us. Now, hath he any time for sleep that is every moment in such danger ?

4. His cruelty : ' As a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' The lions of the forest have no pity : ' Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces,' Ps. vii. 2. The lions brake the bones of Daniel's accusers before they came to the bottom of the den. But the lions of hell have much less pity ; his tender mercies are cruelties indeed. It is not the loss of thy life, but of thy soul, and thy God, and thy Christ, and that for ever, which he looks after. The racking of thy body, and rending thy bones, is nothing to the flames, and whips, and torments which he makes men suffer, and that not for a day, or week, or year, or age, but to all eternity.

Reader, is there not infinite reason for watchfulness ? Had not the apostle ground enough for his precept, ' Be sober, be vigilant,' when our adversary is so strong a devil, so sedulous, going about, so cruel, as a roaring lion, and so crafty, seeking by all means whom he may devour ? Yet, alas ! this is not all. Go where we will, we see abundant cause to look well to our feet. Every place we come into is a net to ensnare us ; we cannot look out of our eyes, but we

see a baited hook, nor open our ears, but we hear the syren's songs ; we cannot put forth our hands, but we touch pitch, nor set our feet, but in the midst of nets ; every part of the body is a Judas, a traitor to the soul. Our crosses and afflictions, if we be secure, will be to us as the jail to a prisoner, filling us with vermin. Our greatest earthly comforts, if we be not watchful, prove but like traps set for vermin, pleasant and killing. When the world sings most sweetly in our ears, she doth but, like Orpheus with his pipe, endeavour to lead us by the ears into unquenchable flames. Thieves with provender in their hands catch horses to steal them ; the world allures our hearts by its pleasures and profits, and steals them from God. Our own hearts are Jacobs, supplanters of us, deceitful and desperately wicked. As the water-fowl in Friesland will decoy other wild-fowl in a net, and then give a watchword to their master to seize on them, so officious will our own hearts be to the devil. And shall we not watch and pray that we enter not into temptation ?

Sleep is the great leveller which makes all equal. The strongest Samson is as liable in his sleep to be slain as the smallest infant. When a deep sleep from the Lord had seized on Saul and his soldiers, how easily might David, if he had pleased, have killed them ! He took away Saul's spear and cruse of water, to assure him that he could have taken away his life. Ah, how soon may the devil, or world, or flesh, defile, deceive, and destroy a sleeping soul ! Bees, that have many enemies, mice, spiders, drones, hornets, birds, and beasts, never dare, say naturalists, to give themselves to security, but night and day have their scouts, and sentinels, and *corps-de-garde*, to keep watch and ward, lest some of their many enemies should on a sudden surprise them. The Christian may learn this duty from such creatures. Spiders weave their cobwebs near the flowers where the bees use to gather, and also just over the passage out of their hives, that so at their going out, but especially at their coming in, laden and weary, they may catch them, and make a prey of them. David saith, ' In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.' So mayest thou, reader, say, In the way wherein I daily walk doth Satan privily lay baits to catch me ; at my table, in my closet, in my shop, in my bed, in the streets, in all places where I go, he hath laid snares for my soul. If there be a snare, and such danger in all things, then let me advise thee, if thou wouldst avoid them, in the words of Paul to Timothy, ' Watch thou in all things,' 2 Tim. iv. 5.

Watch against sin, against all sin. The gardener doth not only

watch over his flowers, to water and cherish them, but also watcheth all weeds, to pluck and root them up. Take heed lest there be any root of bitterness. Epiphanius tells us, when a dead corpse was carried by any of the Israelites' houses, they used to shut their doors and windows, intimating that men must be watchful against the scent and infection of sin. It is in vain for a captain to guard one gate of a castle, to prevent the enemy's entering there, if he leave another open, when the whole fort is beleaguered and surrounded with mortal enemies.

Watch especially against thine own sin. If a man have many wounds, whereof one is more dangerous than the rest, being near a vital part, though he will be mindful and careful of all, yet he will have a special care of that which is most dangerous. A Christian must watch against all sin, all soul diseases, but principally against his own sin—that disease which is most dangerous; as a wise governor will have a special eye upon that particular person in his garrison whom he knoweth to be a traitor.

Watch for the doing of good; for seasons of prayer, and hearing, and Christian communion. The countryman watcheth for the bell ringing on the market-day, when the sacks will be opened, that he may buy food for himself and his family. The mariner watcheth for the tide; the diseased folk watched for the moving of the waters by the angels. David watched as a sparrow on the house-top, where he might peck up some corn, get some spiritual nourishment. An opportunity of worshipping God is a jewel; the Christian may well watch to take it up.

Watch in duties. The child must be watched at school, or he will play and toy, instead of getting his lesson. The heart must be watched in an ordinance, or it will wander wholly from the business in hand: 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,' Col. iv. 2. Take heed how ye hear. The Bible will drop out of the sleeper's hand, and prayer is a wrestling with God, which is not a work to be done nodding. They who talk in their sleep talk idly.

Watch after duties. Running carelessly into the open air, immediately after the taking of physic, is dangerous. When the garden is dressed, and the seed sown in it, we must watch it lest hogs get into it, and root up all. Satan thinks to take the Christian at an advantage, after the duty is over; and though he could not beat him in the fight, yet to do it when the saint hath laid by his weapons. It was a wise speech of Marcus Aurelius, after he had vanquished Popilion, general of the potent Parthians, and won the day: I tell thee of a truth, that I stand in greater fear of fortune at this

present than I did before the battle, for she careth not so much to overtake the conquered, as to overcome the conqueror. Truly Satan will be industrious to destroy both the conquered utterly, and to overcome the conqueror.

Watch thy senses. These are the *Cinque Ports*, as one calls them, of the *Isle of man*, which, if not well garrisoned, will let in strangers and disturbers of our peace. At these havens much of Satan's lading is taken in. Job made a covenant with his eyes; he would not suffer them to gad and gaze at random, lest they should return defiled. Democritus walking abroad, would shut his eyes, lest by their wandering his mind should be taken off from the contemplation of honest things. Actæon became, as the poet fancieth, meat for his dogs, by suffering his eyes to wander. Lusting hath often been the issue of looking; witness Joseph's mistress, David, Achan, the Israelites, Num. xv. 39. Stratonice took Mithridates with a song. The heart hath often been angled into sin by the ear, and led into temptation by the eye; therefore Cassian relates that, to preserve the cleanness of the heart, the Egyptian masters taught that men must be *surdi, cæci, muti*, deaf, blind, and dumb. If those outworks be well guarded, the royal fort is in the less hazard. Shut up the five windows—*i.e.*, guard the five senses, that the whole house may be full of light, according to the Arabian proverb.

Watch your affections. If those waves be tempestuous, they will cast up much foam and froth, mire and dirt. He had need to make a strong wall, that would keep these raging waters within their bounds.

Watch your tongues. The sea hath not more need of banks to keep it in, than the tongue of a bridle. The tongue is compared to a sword, to a razor, both which are keen weapons, and must be handled warily: Ps. xxxix. 1, 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, whilst the wicked are before me.'

Watch your hearts. The heart is the forge, the spring of life, and a wound there is mortal. Keep thy heart with all diligence, (*super omnem custodiam*, above all keeping, Jun. ;) out of it are the issues of life. Watch over all things, watch in all things. This voice, saith Bucer,¹ should always sound in our ears, Watch, watch.

How frequent is Christ in his precepts to this duty, as knowing fully the weight and concernment of it: 'Watch ye therefore, for

¹ Merito debet semper sonare in auribus, Vigilate.—Bucer in Mark xiii.

ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' And he is as frequent in his promises to it: 'Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find watching;' 'blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments;' 'and if he shall come in the second or third watch, and find him so, blessed is he,' Luke xii. 37, 38, 43. Surely blessedness is worthy our waking; bliss is worth keeping our eyes open a few days for. Apollonius, held in his time for an oracle, coming early in the morning to Vespasian's gate, and finding him, then a private person, up, and at study, he said to his companion, This man is worthy to reign and command an empire; which afterwards came to pass.¹ He that watcheth, with Christ, the short hour of this life, shall be counted worthy to reign with him in his kingdom for ever. Sion, which is frequently put for the church of God, signifieth a watch-tower, because from that hill a man might see the Holy Land, and all the countries thereabout; but the spiritual signification of it may be this, that all the members of God's church must be like soldiers in a watch-tower, observing who cometh in and who goeth out, lest traitors should steal into the fort of the heart undiscovered.

Fifthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, think often of thy dying day, and of what price and value godliness will be to thee at such a time. There are few thoughts more terrible or more profitable than of death. Hence it is that God commands man so often to remember his latter end, because the meditation of it is so gainful to him. The first day man was made, he was called to think of his last day. God minded him of death in the tree of knowledge, and the threatening annexed to the prohibition, that he might thereby keep him from sin. Satan could not prevail with Eve to taste of that killing fruit, till he had prevailed with her to distrust that threatening of death, 'Ye shall not surely die,' Gen. iii. 4. After the fall, God reneweth this meditation, by turning the conditional into an absolute commination, 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.' And though the Holy Ghost omitteth many particulars about God's carriage with the long-lived patriarchs, and their holy conversation before him, yet he is exact in registering their deaths—and he died, and he died, of every one, Gen. v.—to quicken us to fear God, because we are but dying, frail men. There is hardly anything about which we deal, but God gives us by it a memento of death. Our clothes are all fetched out of death's

¹ Philostr. in Vit.

wardrobe, our food out of death's shambles. The sun is an emblem of life's posting, the night of the chambers of darkness. The year hath its autumn, the day its night. Our candles should mind us of the wasting of our days, the evening of the shadow of death; our undressing, of our putting off our earthly tabernacles; and our lying down in our beds, of our lying down in our graves.

If thou wouldst make religion thy business and main work, think often and seriously of thy death and departure of this world. He that guides and steers the ship aright, sits in the stern or hindermost part of it. He that would order his works, his way, according to God, must be frequent in the meditation of his end. The end of his days must be at the end of all his thoughts. Zeno Cittæus consulted with the oracle how he might live well, and received this answer, *Εὖ συγχρωτίζοιτο τοῖς νεκροῖς*, If he would be of the same colour with the dead.

Reader, if thou wouldst live much, and well, get thy heart as much affected with godliness in health as it will be in sickness. Have the same thoughts of it, the same seriousness about it, the very same carriage towards it, whilst the world salutes thee with its smiling face, and bewitching features, which thou wilt wish thou hadst had when thou shalt come to take thy leave of it, and lie upon thy dying bed. Be of the same colour with the dead. Oh what thoughts have the dead of godliness, and of making it one's business! The dead in Christ, and the dead out of Christ, have both other manner of thoughts of religion, and making it one's occupation, than thou canst possibly imagine.

Those who, while they live, delay repentance, and dally about religion, minding it as if they minded it not, who neither, in their dealings with men, nor duties towards God, nor in their relations nor vocations, make it their business, but misspend their precious time, misemploy their weighty talents, neglect God and their eternal welfares, as if they had not been made to mind either, when they come to die, and perceive in good earnest that that surly sergeant death will not be denied, but away they must go into the other world, and fare well or ill for ever, according as their hearts and lives have been godly or ungodly, good or bad here, good Lord, what thoughts have they then of godliness! How hearty are their wishes that they had made it their business! What worlds would they give that religion had been their principal work! What prayers and tears do they pour out for a few days to mind it in! What sighs, and sobs, and groans, that they have neglected it so long! What purposes do they take up, what promises do

they make, if God spare them, to follow hard after holiness, and make it their only business! A philosopher asking Euchrites which of the two he had rather be, Cræsus, one of the richest and most vicious in the world, or Socrates, one of the poorest and most virtuous, Euchrites answered, *Cræsus vivens, et Socrates moriens*, Cræsus while he lived, and Socrates when he died. The cuckoo, when wearing away, changeth her note. The worst men, when they come to die, alter and change exceedingly.

It is worthy our observation, that those who are greatest strangers to death are most familiar with the works of darkness. No place abounds more in wolves, no person in wickedness, than where this mastiff is wanting: 'Jerusalem hath grievously sinned. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully,' Lam. i. 8, 9. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; hath sinned sin—Heb., Hath committed a great or grievous sin, so the Chaldee. Behold here the colour of her sin; it was not of an ordinary dye, but of a black, a bloody, a heinous nature. 'Her filthiness is in her skirts.' Lo, here her carriage after her sinning: she made of it an open show, so far was she from shame. It is a term taken from prostituted strumpets or menstruous women, saith Diodat. The outward looks of the former bewray her inward lusts, and the marks of the latter's defilement are visible on her garment. Thus the show of Jerusalem's countenance did publicly evidence her crime. She did as clearly by her skirts proclaim her filth, as if it had been written on her face and engraven on her forehead. Here was impiety in her practice, 'Jerusalem hath grievously sinned;' and impudency to purpose, 'her filthiness is in her skirts.' But what dust was that which bred such vermin? what polluted seed was that which begat such a poisonous serpent? Reader, if thou wouldst know the mother which brought forth and bred up this ugly monster, 'she remembereth not her last end, therefore she came down mightily.'¹ It was her forgetfulness of death which nourished and cherished her wicked deeds. They who mind not their reckoning, care not how much they riot and revel.

They who put far away the evil day, cause the seat of violence to come near, Amos vi. 3. The further we drive death from our thoughts, the nearer we draw to sin. They who fancy their foe to be very far off, will not prepare and make ready to fight. Men that are young do not consider that the old ass often carrieth the skin of the young to the market; that death comes like a thunder-

¹ Immunditiæ suæ in fimbriis suis mercedem nondum recordata.—*Trem.*

bolt and lightning, and blasteth the green corn, and consumeth the strongest buildings; if they did, they would flee youthful lusts.

He who seeth death at his door, will be most diligent about his duty: a serious consideration of the death of the body will be a sovereign though a sharp medicine to kill the body of death. The naturalists tell us, that the ashes of a viper, applied to the part which is stung, draweth the venom out of it. They who look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers, will abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. Who would make his belly, his gut, his god, who considereth that every meal may be his last? or that thinketh his dainty diet, his fine fare, doth but provide a greater feast for worms? Who would give way to sinful wantons, who believeth that whilst he is unloading his lust, God may put a period to his life? He that is high in conceit of himself, little dreameth how low he must shortly be laid. Who would be proud of that body which shall ere long see corruption, become such a noisome, loathsome carcase, that the nearest and dearest relations will not endure the sight or scent of it? He who loveth the world inordinately, forgetteth that he may leave it suddenly, and must leave it certainly. Would Haman have bragged so much of Esther's banquet, if he had known that his own corpse should be served in for the last course? Would the Israelites have tempted God for meat, if they had thought that death should have been their sauce? Would Achan have coveted the golden wedge, if he had mused of his so sudden departure into the other world? Without question, he would have forborne the Babylonish garment, if he had seen death at his back, so ready to strip him naked. Had the rich fool thought that his bed should that night have proved his grave, he would never in the day have prided himself in his goods. Who would not at God's call vilify that flesh which will be ere long a lump of filth, and be choice of that soul which lives for a more high and heavenly flight!

It is reported of the Brahmans, that they use no clothes but bear-skins, no houses but caves, no food but such as nature dresseth. When Alexander came to them in his travels, he asked them the reason of this severe kind of living. They answered him, We know we shall die, whether to-day or to-morrow we know not; and therefore why should we take care, either for power to govern others, or for riches to live in pleasures, or for honour to be esteemed of? None are so loose to the world, that great hindrance of holiness, as they who ponder they must leave it. Travel-

lers who look on themselves near their journey's end, care not to burden themselves with much baggage. Their moderation will be known to all men, who believe the Lord is at hand.

Those who are most mindful of their deaths, are most faithful in their lives. Job was eminent in grace, because Job was daily conversing with his grave. All the days of his appointed time he waited till his change came, Job xiv. 14. That servant will follow his work most and best, who expecteth his master's coming every moment.

It is said of the kite, that by the turning of his tail he directs and winds about his whole body; the same is reported of the glade or puttock. Fish also, say naturalists, turn and wind about by the fins in their tails. Reader, could I but prevail with thee to mind the end of thy life, it would help thee very much to order thy conversation aright.¹ Oh, said God, that my people were wise! then would they consider their latter end, Deut. xxxii. 29.

The Thebans made a law, that no man should build a house for himself to dwell in before he had made his grave. Several of the philosophers had their graves made before their doors, that whenever they went abroad they might remember their deaths. If thou wouldst but in thy outgoings and incomings behold the place of thy burial, I doubt not but thou wilt be watchful over all thy ways. When thou art in the midst of thy delights, as Joseph of Arimathea, have thy tomb in thy garden, and it may prevent thy surfeiting by those dainties. When thou sittest at table, let the first dish set before thee be, according to Prester John's custom, a death's head, and then with what fear wilt thou feed; how thankfully wilt thou receive the creatures, even as through the beloved Son! how soberly wilt thou use them, even as in God's sight! If God raise thee to the height of prosperity, and some friend do but (as Moses and Elias to Christ, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was as white as snow, Luke ix. 30, 31) talk to thee of thy decease, which thou must shortly accomplish, it will abate thy love to the world's withering vanities, and quicken thine endeavours after the eternal weight of glory. If God cast thee into great adversity, and thou dost but consider thy time here is but short, and therefore thy troubles cannot be long, this will make thee contented in the saddest condition. When thou beholdest thy relations, and forethinkest that thine eternal separation from them is at hand, and that within a few days thou shalt never have another opportunity to help them

¹ Consideratio mortis tanquam cauda ad vitam optime regendam confert.

heavenward, how will it stir thee up to do them all the good thou canst now, both by thy precepts, pattern, and prayers ! If, when thou attendest on public ordinances, thou wilt but cast thine eye on the graves in the churchyard, as thou passest along, and meditate thus : Within a little time I must be laid in the dust, when I shall hear no more, pray no more, enjoy a Sabbath no more ; when I shall never, never more have a tender of a Saviour, never more have a season to beg mercy in for my poor soul. After such awakening thoughts, with what attention wouldst thou hear ! with what affections wouldst thou pray ! with what intension and devotion, with what seriousness and uprightness, wouldst thou perform every duty !

Some say that nothing in this world is so strong as death, because it subdueth the mighty, it conquereth the greatest conquerors, it overcometh all. Sure I am, that death hath great force and power over men's souls, as well as over their bodies. The thought of it hath raised some to a spiritual life. The consideration of death hath also caused others to live much in a little space ; when they have seen the sun of their lives near setting, and the night of their deaths approaching, they have in the day followed their work with the greater diligence. None will work so hard as they who think themselves near their everlasting homes.

There were two emperors, Adrian and Charles the Fifth, that in their lifetime caused their coffins to be carried before them, and their exequies to be solemnly celebrated, to this end possibly, that, considering they were but men, dying men, they might thence be righteous in their government, and virtuous in their actions.

It is reported of Turannius,¹ that after he was ninety years old, he got leave of Cæsar to retire himself from court ; and the old man would needs be laid in his bed, as one that had breathed out his last, and all his family must bewail his death. Friend, do thou in earnest what he did in jest. Suppose thou wert this day to bid adieu to thy friends, relations, honours, and possessions, and to travel into the unknown other world ; to take thy leave of hours, and days, and months, and years, and time, and to sail into the boundless ocean of eternity ; suppose thou sawest death creep in at thy chamber window, come up to thy bedside, draw the curtain, take thee by the hand, and tell thee that he is come from the infinite, almighty, jealous, most holy God, to fetch thee immediately into his presence, there to answer for all thy thoughts,

¹ Sen. de. Brev. Vit., cap. ult.

words, and deeds, and to receive either matchless and endless pain, or unchangeable and unconceivable pleasures, according as thy practices have been, what wouldst thou think at such a time of godliness? Good Lord, what a price wouldst thou set upon it! what wouldst thou not do or give for it! Then godliness will be godliness indeed, as little and as lightly as thou settest by it now. And why is it not worth as much now? Dost thou not see death like a mole digging thy grave under thee? Dost thou not feel that worm within thee, which will ere long consume thee?

Believe it, thy death may be nearer than thou dreamest; the glass of thy life may be almost out, though thou thinkest it is but new turned. The murdering piece which kills thee, parting thy soul and body, may be discharged with white powder, give thee no warning at all. The next arrow which is shot may hit thee; the next time the bell goes may be to tell others that thou art dead; the next time the earth is opened may be to receive thy body in. Thou seest some fall on thy right hand, some on thy left hand, some of thy very age, and of greater strength and health, and canst thou esteem thyself shot-free? Is not every carcase a crier, and every tomb a teacher, calling upon thee to number thy days, and apply thine heart unto wisdom?

Silly man is like the foolish chicken, though the kite comes and takes away many of their fellows, yet the rest continue pecking the ground, never heeding their owner, nor minding their shelter. Death comes and snatcheth away one man here, a second there; one before them, another behind them, and they are killed with death, undone for ever, Rev. ii. 23; yet they who survive take no warning, but persist in their wicked and ungodly ways. 'They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom,' Job iv. 20, 21.

It is the saying of a heathen,¹ That it is impossible for a man to live the present day well, who doth not purpose to live it as his last. I may say to thee, friend, it is impossible for thee to live the present day ill, if thou wilt but live it as thy last day. If thou dost but consider, Well, this place may be the last place I shall come into, shall I pollute it with sin? or shall I not rather perfume it with sanctity? This expression may be the last that ever I shall speak, shall it be tainted with vice? or shall it not rather be seasoned with grace? This action may be the last that ever I shall do, and shall it be a deed of darkness? or shall it not

¹ Muson apud Stob., Ser. 1.

rather be a work of the day, of the light? This sermon may be the last that ever I shall hear, and shall I now be heedless? After this I shall never more have a call from Christ, and shall I now be careless? This prayer may be the last prayer that ever I shall pour out to God; if God deny me now, I am damned and undone for ever, and shall not my head, and heart, and will, and mind, and all be working, that it may be a prosperous, a prevalent prayer? This Sabbath may be the last Sabbath that ever I shall sanctify; I may from henceforth and for ever be deprived of all such opportunities of getting and increasing grace, of serving and honouring my Saviour, and of working out my own salvation. If I sow not now good seed, I must never expect a happy harvest. If I buy not now, the market will be quickly over. Shall I lose any precious minute of this holy day? Is it time now to trifle about the affairs of my soul and eternity? Well, I will, through Christ, take heed how I hear; I will hear in hearing, I will pray in praying; I will hear and hearken, cry and call, with all my heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, that if it be possible, the Lord may not leave me without a blessing. When the orator thinketh he is at the close of his oration, then he useth his chiefest art and rhetoric to move his auditors' affections; he would have his last part his best part.

O reader, if thou wilt but often wind up this weight of thine approaching death, it would keep thy soul in a quick, spiritual, and regular motion at all times. As ashes preserve fire, and keep coals from going out, so the thought that we shall ere long be turned into ashes will preserve the fire of grace alive and in action.

Sixthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, mind a daily performance of sacred duties. He that hath nothing of his own whereupon to live, must be frequently fetching in provision from the shops or market where it is to be had. The Christian's life is maintained, not by himself, but by what he receiveth from God; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God; therefore there is a necessity of daily converse with God by holy ordinances, and of waiting at his gate; as the beggar, who hath neither a bit of bread, nor a penny to buy any, at the rich man's door for supply. Our spiritual strength is like Israel's manna, rained down daily; we are kept by a divine power, and allowed but from hand to mouth, that we might continually depend on, and resort to, the Lord Jesus for our allowance. Paul speaks in some places of his great disbursements—how much he laid out for God

and his people, that he laboured more than all the apostles ; but you must think, Whence had Paul such a spiritual stock that he was able to outvie all others in his expenses ? He tells you that the Son of God kept house for him, and that he was the steward to spend of his treasure, and thence his disbursements were so large. ' I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. ii. 20. As the plant mistel, having no root of its own, both grows and lives in the stock or body of the oak ; so the apostle, having no root of his own, did live and grow in Christ. As if he had said, I live, I keep a noble house, am given to hospitality above many, in labours more abundant, in watchings, in fastings more frequent, in perils, and dangers, and deaths often ; but the truth is, I do all this at another's cost and charge, not at mine own ; I am beholden to Christ for strength to do and suffer whatsoever I am called to. He carrieth the purse for me, and gives out to me according to my necessities. I have not a farthing of my own wherewith to buy the least morsel. I can do nothing of myself, but I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.

Man is a weak creature, and so far from running, that he is not able to creep in the way of God's commandments, unless Christ strengthen him : ' Without me ye can do nothing,' John xv. 5. If Christ withdraw himself as the sun, he carrieth the light of holiness along with him. The easiest duty is too hard, and the weakest enemy too strong for us, unless Christ assist us. It is upon his wings alone that we can mount to heaven, in an ordinance, and through his power, that we do improve any providence. It is not the standing army of habitual grace that will make the Christian a conqueror, he must daily be recruited with auxiliaries from heaven. The watchman doth not only make the watch, and set every wheel in its right place, but he or some other must wind it up daily, or it will stand still. Exercising grace is as requisite to our spiritual motion, as habitual grace to our spiritual being. The razor, though it be never so sharp or keen at first, if it be used, must be often at the whetstone, or it will grow dull.

The wife that hath frequent occasions for money for provision for herself, and children, and servants, and for clothes and all family necessities, and not a penny but what comes out of her husband's purse, and he, fearing she should be prodigal, lets her have money by driblets, but from hand to mouth, must be always going or sending to him, or otherwise starve. The shopkeeper that drives a great trade in the country must go often to London, or abroad in

other parts, to fetch in commodities. The Israelites in the wilderness were maintained for water by the rock. They drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. The rock followed them; they did not only drink of it at first, but had a constant morning's draught, and drank of it often in the day; it ran in a stream after them, and every day supplied them. It is no marvel the apostle commandeth us, Pray continually, pray without ceasing, pray evermore, when he knew all our living was got by begging, that all our supplies must be from above, and we must expect nothing without asking. Ordinances are the food of the soul. As cows afford us both milk and beef, so ordinances are milk to babes, and meat for strong men. Our God is the fountain of spiritual as well as of natural life. It is said most truly, in respect of a natural life, 'In him (meaning God) we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts xvii. 28. 'We live.' Now as God hath made the heart the spring of natural life, and hath drawn from thence a multitude of arteries to carry the vital spirits through the whole body, and disperse life through every part of it; so he hath made the Mediator the spring of spiritual life, and his ordinances the arteries to convey life to every part of the soul. 'In whom we move.' As God hath from the head derived manifold sinews to carry out thence the animal spirits, and with them the faculty both of sense and motion over all; so the Lord, from Jesus Christ the Church's head, through the sinews of sacred duties, conveyeth spiritual sense and motion to all his members. 'And have our being.' To preserve our being, he hath made the liver a fountain of blood, and from thence drawn the veins to convey it over the body, to the nourishment of the whole. Ordinances are those veins which convey and disperse gracious spirits over the whole new man. 'With him is the well of life,' Ps. xxxvi. 9.

Sacred duties are as needful every day for our souls as food and raiment for our bodies. The body must continually be repaired with nourishment, because it is continually consumed by our natural heat. Yesterday's bread will not keep the labourer to-day in strength and vigour to go through with his work; he must have new diet, or he cannot hold out. Friend, I must bespeak thee, as the angel to Elijah, Up and eat, for the journey is too great for thee. Up and be doing in prayer, and Scripture, and holy ordinances, that thou mayest feed and receive spiritual nourishment; for otherwise the business of exercising thyself to godliness, the duties required of thee to be performed, the graces to be exercised, the temptations to be resisted, the deadly enemies to be

conquered, will be too hard for thee, the journey will be too great for thee. The Amalekite, by long fasting, grew faint and unable to go his journey. If the bringing stream be not as large as the running stream, the bottom will quickly be without water. The greatest stock will lessen apace, if a man spend daily on it, though but in a small quantity, if he hath no way of getting. Those that are under-kept, and called to hard labour, can never perform what is required of them. The spirits daily are decaying, and if not daily renewed by proper nourishment we perish. The vessels that are always leaking, must stand constantly under the conduit to get what they lose. When Jonathan, through fasting, became faint, he tasted a little honey, and his eyes were enlightened. 'How much more,' said he, 'if haply the people had eaten liberally of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines,' 1 Sam. xiv. 29, 30. The more a Christian mindeth divine ordinances, in obedience to God's precept, and affiance on God's promise, the more strength he shall receive to conquer his spiritual adversaries, and to discharge the several duties incumbent on him. The truth is, our religious life, our heavenly flame, is like a straw fire to malt, which must constantly be tended and fed with fuel, or it will go out. There is not more need of the shepherd's constant and daily tending his weak sheep in the summer season, than of the saint's daily regarding his precious soul. As trees being well ordered with skill and diligence, they become abundantly fruitful; but being left to themselves, without culture and care, they bring forth little or no fruit. So Christians, by a diligent use of means, abound in the fruits of righteousness, but neglecting ordinances, they decline and decay.

The heart of man is, like Reuben, unstable as water, and is established with grace, Heb. x., which cannot be expected, but through the means of grace. The viol, that with every change of weather is apt to be out of tune, must be constantly hung within scent of the fire. Whilst we are in the care of this world we are full of damps, and therefore need all means of quickening. Our hearts are like clocks, twice a day at least the plummets must be pulled up, or their motion and course will be hindered.

Indeed, as God could preserve our bodies without food or any sustenance by his omnipotent power, as he did Moses and Elijah forty days together, but he will not where he affordeth ordinary means; so he could preserve our souls in life without ordinances, but he will not where his providence giveth us opportunity to enjoy them.

Reader, I must say to thee, as Jacob to the patriarchs, 'Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither and buy for us, that we may live and not die.' Behold, thou hast heard there is spiritual food in heaven; the son of Joseph hath his granaries full of corn, go thou thither daily by sacred duties, that thy soul may live and not die. There is a sensible decay of the strength in husbandmen, whose work is great, upon one day's abstinence. If tradesmen grow careless of their business, and neglect their shops, they quickly decay in their estates. When Christians grow careless of duties, and neglect their closets, it is no wonder that they decline in their spiritual stocks. When the moon hath her open side downward she decreaseth, but when her open side is upwards towards heaven she increaseth in light. There is no growing in grace and holiness, but by conversing with heaven. Grace, like armour, may easily be kept bright if it be daily used, but if it hang by the wall, it will quickly rust, and cost much time and pains to scour.

Much fasting takes away the stomach; and omission of closet duties at one time makes a man more backward to them, and dead about them, another time. When a scholar hath played the truant one day, it is difficult to bring him to school the next day. Fear and shame both keep him back; when he comes thither he is the more untoward about his book. Our deceitful hearts, after they have discontinued holy exercises and are broken loose, are like horses gotten out of their bounds, not found or brought back without much trouble. When an instrument is daily played on, it is kept in order; but if it be but a while neglected and cast into a corner, the strings are apt to break, the frets to crack, the bridge to fly off, and no small trouble and stir is requisite to bring it into order again.

We read of the Jews' daily sacrifice, Luke i. 10, which was morning and evening, Exod. xxix. 38, and xxx. 7, 8. David was for morning, and evening, and noontide, Ps. lv. 17. Daniel was three times a day upon his knees, Dan. vi. 10.

In the morning the saints were at their devotion, which is thought to be the third hour, when the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, Acts ii. 15. This is deemed to be our ninth hour.

The middle or mid-day prayer was termed the sixth hour, which is our twelfth, John iv. 6. At this time Peter went up to the house-top to pray, Acts x. 9.

The evening prayer was at the ninth hour, which is our three o'clock in the afternoon. 'Now Peter and John went up together

into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour,' Acts iii. 1. So Cornelius, Acts. x. 30, 'At the ninth hour I prayed in my house.' Some think the primitive Christians had these three hours in such regard and use that thence they were termed canonical hours. David tells us, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments,' Ps. cxix. 164; 1 Thes. v. 17. The more frequent a Christian is at holy duties, (supposing he doth not make the commands of God to interfere, and neglect his calling and family, when his presence is required in them,) the more thriving he shall be in his spiritual trade. The oftener we go to the fountain or river, the more water we bring thence. As runners in a race do daily diet their bodies, and use exercise to keep themselves in breath, that they may be more able and active when they run for the wager; whereas, if they should neglect it, they would grow pursy and short-winded, and unlikely to hold out when they run for the garland; so Christians, who would hold out to the end, and so run as to obtain, must be daily feeding and dieting their souls, and renewing their strength by these means which God hath appointed.

As the sun is the cause of life and growth in vegetables, so is the Son of God the efficient cause of motion and growth in Christians; where the Son is present in any soul, there is spiritual motion and growth, budding, and blossoming, and bearing fruit; but when the sun withholdeth and withdraws, when this sun departs, the soul is at a stand. Now, ordinances are the means whereby the Mediator conveys heat, and life, and growth to men.

CHAPTER XI.

Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. Frequent meditation of the day of judgment. A daily examination of our hearts, avoiding the occasions and suppressing the beginnings of sin.

Seventhly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, meditate much upon the day of judgment. They will prepare themselves best to the battle who always hear the sound of the last trump in their ears. Zisca, that valiant captain of the Bohemians, commanded his countrymen to flay off his skin, when he was dead, and to make a drum of it. Which use, saith he, when ye go to battle, and the sound of it will drive away the Hungarians or any

of your enemies. Could the Christian but, with Jerome, hear the sound of the last trumpet in his ears at all times, it would encourage him in his spiritual warfare, and enable him to fight manfully, and to cause the enemies of his salvation to flee before him. He who can frequently, by faith, view the Judge sitting on his throne of glory, hear the last trumpet sounding; behold the dead raised, the books opened, the godly examined by the covenant of grace, all their duties, graces, services, sufferings publicly declared, approved, and rewarded; the wicked tried by the law of works; all their natural defilements, actual transgressions in thought, word, and deed which ever they were guilty of, with their crimson bloody circumstances, openly revealed, their persons righteously sentenced to the vengeance of the eternal fire, and that sentence speedily, without the least favour or delay, executed on them, will surely loathe sin as that which brings him certain shame and torment, and follow after holiness, which will be his undoubted credit and comfort at that day. The apostle, writing to the Jews concerning the terror of that day, how the heavens must pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein burnt up, makes this use of it, 'Seeing, then, that all those things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Pet. iii. 11, 14. And again, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' He had need to be exact in his conversation, who must undergo so strict an examination. Well may the time of judgment be called a day, for it will declare and manifest the worth of grace and holiness, which in the night of this life is not observed.

Ah, who can conceive the value which the vilest wretch on earth will put upon holiness at that day! Then grace will be grace indeed, and godliness will be godliness indeed. Then they who mock at saints for their purity and strictness, and look upon sanctity but as hypocrisy, and the acting of a part to cozen the world with, and think it is enough to put God off with a few prayers now and then, when their pastimes and lusts will give them leave, will call to believers, as the foolish to the wise virgins, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;' then the graceless princes and potentates of the world will throw their crowns and diadems at the feet of the meanest Christian for a drachm of his grace and holiness.

The apostle, speaking of that day, puts the question, 'Where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. iv. 18. Now, indeed, those that scoff, and deride, and scorn at holiness and holy ones, may

appear before great men in many parts of the world with praise and applause. Now they may appear in the country, and be respected of their drunken, atheistical, brutish neighbours, and probably be the more honoured for their opposition to the spirit of grace and holiness; but then, where will the sinner and ungodly appear? Not in heaven, for that is no sty for swine, no kennel for dogs, no jail for malefactors, no place for such unholy, God-provoking persons. Into it can in no wise enter that which is defiled or unclean. Such a palace is not fit for beasts; snakes, and serpents, and adders are more fit for the bosom and embraces of men, than such men for the bosom and embraces of God. Heaven cast out wicked angels, and will not take in wicked men; where shall they then appear? Not on earth, for that will be burnt up with fire. Their houses and places must know them no more for ever. The earth groaned under their weight whilst it bare them, but now is eased of such loads, and shall not be pestered with such plagues again. But where shall they appear? Not before Christ the judge with any comfort, for him they have derided, buffeted, crucified; they have rejected his laws, trampled on his blood, told him to his face that they will not have him to reign over them. But where will they appear? Not before the saints, for they have maligned, oppressed, imprisoned, persecuted them as a company of cheats and hypocrites. Oh, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?

1. Consider the holiness of the Judge. He is the holy Jesus. He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity, Ps. xlv. What will the ungodly sinner do when he shall be judged by the holy Saviour? Who can stand before this holy God? 1 Sam. vi. 20. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and so he knoweth the most secret works of darkness. His law is very pure, and observeth and condemneth the least spots, the least defilement; and how will unclean ones endure to be judged for their everlasting lives and deaths by such a law? His throne is a white throne; and how will the black sinner do to stand before this white throne?

Reader, thou hast need to be a faithful and loyal subject, if thou wouldst then be owned and acknowledged by thy sovereign. How exact should he be in his life, who must be tried by so holy a law! 'If thou callest him Father, who without respect of persons will judge every man according to his works, pass the time of thy sojourning here in fear,' 1 Pet. i. 17.

2. Consider the strictness of his proceedings. Every thought, word, and action shall be revealed, examined, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary: 'There is nothing hid that shall not be

revealed, nor secret that shall not be made known.' The thoughts of thy heart shall then be as visible as the features of thy face: 'When God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by my gospel,' Rom. ii. 16. All thy words will then be as audible as if thou hadst had a voice to reach every child of Adam, both alive and dead: 'Verily I say unto you, that of every idle word ye shall give an account at the day of Christ,' Mat. xii. 36. Every action of thine will then be legible, not only to God, as it is at this day, but also to angels and men: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of all things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil,' 2 Cor. v. 10. All the works of darkness will then be brought to light. We must all appear, *φανερωθῆναι*, not only be present in person, and not by a proxy, but be laid open and manifest, be transparent, so the word signifieth, to give an account of everything done, &c., to render a reason of every individual thought, word, and deed—what was the principle from which we acted, what was the rule by which we acted, what was the end for which we acted. When Benjamin's sack was opened, the silver cup appeared. On that fair day all men's packs will be opened, and then it will be known what ware they carry about with them.

Hence some have conjectured that it will not be a short time, nor the judgment soon passed over. It is called a day, but not in relation to our natural or artificial days, for Christ, judging as man in his human nature, by his divine power, will probably employ a far greater time in searching into, and publicly revealing, every man's condition and conversation. Though I am not of their opinions who say it will be precisely a thousand years, because it is said, 'A thousand years are in thy sight but as one day,' yet I judge it to be taken indefinitely; and, as Augustine saith,¹ that the day of judgment shall begin is certain, but when it shall end is uncertain. I find two divines, eminent both for grace and learning in their generations, speaking: one saith, I humbly conceive that the day of judgment shall not be passed over in an instant, but shall be of long continuance; for if Christ should judge only as God, he could despatch it in a moment; but he, judging as man, it must be after the manner of men, that the creature may understand, admire, and approve what is done. The other saith, It must take up some large quantity of time to manifest all the secret sins of men, and therefore it may be made evident, both from Scripture

¹ Per quot dies hoc judicium extendatur incertum est. Scripturarum more diem poni solere pro tempore nemo nescit.—*Aug. de Civit. Dei*, lib. xx. cap. 1.

and reason, that the day of Christ's kingly office, in judging the world, shall last haply longer than the day of Christ's private administration now in governing the world.

3. Consider the weight of the sentence. It is called the eternal judgment, because the sentence then pronounced shall never be reversed, but stand for ever. In this world God judgeth men sometimes mediately, sometimes immediately, which is the first judgment, from which men may appeal by repentance to his mercy-seat; but this the last judgment, once for all, once for ever, in which men receive their final, their eternal doom, John xi. 24. Here Jacob appeals from Laban to a higher tribunal, Gen. xxxi. 53; and David from Saul to the King of kings, 'The Lord judge between me and thee,' 1 Sam. xxiv. 12; Ps. xvii. 2; and Paul appeals from Festus to Cæsar, 'I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat,' Acts xxv. 10. But then there can be no appeal to a higher court, no writ of error can be brought, no arrest of judgment, no second hearing obtained. The sinner condemned to eternal death then is gone for ever: no pardon, no, not so much as a reprieve can be procured for one hour. The saint, absolved and declared an heir of eternal life, is blessed for ever; he shall be beyond all fear, all doubts in himself; above all shot, all opposition from others. In this life Nineveh was threatened, Nineveh repented, and Nineveh was spared. The sentence pronounced was not executed, at least it was respited; but then every sinner will repent, weep, and wail, but repentance will be hid from the eyes of the Judge; all their tears will be in vain. When they are cast, then they are gone for ever.

To provoke thee to holiness,

4. Consider the felicity of the godly at that day. Oh, with what joy will they lift up their heads when that day of their redemption is come! This life is the day of their oppression and persecution, but that day will be the day of their redemption. At this day they are troubled and vexed with a tempting devil, and deceitful hearts, and false, proud, unbelieving flesh, but that will be the day of their redemption from them all. No wonder they love the appearing of Christ, and look and long for his appearing, when it will be the day of their redemption, and time of their refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When thousands and millions shall howl and lament; when the orator will be silenced, and have his mouth stopped; when the soldier, that durst venture into the mouth of the cannon, and dare death itself, shall play the coward, and seek for any hole to hide himself in; when the captains, and kings, and

nobles, shall call to the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them from the presence of the Lord, and the wrath of the Lamb, even then the godly shall sing and rejoice.

(1.) Their godliness will then be mentioned to their eternal honour. As God hath a bag for men's sins, ('Thou sealest up mine iniquities in a bag,') so he hath a book for their services: 'A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name.' Then all their prayers, and tears, their watchings, fastings, faith, love, zeal, patience, alms, imprisonment, loss of goods, name, liberty, life for Christ and the gospel, will be manifested to their honour, and praise, and glory at the coming of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7; Mat. xxv. 34.

(2.) Their names will be then vindicated. With the resurrection of bodies there shall also be a resurrection of names. Now, indeed, the throats of wicked men are open sepulchres, wherein the credit of the godly is buried. Joseph is an adulterer, Nehemiah a traitor, Jeremiah a rebel against the king, Paul a mover of sedition, a pestilent fellow, and one that turned Christian for spite, because the high priest would not give him his daughter in marriage; but when the sea, and death, and hell shall give up their dead, then shall the throats, the open sepulchres of wicked men, give up the names of the godly: 'Then their righteousness shall be cleared as the sun, and their uprightness as the noon-day.'

(3.) Their persons shall be then publicly acquitted. They shall be cleared by public proclamation before God, angels, and men. Hence it is said, 'Their sins shall be blotted out, when the time of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' The sentence of absolution passed in their conscience by the Spirit at this day is sweet, and puts more joy into their hearts than if all the crowns and sceptres of this world had befallen them; but oh how comfortable will it be to be declared just by the Judge himself before the whole world at that solemn and imperial day! They may then ring that challenge, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' Rom. viii. 33; and none will accept it, or take up the gauntlet. Who? Shall God, whose children and chosen they are? No; it is God that justifieth. Shall the Judge? No; it is his undertaken work to present them to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. He hath washed them in his own blood, and made them as white as innocent Adam or angels. He was judged for them, and will not pass judgment against them. He cannot condemn them, but he must condemn himself, for they are his members, his body, his brethren, bone of

his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Shall the law? No; they have fully answered all its demands, superabundantly satisfied it through their surety, both in perfect obedience to all its precepts, and undergoing its punishment. What the law saith, either in regard of commanding complete subjection, or cursing for the omission of it, it saith to them that are under the law; but they are not under the law, but under grace. Shall conscience? No; next to God and Christ, it is their best friend. As Christ pleads for them to his Father, so conscience pleads for them to themselves: 'This is their rejoicing, the testimony of good consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they had their conversations in this world,' 2 Cor. i. 12. Shall Satan? No; the accuser of the brethren will be then cast down, and his place will be found no more in heaven; then, then those blessed promises will be performed, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head,' and 'the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet.'

(4.) The saint's happiness will be then perfected, and he shall never know more what sin or sorrow meaneth, or what want of God's favour, or doubt of Christ's love, or defect of joy and comfort meaneth. The Christian hath so much laid out upon him in this world, vocation, adoption, pardon, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, hopes of glory, that, in the worst condition that men and devils can plunge him into, he finds cause to say, 'Yet God is good to Israel, to them that are of a clean heart;' but then, when he shall enjoy all that is laid up for him, and know the full extent of God's promises to him, the all of Christ's purchase for him, and the utmost reward of his piety, then surely he will cry out with the psalmist, 'O how great is that goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!' Clemens Alexandrinus makes mention of a place in Persia where there were three hills; when people came to the first, they heard a clashing of armour; when they came to the second, they heard a confused noise; when to the third, nothing but songs of triumph. At the day of the saint's conversion, he comes to the first hill, then he heareth a clashing of armour, listing himself under the captain of his salvation, and proclaiming open war against the world, flesh, and wicked one. At the day of death he comes to the second hill, a confused noise; his friends are weeping and grieving, his wife and children are mourning and bemoaning their loss; though his soul be rejoicing to think of the rest to which it is going, yet the flesh sweateth, panteth, is pierced and pained. At the day of judgment he comes to the third hill, where

he heareth nothing but songs of triumph—Victoria, Victoria, hallelujahs, salvation, honour, glory, praise to the Lord, and to the Lamb for ever! At that day of judgment the whole world shall see and say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; then shall the wicked return and discern a difference between them that fear God, and them that fear him not. Then grace will appear in all its embroidery and glory on that day of its coronation, when the worst in hell shall admire and adore it. Now holiness hath a wonderful disadvantage, partly by the persecutions, afflictions, bonds, and imprisonments that attend it, and chiefly from the darkness of men's understanding, and the weakness of their eyes, they are not able to view the thousandth part of its comeliness; but then holiness shall be freed from that black guard of hell that dogs her to destroy her, and then the eyes of all the world shall be strengthened so much as to behold her amiableness; then she shall be owned, honoured, acknowledged by God, angels, and all the children of Adam; then she shall be attended, not with mulcts, and penalties, and bonds, and fetters, but crowns, and sceptres, and palms, and kingdoms; and then, oh then, how lovely, how beautiful, will she be indeed!

5. To affrighten thee from sin, consider the misery of sinners at that day. It is called the day of perdition of ungodly men. Sin will be sin indeed at that day. When sin shall be stripped naked of the favour and countenance of great men, of the preferments, and advantages, and riches, and honours, and offices with which it is clothed here below, and instead thereof be invested with fire, and flames, and brimstone, and blackness of darkness, and whips, and serpents, and inconceivable and eternal torments, what an ugly, loathsome strumpet will she be, even in the eyes of them that now dote on her, commit whoredom with her, and sacrifice their strength, and time, and estates, and souls, and God, and Christ, and heaven, and all to her! Then the drunkard will find his liquor more bitter than wormwood, when he shall have a cup of pure wrath, without the least mixture of mercy, brought to him, and he forced to take it down, though there be eternity to the bottom. Then the persecutor of God's people shall find that it had been better to have been rotting in a ditch, or boiling in a furnace of lead, than to have spent his time in wronging the poorest, meanest member of Christ, when God shall recompense tribulation to them that persecute his people, and to them that are persecuted, rest and peace; then every sinner will believe and feel what now, though God himself tell him, he will be an infidel in,

that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart away from the living God. The wicked is reserved, as the beast for the slaughter-day, to the day of destruction; he shall be brought forth, as the condemned malefactor on execution-day, at the day of slaughter. Ah how dreadful will the sinner's doom be then! The tribunal of the Judge will be a tribunal of fire; he shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance, &c.; the law by which he will try them shall be a law of fire, or a fire of law, Deut. xxxiii. 2; the Judge himself to them will be a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29; and the judgment which he will denounce against them will be, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever.' Ah who can dwell in everlasting burnings? who can abide devouring flames? Who can imagine the shame that will cover their faces, the horror that will fill their hearts, the terrors, and tortures, and torments that must seize them for ever? If Judah was so ashamed when he saw Tamar's signet and staff, the remembrances of his sin, how will they be confounded when all their revellings and roarings, their chambering and wantonness, their cursing and swearing, and all their sins shall be opened before all the world! If Herod was so affrighted when he supposed that John was risen from the dead—that the Baptist's ghost, by walking in his conscience, robbed him of all comfort—what affrightment will possess them to see the saints whom they have nicknamed, disgraced, imprisoned, and it may be murdered, risen from the dead, owned and honoured by the Judge, and the chief favourites in the heavenly court? If Saul was so troubled when he did hear Christ call to him out of heaven, that he fell to the ground, what trouble, what tribulation, will possess them whom he shall curse with a bitter curse, and call to devils to seize on, and associate with, and prey upon, for ever and ever? The saint shall find mercy, the sweetest mercy, in that day of judgment; but the sinner shall have judgment, the sorest, the most cutting, killing judgment, without the least drop of mercy. If the day when God gave the law was so dreadful, full of thunderings, and lightnings, and fearful noises, that the people cried out, 'Let not God speak to us, lest we die,' and Moses himself did exceedingly quake and fear; and if the day were so dreadful when the Son of God's infinite love bare the curse of the law, that the rocks were rent, the earth trembled, the sun was darkened; how dreadful will that day be when God shall make inquisition into, and deal with the vessels of wrath for the breach of the law! 'Who can abide that day of his coming? who shall stand when he appeareth?' Well may it be called the great and terrible day of

the Lord Jesus. Well might the wise man, when he had seemingly laid the reins on the young man's back, and given him leave to run on in the way of his own heart and eyes, pull him in with this curb, 'Remember that for all these things, God will bring thee to judgment.'

When Saporess, king of Persia, had raised a violent persecution against the Christians, Usthazanes, an ancient nobleman, and a Christian, who in the king's minority had the government of the people, was so terrified that he denied the faith; but sitting at the court-gate, when Simeon, an old bishop and holy person, was leading to prison, he rose up to salute him; but the good bishop, frowning on him, turned away his head with indignation; upon which Usthazanes fell a-weeping, went into his chamber, put off his courtly attire, and burst out into this speech, Ah, how shall I appear before the great God of heaven, whom I have denied, when Simeon, but a man, will not endure to look upon me! If he frown, how will God frown when I come to appear at his tribunal! Upon these considerations he repented of his apostasy, assumed courage, and became a glorious martyr for Christ. If Felix, a heathen, trembled when Paul reasoned of judgment to come—nay, if the very devils so far believe that day as to tremble at the thoughts of it—well may the consideration of that day make Christians tremble at the thoughts of sin, and not dare thereby to treasure up wrath upon their heads against that day of wrath, and the declaration of the righteous judgment of God.

Reader, at this day think much of that day of judgment; hereby thou wilt be stirred up to judge thyself, to repent of sin, to ensure an interest in Christ the Judge, to keep a good conscience, and so to think, speak, and act as one that must be judged by the law of liberty, 1 Cor. xi. 31; Acts iii. 19, and xvii. 31; 2 Peter iii. 11; Eccles. xii. 14; James ii. 12; Acts xxiv. 16.

Eighthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, call thyself often to account. This is a special help to holiness: 'I considered my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies,' saith David, Ps. cxix. 59. A man that goeth out of his way will continue wandering, if his mind be occupied about other things, and he consider not what he is doing, and whither he is going. The Christian that is careless of his carriage, and seldom compareth his heart and life with the divine commands, to observe how they agree or disagree, will never order his conversation aright. When a clock is out of order we take it to pieces, and search where the fault lieth, knowing that one wheel amiss may hinder the going of

the whole clock. Our hearts are every day out of order ; our work must be to take them to pieces by examination, and to see where the great fault is. Seneca's sober young man, *ita laborat, ita ludit, ita cœnat, ita potat, ita loquitur, ita vivit, ut qui ephemerides patri est approbaturus* ; So labours, so playeth, so eateth, so drinketh, so speaks, and so lives, as one that is daily to be accountable for all to his father. He that would keep his spiritual estate must keep his account-books well ; the neglect of this hath been the breaking of many tradesmen. When shopkeepers live high, far above their incomes, and for want of searching into their books are ignorant whether their gains will allow such large expenses, it is no wonder if they prove worse than naught. They who expect the coming of great and severe strangers, who will observe narrowly how their house lieth, and how their vessels are kept, and publish it either to their credit or discredit, according as they find, will keep their houses in order, sweep them clean, have their pewter bright and clear, and all things exactly in their places. When the Christian looks every night for the coming of God's deputy, his conscience, to spy and search into his heart and life, how clean and holy both have been kept all the day, it will be a special means to make him watchful over his ways, and exact in his carriage and conversation. Bee-masters tell us, that they are the best hives which make the greatest noise ; so that conscience is the best which makes the greatest noise in daily reasonings and debates before its own bar.

Examination is the quickest way to bring the erring sheep home to the fold. Honest men will examine their weights and measures by the standard, that if they be defective they may be mended. The honest heart will examine its thoughts, its words, its actions, by the royal law, that their unsuitableness to its strictness and latitude may be repented of, and to the utmost of its power reformed. 'Let us search and try our ways.' For what cause? What will be the issue of such a scrutiny? 'And turn again to the Lord,' Lam. iii. 40. What man will seek to a physician, or accept his advice, or take his prescriptions, who doth not know himself dis-tempered, and feel his disease? It is examination of our hearts and lives, by the holy and pure law of God, that gives the knowledge of our spiritual sickness, and helpeth us to feel it, to prize our physician, and thankfully and heartily to accept his directions for our cure.

It is observed of the Dutchmen, that they keep their banks, notwithstanding the threats of the insulting ocean, with little cost and

labour, because they look narrowly to them, and stop them up in time. If there be but a small breach, they stop it presently, and hereby save much charge and trouble. Frequent examination will do this courtesy for the Christian ; it will maintain his peace with little charge and trouble comparatively. As soon as any breach is made by sin, that arch-makebait, between God and the soul, it will help the Christian to run presently to Christ, to heal and make it up in heaven by his merits ; and in the soul, by his purifying and pacifying Spirit.

The counsel which the philosopher gave the young men at Athens may suitably and profitably be applied to Christians, That they should often view themselves in a glass, that if they were fair and well-featured, they should do such things as were becoming their amiable shape ; but if foul and ill-favoured, that then they should labour to salve the body's blemishes by the beauties of a mind accoutred with the ornaments of virtue and good literature.

Examination is a special preservative against sin. No children are more bold to defile themselves, and to play with dirt, or rake in kennels, than those who know their parents are so foolishly fond, like David of Adonijah, that they never displease them at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so ? The child that expecteth to be reckoned with at night will be careful how he dirtieth his clothes in the day.

Examination will help the Christian, if not to hinder a coming disease, yet to prevent its growing and increase.

The ship that leaketh is more easily emptied at the beginning than afterwards ; the bird is easily killed in the egg, but when once hatched and fledged, we may kill it when we can catch it. A frequent reckoning with ourselves, will pluck sin up before it is rooted in the soul.

Examination will help the Christian that hath fallen and bruised himself to heal the wound whilst it is fresh, before it is festered. This one advantage, if there were no more, is extraordinary. As the sting of a bee, though the bee be fled, works itself into the flesh deeper, and diffuseth its venom more strongly, causing the greater pain, that every man, unless foolish, will speedily pull it out, lest he increase his own anguish ; truly so doth sin ; though the honey, the pleasure of it, be gone, yet the sting remains ; and the longer it is before it is pulled out by faith and repentance, the deeper it works itself into the soul, and the more sorrow it will put us to, in this or the other world.

It is examination at night that brings the soul to mourn for and

repent of its failings in the day. It is like the tree which Ctesias speaks of in describing India, that besides fruit, distilleth certain tears, of which are made precious amber; or as the drops of the vine, it is excellent against the leprosy of sin. Ephesus would never repent till they had examined and considered whence they had fallen.

When sin is admitted into the soul, and as a thief in the night stole in at unawares when the eye of the soul's watchfulness was fallen asleep, examination will light the candle of the word, and search the house narrowly, and find out this ill guest; and before it hath done so much mischief as it intended, apprehend it, indict, condemn, and execute it.

Examination every day is like purging the body at the beginning of a distemper, which takes it before it hath habituated itself, and so is much the more easily repelled. An enemy may much sooner be forced out of his holds, when he hath newly taken possession, than when he hath continued so long as to cast up his banks, make his ditches, placed his guns, and fortified them. After we have been foiled by our spiritual enemies, and by examination find out the cause, it will make us more watchful at that gate at which they entered, and careful of that particular wherein they got the advantage of us. As when David had received intelligence that the Ammonites had given his army some small defeat, he sends Joab word of the reason—'they went too near the city'—and wisheth him to make the battle more strong against the place, 2 Sam. xi.; So examination finds out the reason of a Christian's defeat by Satan:—either it was through self-confidence, or want of spiritual watchfulness, or love to some known sin,—and helpeth the saint to bewail the cause of his defeat, and directeth him how to provide better against the next onset.

Frequent examination keepeth the conscience raw and tender, that the least touch of sin will be offensive and troublesome to it. When the heart is used to yield at a small willow, it will never be quiet under a great oak. Searching into our souls makes sin more loathsome to us. Whilst these filthy sinks are unstirred, they do but little disturb us or annoy us with their filthy savour, but when by examination we rake into them, their noisome stench offendeth us extremely, and shews us what need we have of cleansing.

Examination every night will help the Christian to a good night's rest. How comfortably may he lie down who hath made all even with his Maker, and heard his everlasting Father bidding him good-night! How quietly may he sleep who has his pardon

under his pillow ! He needs not fear any officer to call him up at midnight, and attach him for any treasons or misdemeanours.

It is said of Cato, that constantly at evening he would call to mind whatever he had seen, read, or done that day.¹ It was Pythagoras' rule to his scholars, that they should no night suffer sleep to seize their senses till they had three times recalled the accidents and passages of the day. Oh what a shame is it that moralists, who had no true sense of the benefit of such a duty, should out-go the Christian in the performance of it ! that many persons should know the chronicles of other countries or kingdoms, some ages past, and yet not know the passages of their own souls one day past !

Reader, if thou wouldst walk closely with God, and keep even with him, reckon daily with him, call thyself to a strict scrutiny : What do I ? How live I ? Where am I ? Is the work I do warrantable by the word or no ? Is my life the life of faith, of holiness, or no ? Am I in God's way, under his protection, or no ? Have I truth of grace, the power of godliness, or do I please myself with the form of it ? Do I thrive and increase in grace, or do I decay and decline ? Suppose I were to die this night, what ground have I to hope for heaven ? What assurance that I shall escape the power and rage of frightful devils ? What evidences have I that I am a new creature, engrafted into Christ, and thereby entitled to life and bliss ? Thus feel the pulse of thy soul, inquire into its state, visit it often, and see how it doth.

Call thyself to an account for thy sins ; let heart and life sins, open and private sins, omissions, commissions, personal, relative, be all reckoned for. Ask thy soul, as Rebekah, Why am I thus ? Why am I so false to my God, so unfaithful to my covenants ? The heart is like a ditch, into which filth is continually running ; and therefore it behoveth thee, by examination, to be always emptying it. The stable that is daily fouled must be daily cleansed ; the hands that are daily contracting dirt must be daily washed. Our souls are more polluted and diseased than our bodies ; we have always a filthy issue of sin running, which we must be daily searching into and dressing, or our stench will make us loathsome to, and unfit for, any communion with God or his people.

Call thyself to an account daily, for thy mercies ; ask thyself, How much am I indebted to my God ? what privative, what positive mercies do I partake of ? what old, what new, what night, what day, mercies ? what mercies at home, what abroad ? what personal,

what domestical, what national, mercies do I enjoy, or am a sharer in? what bodily, what spiritual, mercies do I receive? what time, what talents, have I to trade with and reckon for? This will help the soul to be speedy and hearty in thankfulness, and force it to David's interrogation, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?' What hot love should I return, what a holy life should I lead? Do this daily; it is much better to pay sums when they are little, than when they are large. Wise men that are able, find it the best way to pay ready money for their wares. Neglect herein causeth many mistakes and inconveniences, and many times differences, among friends.

Having spoken to this particular in the sixth chapter, I shall say no more to it here, though, indeed, I judge it next to a new nature, not inferior to any means of godliness.

Ninthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, avoid the occasions of sin. He that would avoid the commission of sin, must avoid the occasions of sin. If we would not fall down the hill, we must beware of coming near the brow of it. Keep thee far from an evil matter. Children, which in frost venture upon the ice, may possibly be safe, but yet many times they break their limbs, and sometimes lose their lives. It is possible for a saint to come off safe from occasions of sin, but is very seldom seen. A fair booty makes many a man a thief, who otherwise might have lived honest. It was counted, therefore, a great part of wisdom in Alexander, when he had taken the beautiful daughters of Darius prisoners, not to see the fair ladies, lest their beauty should have enticed him to folly. The same word in Hebrew signifieth both an eye and a fountain, to shew that from the eye, as from a fountain, sin doth too often flow. Job's practice was such, that he would not look on a maid lest he should lust after her; and David's prayer was, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' We take the wind of those that are infected with contagious diseases. The wise man gives notable counsel to men, if they would avoid drunkenness: 'Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it casteth its colour in the glass,' Prov. xxiii. 31. When it laughs in thy face, then shut thine eyes, lest it steal into thy heart. We are ready to think, What hurt, what danger is there in beholding the wine in the glass, sparkling and briskly? But Solomon knew, that from looking on it, men come to like it, from liking to tasting, from tasting to a draught, from one draught to another, till the man is metamorphosed into a beast, Gen. xxxix. 10; Ps. cxix. 37. The wise Socrates could advise men to beware of those meats;

which would entice men without hunger to eat, and those drinks which would entice a man without thirst to drink, knowing that, if men come within those traps and baits, they are easily taken. A guest may easily be kept out of the house at first, but if once entertained, it is hard to turn him out of doors. When a governor of a fort once comes to parley with the enemy that besiegeth him, there is great fear that the place will be surrendered. I have read of one, that, having a great mind to go to Rome, yet knowing it to be a corrupt place, and a corrupter of others, entered the city with his eyes close shut, neither would he be persuaded to see anything there but Peter's church, which he went to visit. Solomon persuades his son, if he should not be enticed by the harlot, that he would not come near her house: 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house,' Prov. v. 8.

He that carrieth always along with him a heart ready to break out into a flame, prone to all wickedness, had need to take heed of those bellows that will help to blow up the fire. I more fear, saith Luther, that which is within me, than that which is from without. When a distempered stomach comes to meet with tossing waves, sickness ensueth, though the prime cause is not from the billows without, but choler within. Occasion and the heart are like Dinah and Shechem, if they meet, they usually part not till folly is committed. Those that desire to hinder the generation of vice, that brat of hell, must keep the male, occasion, and the female, a wicked heart, asunder, one from the other. They who have bodies always ready to take infection, must be more careful of their diet and company than others; insensible vapours bring forth horrible tempests: 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' The best heart is like a flint; there is fire in it, though it doth not appear; occasion is the steel that fetcheth it forth, which, being let alone, would be quiet. Bees in winter, being sensible of their weakness, keep their hives, and will not expose themselves to the sharp air and bitter frosts, lest thereby they sicken and die. Alas! how weak is man, how unable to resist the occasions of sin!—no more than the hound can forbear pursuing the hare before his eyes, and therefore it concerns him to avoid them. A candle newly extinguished, will quickly be lighted again. Powder meeting with a light match presently takes fire.

For this cause, it was ordained of God in the law of the Nazarite, who did for a time specially consecrate himself to God, that besides his not coming to the dead, and suffering his hair to grow, he should abstain from these things: 1. From wine and strong drink.

2. From the vinegar of wine or strong drink. 3. From any liquor of grapes, though it were but the water wherein they were steeped. 4. From the green or moist grape. 5. From the dried grape or raisin. 6. From the husk or kernel of them, Num. vi. 3, 4. Had the Nazarite eaten but the skin of the grape or raisin, he had broken the law. Hereby the Holy Ghost would teach us that those who separate themselves from the world, to be in a special manner serviceable to the Lord, must avoid not only plain sin, but the appearance of sin, and all occasions of it, though we may look upon them but as the husks of grapes, to be of small moment, and little danger. Beza giveth this reason why the Levite, when he saw the man that fell among thieves, passed on the other side of the way, *Ne cadaveris contactu pollueretur*, Lest he should be defiled with the touch of the corpse. He would be so far from touching a dead carcase, that he would pass on the other side of the way when he saw one dying: 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, (*i.e.*, come not near it,) turn from it, and pass away,' Prov. iv. 14, 15.

He that will do all he may, will quickly do what he may not. It is lawful to enjoy bodily pleasures and delights, but not to buy them with hazard to our souls. Soldiers in a garrison that venture to the outmost line, are often snapped up by those that besiege them. We sometimes, when in danger of a siege, burn down those houses in the skirts of the city which might be serviceable to us, when we cannot well defend them, lest they should prove helpful to our enemies against us. Theseus is said to cut off his golden locks, lest his adversaries should in fight take hold of them. Even in things lawful, it is commendable for Christians to deny themselves, when there is danger, by taking liberty therein, of gratifying the enemies of their souls. Cotis, king of Thracia, manifested possibly more prudence than prodigality in breaking the cupboard of curious glasses presented to him, lest, his nature being extremely choleric, he should deal too severely with his servants in case they had broken any of them.¹ Aristotle hath a story of Satyrus, that being a pleader, and knowing himself passionate, and in that drunkenness of the mind apt to commit many indecencies, and to rush into foul extravagancies, he used to stop his ear with wax, lest the sense of ill language should move him to choler.

Reader, as thou wouldst shun sin in the action, shun it in the occasion; remember thou carriest thatch about thee, and therefore

¹ Plutarch.

oughtest to avoid the least sparks.¹ A little wind will drive a ship with the stream and tide, and a small temptation may carry thee that way which thy wicked heart inclines thee. A little pulling will draw a strong man whither he is willing to go; it is safest, therefore, to be out of harm's way, and the greatest magnanimity to fly from the sight of such an enemy as sin is. He hath most true courage who makes a timely retreat before he be wounded.

CHAPTER XII.

Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. A humble frame; suppressing sin in its first rise; the knowledge of God.

Tenthly, if thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, walk humbly with thy God. A tree, the more deeply it is rooted, the more it groweth under ground, the more upward in fruitfulness. The Christian will find that, by growing in humility, he shall thrive in godliness. He that turneth his eyes upward, is ready to stumble at every rub that lieth in his way; but he that looketh downward, seeth and avoideth those stones. A proud man is like a little man with a high-heeled shoe, raised thereby, in his own conceit, above others of the same rank, but it fits him with many a fall. The proud person giveth not glory to God, and therefore must not expect that God should give grace to him; but the humble man honoureth God, and sanctifieth his name, and sets the crown on his head, and so may expect, because God hath promised, that God should honour him, and sanctify his soul. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He leaves those high hills barren, but makes the valleys to abound in corn. It is in vain to undertake to pour liquor into a full vessel, it will all run over; but the empty vessel will receive it. The proud person is full still of self, and so will not be thankful for an alms; but the humble man is empty, hungering and thirsting, and he shall be satisfied. Proud Vashti divorceth herself, and provoketh her lord to disown and disclaim her; but humble Esther is thought worthy of a crown, and admitted into the king's embraces. The fig-tree that blooms not at all, brings forth most pleasant fruit, when the sallow, which hath most glorious palms, is barren. Hypocrisy kills the flower of grace at the root; pride nips it in

¹ Quantum possumus a lubrico recedamus, &c.—*Sen. Epist. ad Lucil.*

the bud. Sincerity, like Paul, planteth grace ; humility, like Apollos, watereth it, and helpeth it to flourish. We may take notice all along in Scripture, that the humblest men were the holiest men ; and those that were eminent for any grace, were eminent for humility. The deepest streams were most silent, and made the least noise. Abraham was famous for faith, strong in faith, he believed in hope against hope, but lo, how lowly was he : ' Behold I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' So Jacob, named Israel by God himself, for his fervency and prevalency in prayer : ' I am less than the least of all thy mercies.' David, that man after God's own heart : ' I am a worm and no man ;' as a child weaned from his mother's breasts for humility. So Asaph, Ps. lxxiii. 21 ; Agur, Prov. xxx. ; Isaiah, chap. vi. 3 ; the Virgin Mary, the centurion, the Syro-Phœnician, Paul, all, like full vessels, sounded not their own praise, and like stars, the higher they were in holiness, the less they appeared. When Elisabeth had conceived, she hid herself three months. They who are most fruitful in holiness, make the least boasting of it. Lord, said holy Hooper, I am hell, but thou art heaven ; I am full of sin, but thou a gracious God. Bradford would subscribe his letters, The most miserable, unthankful, hard-hearted sinner, John Bradford. The greater the fire of grace, the less the smoke, or show of it, to the world. The weightiest wheat seeks for the lowest place, when the light chaff flieth in the air.

When the sun is at the highest, the shadow is the least, and the more directly the sun shineth on us, the less our shadow is ; so the higher Christians are in God's favour, the lower they are in their own eyes. The more God exalted David, the more he debased himself : ' What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me up hitherto ? and yet thou speakest of thy servant's house for a great while to come,' 2 Sam. vii. 18, 19. This was David's language, when Nathan brought him word that God would build him a sure house. Those trees which spread much and grow low, near the ground, most commonly bring forth more and larger fruits than high trees, that aspire up into the air. The highest trees are barren—so the proud and high-minded man ; but with the lowly is wisdom.

The humble Christian is nearer God than others, and so must needs thrive above others ; though God beholdeth the proud afar off, he dwelleth in the humble heart. The lowly Christian is most lovely in his eye, and shall have most of his company. God appeared to Moses, not in a lofty cedar, but in a low, mean, abject

bush. If he that walketh with wise men becomes wise, and is the better for such good company, what good doth the humble Christian get by walking with his God !

Pride is like the remora to a ship, which will arrest it under full sail, hinder the saint in his heavenly passage when he is making the greatest speed ; it is like those weeds, which are of so poisonous a nature that they will suffer no good herbs to grow near them. The servant that hath been trusted and honoured by his lord, if he prove a thief and steal from his lord, provokes him to take his stock out of his hands, and to trust him no longer. The proud man steals from God, and robs him of that glory which is due to him ; and therefore it is no marvel if he deny to trust such an unfaithful servant with any more spiritual riches.

It is the empty barrel that makes the greatest sound. The poor women that have nothing but a few matches, or pins, or band-strings, or thread-laces, the men that have only a few brooms, or some small coal or roots, make a great stir and loud noise about the city, and would have everybody acquainted with their ware ; when the great usurer, that is worth thousands in bills and bonds, and the rich shopkeeper, whose estate swelleth to a vast bulk, never proclaim what they are worth, but rather endeavour to hide it. Those that have least spiritual riches are most guilty of boasting. Laodicea bragged much, that was poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and worse than naught. They who are fullest of faith, and richest in good works, make the least sound. When their hearts and lives, like the face of Moses, shine brightly with grace and holiness, they do not, they will not, know it ; they consider their greatest light and lustre is but a reflection from the Father of lights, and therefore they have no reason at all to boast of borrowed goods.

The worm of pride breeds soonest in rotten wood. The proud pharisee, who justified himself, had nothing in him but matter of condemnation ; when the poor humble publican, affected with his own vileness and baseness, had something of worth in him, even his sense of his own unworthiness. Brass makes a greater sound, and is heard farther, than gold, but every one knoweth there is no comparison between them. Chaff is seen above the wheat, not because it is better, but because it is lighter.

Alas ! what is man ? what hath man that he should be proud ? He is but enlivened dust, moving earth, refined clay, that which beasts trample under their feet. He hath nothing that good is but what he hath received. He lives wholly upon the alms and charity

of another. A proud heart and a beggar's purse do not agree. As he is a sinner, he is more vile and base, more noisome and loathsome, than any toad, or snake, or serpent; and hath he any reason to be proud? Reader, be clothed with humility; learn of thy Redeemer, for he was meek and lowly in heart. Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,' Phil. ii. 7, 8.

When pride cometh, then cometh a fall. As a wrestler, if he can lift his fellow from the ground, quickly gives him a fall; so the devil, if he can lift up with pride, doubts not but to throw them. Physicians observe that the dropsy and consumption are usually together; when once thou swellest with this dropsy of pride, expect a consumption of thy godliness. He walks but dangerously who walks on high places, as on the ridges of houses and on ropes; he that walks below is more safe. Angels, Adam, David, Hezekiah, Peter, and many others in Scripture, confirm the wise man's proverb, 'Pride goeth before a fall.' Trees that are set on mountains are easily shaken and torn up by the roots when stormy winds arise. Indeed, it is no wonder that a proud man should fall into sin, for he relieth on his own strength, which is but a broken reed. Peter had not fallen so foully if he had not undertaken to stand upon his own legs, which were too weak to bear his weight. But before honour is humility. The lower the foundation, the higher the building.

A proud man hath a great infelicity, in that he is his own enemy, and makes all others his enemies. God is his enemy; there is no sinner whom he proclaims such open war against, in such express terms, as the proud: 'God setteth himself in battle array against the proud.' It were better earth and hell should unite their force against him than one God. Ah, who knoweth the power of thine anger! Men are his enemies; he disdaineth others for their meanness, or poverty, or want of parts, and they disdain him for his pride. He that overvalueth himself shall soon be undervalued by every one. Pride makes him scorn friends, for familiarity would deprive him, he thinks, of that reverence which he deserves, and therefore all must be his enemies; but he is his own enemy most, in cutting such a gash in his soul by his pride, and making way for all other sins to fall on. He that is lifted up with pride, quickly falls into the condemnation of the devil. Satan has found this vice, pride, by experience so prevalent to draw the creature from God, that he knew no better bait to catch

Adam with, 'Ye shall be as gods;' and when afterwards he encountered David, it was with this weapon—he tempted David to number the people.

Yet, alas! though it be so prejudicial, how natural is it to us! Pride is a weed, a worm that gets into the best garden. It was a witty taunt which a proud cardinal had from a friend of his, that upon his election went to Rome on purpose to see him, where, finding his behaviour stretched to nothing but pride and state, he departed, and put on a mourning suit, and the next day comes in black to visit him. The cardinal, asking the cause why he was in mourning, he answered, It was for the death of humility, which fetched its last breath in him when he was elected cardinal. Most of us have cause to put on mourning upon the same account.

Eleventhly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, suppress sin in the beginning. This foul bird is easiest killed in the egg. When a fire is first broke out in a chimney, it may with much less labour be quenched than when it hath seized the timber of the house. What small beginnings had those fires which have conquered stately palaces, and turned famous cities into ruinous heaps! A hair is but a little thing, yet some have been choked with it. If the tetter be not killed, it will come to be a ringworm. Passion at the first kindling may be quenched; but if let alone, sends such a smoke into the understanding, which thickens into a cloud, and hinders us from the sight of ourselves and our duties. The tree may soon be pulled up before it hath taken root, but then it may be too hard for the strongest man. A prick with a pin or a thorn, being let alone, hath sometimes caused the cutting off of a limb, nay, the loss of life. Minutes to sin are like cyphers to a figure, which quickly increase it to vast sums. Sin increaseth by degrees, James i. 14, 15: first it surpriseth the heart in a thought, then it stealeth into the affections for approbation, then the affections plead with the will for its consent, and then that commandeth the act of it, and frequent acts cause a habit, and custom in sin causeth despair, despair causeth men to defend sin, their defence of sin a boasting and glorying in it, and the next step is hell. Sin is therefore fitly by the prophet compared to a chain, for one link draweth another.

As the ivy by little and little creepeth upon the oak, till at last it doth destroy it, so doth sin cling about the soul, and by degrees overrun and undo it. When the water begins to freeze, it will hardly bear a pennyweight; let it alone a little longer and it will bear a shilling, then a pound weight, then a man, then a horse,

then cart and load and all. As the cloud which Elijah's servant saw was at first no bigger than a man's hand, but afterwards it spread till it covered the heavens. Peter first denieth his Master, then sweareth, then curseth, and forsweareth himself. Cain first harbours envious thoughts of his brother, then murdereth him in his heart, then kills him with his hand, then quarrelleth with God, and despaireth. There is no staying, when we are once down the hill, till we come to the bottom. If this giant of sin get in but a limb, he will quickly get in his whole body. Wanton thoughts, if not stifled, bring forth actual uncleanness. Sin is like water—if we give it the least way, run it will in spite of us. If we get not the conquest over it in its infancy, we shall not overcome it when it is brought to maturity. He that cannot put out a spark will be much more unable to put out a flame. The smallest of these twigs will prove thorny bushes, if not timely stubbed up.

The horse must be broken when a colt, and the lion tamed when a whelp. It is best to deal with sin as Jocasta with Œdipus, to cast it forth in its infancy. The Israelite must dash these Babylonian infants against the wall, if he would be a blessed man, Isa. xiii. 18. The Christian that checketh and curbeth sin when it first appeareth, doth, as David to the Philistine, wound it in the forehead, and so slayeth it certainly. As the snail by little and little creepeth up from the root of the tree to the top, consuming the leaves as it goeth, and leaving nothing behind it but filth and slime; so sin gradually infecteth the whole man. This poison, if not presently vomited up as soon as taken down, flieth to and destroyeth the vitals. The apostle calleth it a canker, and truly so it is in regard of its spreading nature, both as to persons, from one man to another, and to parts, from one faculty of the soul and member of the body to another. How dreadful was the effect of a few boys joining with Masaniello in Naples, A.D. 1647, whom the officers and people laughed and jeered at instead of subduing! What murders and burning palaces and churches did ensue and arise from so contemptible means! Therefore, as wise princes will be heedful to suppress riots and petty insurrections, knowing that if they be let alone they will break out into open rebellion, and cause much bloodshed and mischief; so, reader, do thou stifle and kill sin in the womb before it be quick, lest that, like the young serpents, if brought forth, it tear out thy bowels, and its birth cause thy death.

Twelfthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, study the knowledge of God. It is ignorance of God that is the origin of

all sin. Did men know the sad fruits of his fury, they durst not by sin provoke him. Did men know the sweetness of his favour, they would do, they would suffer anything to please him. It is in the mist of ignorance that they lose their way, and wander from him who is the chiefest good. The devil is bound in chains of darkness, and so are all his children.

They who know God most, love him most, and fear him most, and trust him most. It is life spiritual, and the seed of life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, John xvii. 3. All godliness, all grace, is seminally in the knowledge of God, and floweth from it. They who with open face behold the Lord, though but as in a glass, are changed into his image, from glory to glory; from one degree of grace to another, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

They who know the infiniteness and immensity of his being, cannot but despise all things for him, esteem all things as nothing to him, as nothing without him; look on the whole creation as less than nothing in comparison of him. Ah, what admiring, reverent thoughts of that being of beings, of him whose name is I AM, have they who launch a little, for it is but a little that they can here, into this ocean! All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity; they cannot but desire and labour to enjoy so boundless a portion.

They who know the power of God cannot but fear him, and stand in awe of his presence and threatenings. They fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell, Mat. x. 28; Heb. xii. 27, 28. They will depend on him, because there is no want which the Almighty cannot supply, no weakness which he cannot remove, no danger which he cannot prevent or support in. Acquaintance with him who is mighty in strength makes the Christian resolute in God's cause, and as bold as a lion at his call and command.

They who know the eternity of God, will choose him before temporal vanities. What are the pleasures of sin for a season in his eye, who seeth the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore? What are the honours on earth to him who knoweth the eternal weight of glory? What are temporal relations in comparison of the everlasting Father? Nay, what is his natural life to eternal life? No good is little that is eternal. How great, then, is the infinite and eternal God!

They who know the wisdom of God will submit to his providences, and acquiesce in all his dispensations. He is wise in heart, his understanding is infinite, and he knoweth what is best for thee, and

me, and all others, and therefore there is all the reason of the world why I should rest in his will, and be satisfied in his pleasure. It is the Lord, saith the soul in his greatest afflictions, who is infinite in wisdom, and knoweth what will do me most good. Let him do what seemeth good in his eyes.'

They who know the faithfulness of God will credit his word, and make him the object of their hope and faith: 'They that know thy name will trust in thee,' Ps. ix. 10. His truth commandeth our trust. We will rely on faithful men, who will not lie; but the Christian seeth infinitely more reason to rely on the faithful God, who cannot lie.

They who know the mercy, and love, and goodness of God, will love, and admire, and trust, and praise him. The knowledge of his love to us will call out our love to him, as one that deserves it, being infinitely amiable in himself, and the more deserving of our love for his love to such loathsome ones as we are. It will cause us to rely on him; for infinite love, joined with infinite strength and faithfulness, will not, cannot, deceive us. It will help us to see the odious nature of sin, in that it is an abuse of infinite love. The goodness of God will lead the soul to repentance.

They who know the holiness of God will sanctify him in their approaches to him, and walk humbly and watchfully with him. They know that sin is loathsome to him, because contrary to his holy nature, and therefore they hate it. They know that holiness is lovely, as it is his image and excellency, and therefore they follow after it. They are upright, and serious, and zealous, and humble, and reverent in their holy performances, because therein they have to do with such a holy God.

They who know the anger of God will stand in awe, and not sin. They know that God is not to be mocked; for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. They know his fury is terrible, intolerable; none can abide it, no sinner can avoid it. Therefore they hate sin, the object of it, and fly to Christ, who delivereth from it.

Oh what a work, a gracious sanctifying work, doth the knowledge of God make in the soul! It makes the understanding to esteem him above all, the will to choose him before all, the affections to desire him, to delight in him, more than all; the whole man to seek him, to serve him, to honour and praise him beyond all in heaven and earth. What is the reason that God is so much loved, admired, and worshipped, and glorified in his church, when all the world besides despise him, but this, 'In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel'? Ps. lxxvi. 1.

O reader, be confident of this, the more thou knowest of the excellencies of God, the more thou wilt prize his Son, submit to his Spirit, crucify the flesh, condemn the world, fear to offend him, study to please him, the more holy thou wilt be in all manner of conversation.

Hence the main work of Christ's prophetic office was to reveal God to the world.

And the devil's great work is to keep men from this knowledge of God, knowing that it will tend so exceedingly to their sanctification and holiness, and to the overthrow of his interest. The miller muffleth and blindeth his horse that draweth his mill, and thereby keeps him at his round, deceiving him in making him to think he goeth forward. The first work of the Philistines was to put out Samson's eyes, and then they made him grind at their mill, and make them sport. The eagle, saith Pliny, (Nat. Hist.; lib. x. cap. 20,) before he setteth upon the hart, rolleth himself in the sand, and then flieth at the stag's head, and by fluttering his wings, so dustieth his eyes that he can see nothing, and then striketh him with his talons where he listeth. Satan darkeneth men's understandings, and thereby commandeth their wills and affections, and destroyeth the whole man. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish, in whom 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,' 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

When men are spoken in Scripture to be vicious and profane, they are only said not to know the Lord, 'and there is no knowledge of God in the land,' Jer. iv. 22; Hosea iv. 1; and when God undertakes, in his covenant of grace, to sanctify and make men holy, he is said to put his knowledge in their hearts, and his promise is, 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest,' Heb. x.; Jer. xxxi. 34. And they that would grow in grace are commanded, in order thereunto, to grow in knowledge, 2 Pet. iii. 18.

Ignorance is the mother of all irreligion, of all atheism: Eph. iv. 18, 'They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' As owls, sinners may see in the night of this world, have some knowledge in worldly affairs; but they cannot see in the day, are ignorant of spiritual, of heavenly things. Sin, like the pestilence David speaks of, walketh in the dark, Ps. xci. 5; and Satan is the enemy that soweth his tares by night. This is one cause why sin is called a work of darkness. It is from that darkness which is in men's understandings that they turn their backs upon God, and run upon

their own eternal ruins. It were impossible for the rational creature to be so desperately mad as to play with the wrath of God, and slight the love of God, to neglect his mercy, and despise his justice, if they did but know God. When princes go *incognito*, in a disguise, and are unknown, then they are disesteemed. Hence they who are obstinately profane and resolved on wickedness say unto God, 'Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14. The hooded hawk, that seeth not the partridge, will never fly after it. The Israelites pitched in Mithkah, which signifieth sweetness, before they removed to Cashmonah, which signifieth swiftness. They only who know the sweetness of God will fly to him with swiftness. *Ignoti nulla cupido*. He who knoweth the all-sufficiency of God will never turn to the creature; even as the bee, if it did not find honey enough in one flower, would never hasten to another.

Those that are ignorant of God abound in all manner of atheism and wickedness. The families which know not God will not call on his name. There is no truth, no mercy, but lying and stealing, and swearing and killing, where there is no knowledge of God, Hosea iv. 1, 2. It is no wonder to see blind men stumble and fall, and break their limbs. I do not marvel to see ignorant men, who know not God, to live without him, to turn him out of their hearts and houses, as if they had no dependence on him, or engagements to him.

Whence is it that men are regardless of their souls and eternal estates, that they dance over the unquenchable lake, and are merry and jovial at the very brink of destruction; that they despise the God that made them, preserveth them, bought them, and hath them in his hands and at his mercy every moment; that they slight his Son, his Spirit, his law, his love, his wrath, his promises of eternal life, as if they were things of no value, and rather fit to be trampled on than esteemed; that they can lie down and sleep, and rise up and eat, and drink, and follow their sports and pleasures, and laugh and sing under the guilt of sin and curse of the law, and infinite wrath of the Lord, but their ignorance of God? Ah, did they but know his holiness, his jealousy, his power, his justice, they would sooner undergo any misery that men could inflict on them, than incur his anger, or provoke him to jealousy; they would never neglect his worship, or put him off with a few heartless prayers. *Ludentes cum Deo ut pueri cum suis pupis*, as Calvin hath it; playing with him, as children with their babies, when they come immediately to his presence, and pretend to seek his face.

The holy times under the gospel, wherein the people of God should be of one heart, are spoken of as proceeding from this cause : ‘The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the sea,’ Isa. xi. 9. The perfection of grace and holiness in heaven will be the effect in part of this knowledge of God. When we shall see him (perfectly) we shall be (perfectly) like him, 1 John iii. 2.

Reader, be persuaded, therefore, to study this knowledge of God ; think no labour too much for it ; pray, and read, and hear, and confer, and mourn that thou mayest know God. Believe it, it is a jewel that will pay thee well for all thy pains. Incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart unto understanding. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God : ‘For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,’ Prov. ii. 2-6. Did men but spend that time and strength about the knowledge of God which they spend in endeavouring to raise their families, and advance their parties and interest, and to suppress them that in their apprehensions stand in their way, we should quickly have a nation as famous for peace, and love, and holiness, as now it is notorious for divisions and profaneness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. A contented spirit ; avoiding those things that hinder godliness.

Thirteenthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, labour to get a contented frame of heart. A settled, fixed frame of heart as to all outward occurrences, is like ballast to a ship, which will help it to sail trim in all waters ; whereas a discontented spirit is as a light, small boat in the ocean, tossed about with every blast, and always in danger of drowning. I doubt not but the great apostle’s diligence to learn this lesson perfectly—‘I have learned in what state soever I am to be contented ; I know how to be abased, and how to abound,’ Philip. iv. 12—was a special means of his extraordinary growth and proficiency in grace. It is generally observed that peevish persons, whom nothing pleaseth, are usually lean and thin in their bodies ; but those who are of cheerful tempers, and

not overmuch troubled with any disasters, are thriving and healthful. The discontented soul, whom every heat or cold above ordinary puts into a fright or fever, will rather decline than increase in his spiritual health ; but the Christian who is ever cheerful in his God and Saviour, and lives about these lower things as one indifferent about them, will never be hindered by them in his work of holiness. As a sickly man is hindered in his journey by every storm, and ready to run to a house, or stand under a hedge, at every shower ; so is a discontented person ready to turn aside, or stand still, at every unexpected providence, when a contented man, like a lusty, resolved traveller, keeps on his course whatsoever weather comes. Godliness requires a contented mind to grow in, 1 Tim. vi. 6. It is said of the pelican that she is caught by the shepherds in this manner : they lay fire not far from her nest, which she finding, and fearing the danger of her young, seeks to blow out with her wings so long till she burns herself, and makes herself a prey, out of foolish pity to her young. So many men, out of unwise pity to their relations and possessions, when they are at any time in danger for want of this contented spirit, and quiet submission to infinite wisdom, trouble themselves so much and so long about them, till they make themselves a prey to Satan, and no whit preserve or secure those persons or things about which they are so immoderately anxious and solicitous.

Whilst we are in this world we must expect various winds—some sharp, some warm, some nipping, some refreshing, some with us, some against us ; and unless we are prepared for all by a holy pliability, we shall be injured by every one. Every strong wind, whether with us or against us, will be ready to overturn us if we want this ballast. There is no condition in this life so blessed as to afford the perfection of content ; and yet there is no estate in this life so wretched but a Christian may be contented with it. If thou hast as much as thou wantest, thou hast as much as in reason thou desirest, and therefore hast cause to be contented.

The way to true riches, saith Plato, is not to increase our heaps, but to diminish the covetousness of our hearts. It were well for the world, saith another, if there were no gold in it ; but since it is the fountain whence all things flow, it is to be desired, but only as a pass to travel to our journey's end without begging. Every man is rich, or may be so, if he will equal his mind to his estate, and be but poor in his desires. He that hath most wants something, as Haman, when he had the commander of one hundred and twenty

provinces at command. He that hath least wants nothing, if he wants not a contented spirit.

He that can bring his heart to an even poise in all providences will avoid many temptations, and escape many snares in which others are entangled. The want of this renders many a man's life as unserviceable to God as uncomfortable to himself. The discontented person, like the sea, is seldom seen without storms and tempests. A small matter puts him out of order and joint, and so unfits him for spiritual actions. As hot iron, the smallest drop sets him a hissing; like a ruffled skein of silk, every way taken to compose him entangleth him. Discontent, like ink poured into a bottle of water, turns all into blackness. O friend, beware of it!

It hinders from praying. A discontented man will rather pour out his passions than any sober prayers before the Lord.

It hinders examining ourselves. Though quiet and calm waters will, like a glass, if we look into it, shew us the image and likeness of ourselves, yet troubled and muddy waters will make no such representation. Though the heart, when calm and contented, may shew us the face and features of our souls, yet if muddied by discontent they cannot do it, John xiv. 27; Ps. lv. 4, 5.

It hinders from hearing. The noise of passion drowns the voice of the preacher. Men must with meekness receive the ingrafted word, if they desire it should save their souls, James i.

When a fountain is troubled, there can no water be drawn out of it but what is filthy and unsavoury. When a person is discontented, all his duties are distasteful and unacceptable to God. Therefore, Christ more than once dissuades his disciples from it: 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,' John xiv. 1, 27.

Diogenes resolved, since many evils would befall him, to keep himself steady in all. He would oppose resolution to fortune, nature to the law, his reason to his affections. But the Christian hath a better guide, and better grounds for contentedness.

There be several thoughts which may quiet and compose the heart in all occurrents.

1. That infinite wisdom ordaineth whatsoever befalleth me, and the present condition that I am in is ever best for me. If a greater portion of outward good things had been good for me, I had had it. My Father is not so careless of his children as to deny them anything that is good for them; and if it be not good for me, why should I desire it? He acteth without reason, as well as without religion, who craveth what is hurtful to him. If my condition

were cut out by the will of malicious men, I might have some ground of grumbling; but when it is cut out by the infinite wisdom of a gracious God, I have not the least cause of discontent. I take it ill if my children be not satisfied with what food and raiment I think fitten for them; and may not God much more take it ill at my hands if I sit not down quietly with his allowance, be it more or less?

2. That the smallest mercy is above my merits. If my condition be not so good as I desire, yet it is better than I deserve; if my estate be not so flourishing as I would it should be, it is not so bad as I know it might have been. Beggars must not be choosers; they who have nothing but of charity and alms, must be satisfied with a bare allowance, and contentedly be at another's disposal: 'Why doth living man complain?' Lam. iii. 39. Man, a reasonable creature, and complain against his Maker! Living man complain, when the most miserable estate out of hell is a mercy to him!

3. That, be our estate as low as it will, it is better than we brought with us into the world. Some give us this reason why man, when none besides of the visible creatures, is born naked, weeping, helpless, but to teach him contentedness. Have I any food? I brought none with me. Is my garment coarse and thin? I was born naked. Am I blessed with any comforts? I came into the world without any: 'Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out of the world; the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.'

4. That a better condition might and would make me worse. If I were mounted high in the world, I should be like the flag at the top of the mast, more liable to storms and winds. The full purse invites the thief, and perhaps may occasion a stab, when the empty pocket is secure, and the poor man may travel the road without any such danger. Low shrubs escape many a cold blast with which tall trees are assaulted: 'They have no changes; therefore they fear not God,' Ps. lv. 19. Atalanta lost the wager she ran for, by gathering up the golden apples which Hippomenes for that purpose had thrown in her way.

5. That others, who are better than I, and more holy, are worse for this world, and suffer more hardships. In spiritual things look on those above thee, that by an honest emulation thou mayest reform and amend; but in temporal things look on those below thee, that thou mayest not complain or murmur. How many are in fetters, wandering up and down from house and home, set upon

the rack of diseases, and have an ounce of misery for every drachm which thou hast? Stay, sirs, said the wise Harry in the fable, let our estate content us; for as we run from some, so others run from us.

6. That all shall work for my good. The saint is sure to thrive by his sufferings. When children meet with nuts, or apples, or primroses, in their way, those are oftentimes occasions to make them loiter in their errands, incur their parents' anger, and sometimes their late return finds the door shut against them; when such as meet with danger make the more haste, and their speed procureth them the greater welcome. They who meet with pleasures are apt to loiter; they who meet with miseries make the more haste, and shall find the better cheer. The Christian hath a promise, and the very Godhead of the Almighty engaged for its performance: 'We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose,' Rom. viii. 28. Why should not the Christian, with a holy resolution, hold a steady course in all weathers; and though he be forced with cross winds to shift his sails and catch at side winds, yet wisely steer and keep on his course by the *cape of good hope*, when he may be certain that every wind that bloweth shall help him forward to his eternal joyful haven. Though we cannot see how some passages of God's providence, as persecution, oppression, loss of relations or estates, sickness or disgrace, should do otherwise than hurt and injure us; and are ready to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and to say, as Jacob, 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; all these are against me.' Children are not, honours are not, riches are not, liberty is not; all these are against me. But Christ may say to us of such severe dispensations, as once to Peter, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter.' The issue will prove a truth in God's promises, and the conclusion will speak what was in the womb of the promises. I am confident, when God sendeth afflictions, they are at that season more fit for me than outward mercies; and though at present I am ready to blaspheme, yet when I find the fruit of them in being thereby partaker of his holiness, I bless him for them. A Lacedæmonian woman, when Sparta had got the day in a battle, could not only submit, but rejoice, though her five sons were slain in the fight. If I get the victory over one sin, I have cause to rejoice, though it cost me some outward comforts.

7. That the more I repine, the worse I make my condition. A discontented man, like one in a barrel of pikes, which way soever he turns, he finds something that pricks; he is best at ease when

he lieth still. Murmuring turns whips into scorpions, and makes that which would be but as a little finger, heavier than weighty loins. They who by an even poise may sit safe in a boat when the waters are rough, by rising up or stirring are drowned. Passions, like rain or mist to the best firs,¹ breed vermin in the soul. Because this man hath not what his lust craveth, he enjoyeth not what God hath given him; but like an ass, feedeth on herbs, whilst he carrieth better food on his back for others. A single mischief by discontent is made double. The prisoner galls his legs by striving with his fetters.

8. The examples of others may have some prevalency with us; Abraham, Moses, Paul were eminent for this grace.

Many heathen who were ignorant of the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God, yet upon principles of morality were constant and even in their behaviours, not changing their countenances with the change of their fortunes and conditions, but bringing their mind to their estates, when they could not bring their estates to their minds. Xantippe said of Socrates that she always found him returning home—though he often met with affronts and abusive language abroad—with the same face and carriage with which he went out. Furius Camillus was ever like himself, neither by obtaining the dictatorship inflamed with arrogancy, nor, being banished his country, sick with melancholy. The whole body of Rome, after their disaster at Cannæ, where their consul was slain, and the flower of their gentry and soldiery cut off by Hannibal, when the whole world did ring their passing bell, and judged their fortune dying and desperate, were even then heroic in their carriage, and acted nothing unworthy their former greatness. In their Asian enterprise they proposed, before the battle, conditions to Antiochus, as if they had conquered him; and after the fight and victory offered him the same terms as if they had not conquered.

Abdolomius, a poor gardener, though of the king's stock, when advanced by Alexander to be king of Zidon, and asked by him how it was possible for him to endure his poverty with contentedness, answered, I pray the gods I may continue the government of this kingdom with the like mind; for those hands were sufficient for me to live by, and as I had nothing, so I wanted nothing.

9. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He doeth thee no wrong, he cannot do thee any wrong; now why shouldst thou complain when not injured? It is unreasonable to murmur when a man hath right done him.

¹ Qu. 'furs'?—ED.

10. God is gracious and good in all his dealings with thee.

If thine estate be but little, yet that little, with the fear of the Lord, is better than the possessions of many wicked men, Ps. xxxvii. A penny which is the earnest of some great bargain, is another manner of thing than an ordinary penny, and more worth than many pounds, being given and received under another notion. Thy little is an earnest of infinitely more than thou canst imagine, and therefore more precious than others' thousands. A dinner of herbs, with the love of thy God, is infinitely more eligible than the stalled oxen of the wicked, and his wrath therewith. Who would desire Eglon's present with the dagger, Sisera's milk with the nail and hammer, and Haman's banquet with the gallows that trod upon the heels of it? Truly such is the riches of every wicked man.

The smallness of thy temporal may increase thy spiritual estate. If God recompense thy want of earthly with a supply of heavenly riches, thou art no loser. Nicephorus tells us of one Cyrus, a courtier in the time of Theodosius the younger, who, through the envious occupation of some favourites, being spoiled of his goods, of a pagan became a Christian, and of a Christian a minister of Christ. Eudoxia, the daughter of a philosopher in Athens, being cast out of her father's house by unkind brethren, and coming to Constantinople to beseech Theodosius to right a poor orphan, found such favour in his eyes that he made her his queen. Affliction is the way to honour with men, to more holiness from God, when prosperity causeth our fall both into sin and misery. He holds the garments of his godliness fast in a boisterous wind, who would lay it off in a sunny day.

Lastly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, take heed of those things that will hinder thee therein. As if a man would have his trees to thrive, he must not only open the earth sometimes and mind its watering, but also lop off superfluous branches; and as a gardener, if he would have his herbs and flowers to flourish, must be sure to keep his banks and beds well weeded, as well as dunged or watered; so if thou wouldst thrive and flourish in godliness, there is a necessity of avoiding what is hurtful to it, as well as of using what is helpful.

There be several things which will keep a Christian from the exercise of his holy calling, some of which I shall but briefly name, having had occasion to speak of others, and also to these, in other chapters.

1. Avoid evil company. Wicked persons delight to have or to

make fellows. Hence we find in Scripture that they go as the unclean beasts into the ark in pairs: Adam and Eve, Simeon and Levi, Ammon and Jonadab, Hymeneus and Alexander, Phygellus and Hermogenes, Ananias and Sapphira. Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned? Expect not that the flowers of thy graces should flourish unless these weeds be removed from them. He that walketh in the rain must expect to be wet; he that walketh in the sun must expect to be tanned; and he that walks among polluting persons must expect to be polluted.

2. Take heed of idleness. An idle man is like a heap of dry straw, quickly fired by the sparks of Satan's temptations, Prov. xxviii. 19; 1 Tim. v. 13; 2 Thes. iii. 10, 11.

Whilst the oyster lieth gaping against the sun, he is devoured by the crabfish. Whilst the Christian lieth lazying on the bed of idleness, he is a prey to Satan.

The purest river water, if it stand still in a vessel, will become unsavoury. The best corn, if not stirred, will be musty. As the caterpillar consumeth the leaf, and the canker the rose, so will idleness thy godliness, Ezek. xvi. 49.

As men in war lying in the field, if they be slothful and lie lazying on the ground, must expect to be a prey to their enemies; the Amalekites found this by experience. The sluggard will rather be killed than take the pains to defend himself. A slothful man, who will not employ his stock, cannot expect to improve his stock. The diligent hand maketh rich, in goods and in grace.

3. Love not the world. The thorns of the world hinder the growth of the good seed of grace. This world's best, are the other world's worst husbands. It is hard for the periwinkle in the sea to swim, because of the house on her back; it is impossible for them to swim heavenward who have the world, not on their backs, but in their hearts. The more thou delightest in this world, the more thou wilt neglect the other world. He who is taken with, and fond of a harlot, will quickly abate in his love to, nay cast off, his honest wife. The palm-tree is least at the bottom, and the higher it groweth, the thicker and greater it is, contrary to all other trees. The higher a Christian mounts in his affections, and the more heavenly he is, the more he will thrive in Christianity. The child cannot thrive that feedeth on dirt; the more a man loveth the earth, the less he will do or suffer for heaven. Such Esaus will sell the birthright for a mess of pottage; such Gehazis will dishonour and belie their master for a talent of silver; such Achans will destroy themselves and families, and trouble a whole Israel,

for a wedge of gold ; such Judases will sell their Lord and Saviour for a goodly price, thirty pieces ; for a piece of bread such a one will transgress. The fire which breaks out of this bramble devours the cedars of Lebanon. The Athenians did set up a pillar, wherein they published him to be an enemy to their city who should bring gold out of Media as an instrument to corrupt them. Inordinate love of creatures is a canker which in time will eat up the very life of godliness. Reader, if thou art risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is. It is recorded by divers historians, both of the East and West Indians, and some blackamoors in Guinea, between both, that many subjects willingly die with their princes, and women with their husbands ; that some men give their wives, others their children, others their servants, to be buried alive in the grave with their kings, to serve him, as they conceit, in the other world ; that some women cast themselves into the fire in which the dead bodies of their husbands are consumed. If these can cast away and condemn the world and all things in it for the love of a poor wretched creature, what a shame is it to Christians if the love of Jesus Christ, their head, their prince, their husband, do not mortify them to the world, and make them despise all in it, to enjoy him whilst they live, and to be with him where he is when they die !

4. Allow thyself in no known sin. This is like a thief used to the shop, which will steal away all thy gains, and keep thee assuredly from thriving in thy heavenly calling. There is no possibility of making religion thy business without the gracious concurrence of the Holy Spirit ; he it is that must lay the foundation, rear up the building, and perfect what he beginneth ; but thou canst not expect his company or assistance if thou harbourest any corruption in thy heart. Though this dove may fly to thee, desirous to make its abode with thee, as the dove went out of the ark, yet if it behold the earth under water, thy heart in any way of wickedness, it will return again whence it came ; doves will lie clean, or be gone. Bees will not continue in a stinking or impure hive ; therefore those that would not lose them, prepare the stools where they set them with perfumes and sweet-smelling boughs, lest ill savours force them to forsake their stations. Thus, saith Chrysostom, deals the Holy Spirit ; our souls are the hives, which, if perfumed with grace, invite his presence, but, if polluted with any known sin, provoke him to depart. Oh let there not be any way of wickedness in thee, if thou wouldst run the way of God's commandments !

CHAPTER XIV.

Motives inciting Christians to exercise themselves to godliness. The vanity of other exercises. The brevity of man's life. The patterns of others.

Thirdly, I shall annex some motives to quicken thee to exercise thyself to godliness, and then conclude the treatise.

First, Consider the vanity of all other exercises and labours. The wise man begins his Ecclesiastes with vanity of vanities, all is vanity; and after a large and exact demonstration thereof, makes this use, and ends his book with, 'Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.' It may be, reader, thou takest much pains and spendest much time; thou risest early, and sittest up late; and wastest thy body, and wearest out thy strength; and toilest and moilest about the things of this life; but, alas! to what purpose? to what profit? The foot of all thy accounts, when at the end of thy life the total comes to be summed up, will be only ciphers, and signify nothing. Thou workest all this while at the labour in vain. Like the disciples, thou fishest all night, and catchest nothing. Thou spendest thy strength for what is not bread, and thy labour for what will not satisfy. If the word of truth, and the God from whom it is impossible to lie, may be believed, all the things of this life separated from godliness are lying vanities, broken cisterns, ashes, lies, wind, vanity of vanities, and things of naught, Jonah ii. 8; Jer. ii. 13; 1 Sam. xii. 21; Hosea x. 13, and xii. 1; Eccles. i. 2; Hab. ii. 13. It is Chrysostom's saying, that if he had been to preach to all the world, and could so have spoken that all should have heard him, he would have chosen that text, 'O mortal men, how long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing!' Democritus gave that for the reason of his continual laughter, which occasioned his countrymen to look on him as distracted, that when he beheld the labour and diligence, the running and riding, the sweating and panting, nay, the fighting and killing of men to get one above another, and to heap up a fading treasure, he could not but deride their folly.

Indeed, though the heathen laughed at the ridiculousness of such persons, the sensible Christian seeth great cause to weep at the emptiness and unprofitableness of such actions, and the madness of the agents. Cyprian advised his friend Donatus to sup-

pose himself at the top of the highest mountain, and thence to behold the tumults and chances of this wavering world, and told him that then he could not but either laugh at it, or pity it. It is no such wonder that brutish horses should leave good provender to feed on litter, as some jades do; but that men who are indued with reasonable souls, that seeming Christians, who have a table spread before them with hidden manna, with angels' food, with meat indeed, and drink indeed, with all the dainties of heaven, should neglect these and feed on ashes, may well be matter both of admiration and lamentation.

The Holy Ghost tells such, that they follow after vain things, which cannot profit them, 1 Sam. xii. 21. All outward things are like an olive or date stone—hard to crack or cleave; but when with much labour they are opened, they are nothing worth.

The wise moralist, speaking of such laborious loiterers as work hard for nothing, compares them to such as spend many months to learn to write with their feet, and when they have learned it, are never the better for it. Cæsar compares them to such as fish for gudgeons with a golden hook—hazard more than the fish when taken are worth. Life is precious; health, and strength, and time are precious, because all these have a relation to an eternal estate; now how foolish is he that wasteth them upon toys and trifles, and neglecteth provision for the other world! 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain,' Ps. xxxix. 6.

Observe, reader, how dearly men pay for their gilded nothings, for their earthen potsherds covered with silver dross; they walk up and down, run hither and thither, disquiet themselves with cares and fears, and heart-piercing frights and vexations, for a vain show: 'The people labour in the fire, and weary themselves for very vanity,' Hab. ii. 13. Their work is hot and hard; they labour in the fire, even to lassitude and weariness. But is it about the noble concerns of their immortal souls? Is it that their sins may be pardoned, the vitiosity of their natures healed, and that their souls may be fitted for the heavenly mansions? No, it is for very vanity; for that which will not afford them the least good, or make them in any respect better or blessed. Alas! how much below, nay, contrary to, reason doth man act, to cast away pearls upon swine, gold upon dross, diamonds upon dirt—to throw away his time and seasons of grace, which are more worth than rubies, than all riches, upon that which is vanity and vexation of spirit!

It was a worthy check which Cyneas the orator gave to the

monstrous ambition of Pyrrhus. When that king of Epirus was solicited by the Tarentines, and other people in Italy, to become the head of their league against the Romans, whilst he was musing upon that affair, his favourite Cyneas came into his presence, and perceiving the king in a study, desires the knowledge of his thoughts. Pyrrhus courteously opens his heart to him, and asketh his advice whether he were best to accept of that honourable offer or no, but resolving before to join with them, and promised himself success. The orator answered him, That in case he should join with them and prevail, what would he then do? Pyrrhus told him, Then Sardinia and Sicily will be at my command. Cyneas consented, and replied, What then will you do? Pyrrhus told him, Then Africa will soon be conquered. Cyneas asked, What then will you do? Then said Pyrrhus, Greece will yield to my victorious arms. Cyneas continued, When Greece is brought under, what will you do next? The king, perceiving the intention of his favourite, replied, smiling, Then, Cyneas, we will sit still, rest ourselves, and be merry. That, said Cyneas, you may do presently without any bloody fight or barbarous outrageous acts, without tiresome marches, pinching quarters, tormenting fears of losing the day, without any hazard or danger to yourself or others.

Truly, reader, I may tell thee, if thou art one that busiest thyself about a throng of worldly businesses, and crowdest thy mind and heart with projects and designs to increase thy heaps, and advance thy name, and provide for thy children, and procure thyself a comfortable subsistence for a few days, that after all thy care, and trouble, and restlessness, and vexation, and hazards, and dangers, thou wilt be never the better; thou wilt but, like them that spend their time, and money, and thoughts for the philosopher's stone, reap thy labour for thy pains, and find all unprofitable. Felix Platerus is of opinion that all alchymists are mad, in being so laborious for nothing.

May I not say to thee truly concerning thy pains and time, what Judas did falsely concerning the ointment, 'To what purpose is this waste?' To what purpose is thy waste of time, and strength, and health? Alas! what profit will all thy pains bring thee in?

The vanity of other labours will appear in that all other things are unsuitable, deceitful, unsatisfying, vexatious, and uncertain.

1. Unsuitable to thy soul. Gold is unsuitable to hunger, food to the sick, honour to the weary; so are all the comforts of this life to thy soul. What is an earthly treasure to the poor in spirit? what is the best physic-garden to a wounded conscience? what are

all the dainties on the table of the creation to one that is hungry and thirsty after the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit? Bodily things are not suitable to our spirits, nor temporal substance to an immortal soul. The fattest increase of the earth is from the excrements of beasts, which must needs be far from answering the nature of a heaven-born spirit.

2. Deceitful. As Jael to Sisera, the world brings forth meat to us in a lovely dish, and saith, Come in, my lord, turn in; but she puts her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer. With the hammer she smites foolish Siseras that trust her; she smites off their heads after she hath pierced their temples. It serveth its greatest darlings in their extremity, as Plutarch reporteth Pompey to have served Cicero, who, when Cicero fled to him in his misery for succour, fled out at a back-door, and left him to the mercy of his enemies. The world, next man's heart, is the greatest cheat and impostor in the world. Like a host, it welcomes us in our inns with smiles and embraces, but kills us in our beds, when we suspect no such matter. As the wise man wisheth thee to be moderate and abstinent at a full table, and to put a knife to thy throat, for they are deceitful meat; so I may say of all the dainties and delicacies of the creation, they are deceitful meat, pleasant, but poison. Like the bramble, the world promiseth us protection and refreshment under its shadow, if we will suffer it to be our king, and reign over us; but a fire comes out of it to destroy the cedars of Lebanon, the souls of men.

As the plover, to put a man out of his way, flieth before him, clapping her wings, that he, minding the noise she makes, and following her, might not find her nest; so the world, with its noise and clamours, its songs and music, keeps men still in admiration of her, and hinders them from finding out her cozenage and thievery: 'He that trusteth in vanity, vanity shall be his recompense,' Job xv. 31. It is reported of one Oromazes that he had an enchanted egg, in which, as he boasted himself, he had inclosed all the happiness of the world; but, being broken, nothing was found in it save wind. Truly such is the world's inside, wind, whatever appearance it hath in the eye of a worldling. As the forbidden tree seemed to promise knowledge to our first parents, but it took their knowledge from them, and brought in ignorance; so the world promiseth great matters, much joy and delight, but payeth us with the contrary—sorrow and horror. The worldling's voice is like that of the thief, 'Come, let us lay wait,' &c.; 'We shall find all precious substance, and fill our houses with spoil;' when, alas!

instead of precious substance, they find pernicious shadows; and instead of filling their houses with spoil, they fill their hearts with gall and wormwood. The world, as a cunning courtesan, flattereth and fawneth upon the young gallant, to commit spiritual uncleanness with her, and then casteth him from the height of fancied delights into the depth of real horror, Prov. i. 10, 11.

3. Unsatisfying. All these sublunary comforts are but skin-deep. As a mist, they may wet the blade, but leave the root of the corn dry; they may cause a smile in the face, but cannot refresh the heart, or satisfy the soul. The countryman thinks, if he were at the top of some high hill he should touch the heavens; but when, with much pains, and sweat, and toil, he is gotten thither, he finds himself deceived. Men think if they could attain to such a degree of honour, or such a quantity of riches, or enjoy such brutish pleasures, then they should be satisfied, but they find their thirst after creatures as immoderate as before; like men in a fever or dropsy, the more they drink, the more they desire: 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth gold with increase.' Many men have too much of the world, but no worldly man hath enough; his voice still is like the horse-leech, Give, give. Though he hath enough to destroy him, yet he hath not enough to content him. When the Parthians had taken Crassus, the covetous Roman who had robbed the temple, they poured molten gold into his mouth, saying, Drink now thy fill, thou greedy wretch, of that which thou hast so long thirsted after. The covetous caliph of Babylon, when taken prisoner, was set by the great Khan of Tartary in the midst of those treasures which he had wretchedly scraped together, and bidden eat his fill and satisfy himself, but amongst all his heaps of silver and gold he was miserably famished.¹ The soul will starve, for all the food which the whole world affordeth it. A worldling is like Tantalus, who had apples at his lips and water at his chin, yet pined for want; in the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits. If thou triest the whole creation, and empanellest every creature upon the jury, to inquire where satisfaction is to be had, they will write *Ignoramus* upon the bill. If thou askest the sea, it will answer, as concerning wisdom, 'The sea saith, It is not in me; and the depth saith, It is not in me; the earth saith, It is not in me.' Ask every worldly blessing particularly, and it will say, It is not in me. Thou mayest call and cry to them in thy need for comfort, as eagerly and earnestly as Rachel for children, and each will answer,

¹ Turkish History, 113.

as Jacob did here, 'Am I in God's stead, that hath withholden thy desire from thee?' or as the angel to the woman, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is risen, he is not here.' Am I, a poor finite being, in God's stead, to satisfy the vast desires of thy capacious soul? Why seekest thou living comforts amongst dead creatures? it is gone, it is not here. The world entertains its best guests no better than Caligula did his favourites, whom he invited to a feast, and when they were come, set golden dishes and golden cups empty before them, and told them they were welcome, and he would have them feed heartily. All the trees in the garden of the creation are like those trees which Solinus mentioneth in Assyria, the fruit whereof seemeth as yellow as gold, but, being touched, is as rotten as dirt.

4. The things of this world are vexatious. Their sting paineth far more than their honey pleaseth. They are like the Egyptian reed, which will not only fail them that trust it, but also pierce them with splinters, and wound them deeply sooner or later: 'They who will be rich, pierce themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Instead of satisfaction, thou wilt find vexation. The things of this world are not only wind for their vanity, but also thorns for the vexation they cause. As when the blood is corrupted by a poisoned arrow, it flieth to the heart, thinking to find some remedy there; but as soon as it toucheth the heart, it findeth death where it looked for life. Thus men that are pressed with miseries, run to the world as their refuge, hoping to find comfort and refreshment there; but, alas! that doth increase their afflictions, and gives them rather matter of more mourning than any abatement of their sorrows. They who dive into the bottom of this sea of the world, to the hazard of their lives, instead of the pearl of contentment and happiness, which they take such pains for, bring up nothing but their hands full of the sand and gravel of vexation and anguish. All the ways of worldly delights are strewed with nettles and briars, so that its greatest darlings are but like bears robbing a bee-hive, that with much labour get a little honey, but are soundly stung for their pains. Therefore reason, much more religion, may sound a retreat, and call us off from our eager pursuit of these lying vanities. *Car où il n'y a rien à gagner que des coups, volontiers il n'y va pas*: No man makes haste to the market, where there is nothing to be bought but blows.

5. Uncertain. There is no constancy in outward comforts. As brooks in winter are carried with violence, and run with a mighty stream, flowing over with abundance of water on every side, when

there is no want nor need of waters ; but in the heat of summer is dried up, when water is scanty and hard to be had ; such is the friendship of the world ; it will promise us many things when we have need of nothing ; but when the wind turns, and afflictions overtake us, it is like a tree withered for want of sap, and as a ditch without any water to refresh us. When the sun of our prosperity is hid and covered with a cloud, these shadows vanish and disappear. As leaves fall off in autumn, so doth the friendship of creatures fail men when the sap of that maintenance which commanded their company is withdrawn from them. Man in honour doth not abide, Ps. xlix. As the rising sun, coming into our horizon like a giant ready to run his race, appearing to us with a full and glorious countenance, within an hour's space is obscured with mists, or darkened with clouds ; and however, if it meet with neither of these, when it arriveth at its noon-day height, it declines, descendeth, setteth, and is buried under us ; so the ambitious person sheweth himself to the world as chief favourite at court, with much pomp and pride ; by and by his honour is eclipsed by the hate of the people, or frowns of his prince, or envy of his fellow-courtiers ; or if not, yet he dieth, and carrieth nothing away, and his glory doth not descend after him. The like is evident of earthly treasures ; they are soon gone, though not soon gotten. As a gallant ship, well rigged, trimmed, tackled, manned, with her top and top-gallant, and her well spread sails, putteth out of harbour to the admiration of many spectators ; but within a few days is split upon some dangerous rock, or swallowed up of some disastrous tempest, or taken by some ravenous pirate ; so are this world's goods on a sudden taken from their owners, or their owners from them.

There is a hole in our strongest bags, and rust in our choicest metal. The apostle calls riches uncertain riches, and honour a fancy, and all the things of this world a fashion, 1 Tim. vi. 17 ; Acts xxiv. ; 1 Cor. vii. 31. We are not certain to keep these birds in our yards whilst we live ; for riches make themselves wings and fly away ; but we are certain, if they do not leave us, that we shall leave them. ' We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out of the world.'

Reader, how unwise is he who neglecteth eternal substance for fading nothings ! The Romans are recorded as guilty of much folly, that in their fight with Mithridates, they were so eager after their prey, that thereby they missed taking the king, who could not otherwise have escaped their hands. Ah, how foolish art thou, if, through thy violent pursuit of a perishing world, thou shouldst

lose an eternal kingdom ! As Constantinople was lost through the covetousness of the citizens ; so is the crown of life and glory, the city that hath a foundation, through men's eager endeavours after earthly things. The beloved disciple doth not unfitly represent all the beauties, and glories, and excellencies of this lower world, under the name and notion of the moon, which is ever in changes, and never looks upon us twice with the same face ; and when it is at the fullest, is blemished with a dark spot, and next door to declining, Rev. xii. 1.

An old man of Brazil, discoursing with the merchants of France and Portugal, and perceiving the long and dangerous voyages which they took to get riches, asked them if men did not die with them as well as in other countries ? They told him, Yea. He asked them who should possess their riches after their deaths ? They said their children, if they had any ; if not, their next kindred. Now, saith the old man, I perceive ye are fools ; for what necessity is there for you to pass the troublesome seas wherein so many perish, and to run so many hazards ? Is not the earth that brought you up, sufficient to bring up your children and kindred also ? We have children and kindred that are likewise dear to us ; but when we consider that the earth which nourisheth us is sufficient to nourish them, we rest satisfied.

That busy bee and great trouble-world, Alexander, had a tart yet wise reproof from Diogenes, when, being taken with the philosopher's witty answers, he bade him ask what he would, and he would give it him. The philosopher desired him to grant him the smallest portion of immortality. Alexander said, That is not in my power to give. Then, saith the philosopher, why doth Alexander take such pains, and make such stir to conquer the world, when he cannot assure himself of one moment to enjoy it ! Ah ! why should thou neglect thy God and Christ, and soul and eternal good, and tire and weary thyself night and day, for these unsatisfying comforts, which may leave thee to-morrow, and of which thou canst not secure the enjoyment of one moment ! If God complain of wicked men, and threatens them with fierce wrath and fiery indignation for selling the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes, and would make them know that he valued his people at a higher price, and would not suffer them to be sold at such a rate ; what will become of thee if thou shouldst sell thy soul, thy salvation, thy God, thy Christ, for silver, for vain, unsatisfying corruptible silver, when their value is above millions of worlds ! Oh take heed that thou dost not cast away thyself for

such transitory trifles. Let not the world's venison cause thee to lose thy Father's blessing. It was a poor change of Glaucus to exchange gold for copper; but oh what a sad exchange wilt thou make to exchange heaven for earth, the endless fruition of the blessed God for a moment's enjoyment of creatures!

Thou wouldst condemn that mariner of folly, who, seeing a fish in the water, should leap into the sea to catch it, which, together with his life, he loseth. What a fool art thou, for mortal comforts to lose an immortal crown! The women of Corinth, saith an ancient father, did set up tapers at the birth of every child, with proper names upon each of them, and that taper which lasted longest in burning, had its proper name transferred to the child. God himself gives the highest and richest, though conceited worldling, his name: 'Thou fool, this night,' &c. 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.'

The plain truth is, the world is the ruin and destruction of men. Its pleasures and honours make the sinner merry and jolly, as the herb sardonia the eater, who eating dieth: 'They that will be rich, fall into temptations and snares, and many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. The world serveth its darlings as that tyrannous emperor did his servants—let them through a sliding floor into a chamber full of roses, that, being smothered in them, they might meet the bitterness of death in sweetness. Oh do not spend thy strength for that which is not bread, but hearken to Christ, and thou shalt eat that which is good, and thy soul shall delight thyself in fatness, Isa. lv. 3, 4.

Secondly, Consider the brevity of thy life. He who hath but a little time, and a great task, must work hard, or his work will not be done. The birds know their time, and improve it. In some countries, the shorter the days are, the faster they fly. Heathen have been sensible of this. Theophrastus cried out on his dying bed, *Ars longa, vita brevis*; Time was short, and not sufficient for human arts and sciences. Seneca saith of himself, *Nullus mihi per otium exiit dies, partem noctis studiis devovi*; I lose no day through idleness, but even devote part of the night to my studies. The very devils follow their cursed trade with the greater diligence, knowing that their time is short, Rev. xii. 12.

Now, reader, consider how few thy days are. What is your life? even a vapour, a coming and a going, a flood and an ebb, and then thou art in the ocean of eternity. I have read of one, that being asked what life was, was answered answerless; for the party of whom the question was demanded only turned his back and went

away. We come into the world, and take a turn or two about in it, and God saith, Return, ye children of men. A little child may number the days of the oldest man. We project high things, and lay foundations for an earthly eternity, but the longest life is less than a drop to that ocean. Yet, alas! the most are blown off in the spring, and few continue to fall off in autumn. Plutarch compareth Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, in regard of their short reign, to kings in tragedies, which last no longer than the time in which they are represented on the stage.

The river Hypanis in Scythia, bringeth forth every day little bladders, out of which come certain flies, which are bred in the morning, fledged at noon, and die at night: 'Man cometh up like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not,' Job xiv. 2.

This short time posteth away with speed; how soon do our days vanish! Job tells us that his little time made great haste to be gone: 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,' Job vii. 6. The weaver's shuttle is an instrument of very swift motion, and so swift that it is used for a proverb, for all things that are swift and speedy. *Radius textoris dictum proverbiale; Radio velocius.* The Latins express it by a beam of the sun, or a word which signifieth a ray, which is darted in a moment from one end of the heavens to another; such speed doth our life make to pass away.

Cardinal Bellarmine, when he had a full prospect of the sun going down, to perceive the quickness of its motion, took a psalter in his hand, and before he had twice read over the fifty-first Psalm, the whole body of the sun was set, whereby he concluded, the earth being twenty-one thousand miles in compass, the sun must go seven thousand miles in half a quarter of an hour. However the Cardinal might be mistaken in his reckoning, yet man's days are 'swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey,' Job ix. 25, 26. It is our shame and misery that our days should be so swift, and we so slack; that our time should be as speedy as a post, or ship, or eagle, and our hearts as slow about our eternal concerns as a snail. Our negligence herein speaks us brutish, and void of common sense. Reason will teach him that followeth its directions, to be most industrious about matters of such importance.

The heathen historian¹ can agree with Scripture in this: *Vita nostra sicut fabula, non refert quam diu sed quam bene*; Our life

¹ Liv. lib. xv. cap. 7.

passeth away, as a tale that is told ; it matters not much whether it be long or short, but whether it be well or ill.

Surely it concerneth thee, reader, to make religion thy business, and work the work of God, when thine everlasting happiness dependeth on it, and thy time is so short that thou hast to do it in. In the days of Ptolomeus Philopater, when the huge and great anchor of the ship Thalmegos was laid out upon the shore, the children of Alexandria did ride upon the stalk, and crept through the ring of the anchor, as if it had been made purposely for their pastime, whereas wise men knew it was appointed for better uses, namely, to stable and make sure the great vessel in storms and tempests.

Truly, so do too many serve time ; they play, and toy, and trifle it away, as if God had given it to them for that end ; when he who hath but half an eye, as we say, may see that it was given for better purposes, viz., to furnish his soul for his eternal voyage, and thereby to help to stablsh and fasten him when he shall launch into the stormy ocean. Protogenes made himself ridiculous in the judgment of all that are sober, for spending seven years in drawing Falisus and his dog ; for though the most excellent pictures are longest in drawing, yet to spend years about that which may be finished in days, argueth want of wisdom. But having spoken somewhat largely to this in the sixth chapter, I am the more brief in this.

Thirdly, Consider the examples of others, who have wrought hard at this heavenly calling. Cicero tells us, Nothing prevails more with men than similitudes and examples. Indeed, worthy patterns are of great power. Thucydides brake forth into tears, out of love to learning, upon hearing Herodotus read a history that he had written. Themistocles tells us, the statue of Miltiades would not suffer him to sleep. Alexander was much provoked to valiant acts by reading the prowess of Achilles and Hector in Homer. Cæsar was so stirred to courage by reading the conquests of Alexander in his youth, that he wept for anger that he had done nothing worthy of himself at that age. Iron put into the fire is turned into fire. Consider, therefore, the prophets and apostles of the Lord, how diligent they were at their duty, how hard they wrought for God.

The great apostle was indefatigably industrious for his soul and his Saviour. Consider him in reference to his outward man, how unwearied was he at his Master's work ! and in reference to his inward man, how zealous, how fervent in spirit, serving the Lord !

'From Jerusalem to Illyricum I have preached the gospel.' His travels are computed to be twelve thousand nine hundred and seventy miles. He gives us, when necessitated thereunto, a brief catalogue of his actions and passions for Christ. 'Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils by false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' 2 Cor. xi. 23-29.

Reader, think thou hearest the apostle speaking to thee, as once to the Corinthians, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.' How did our blessed Saviour work the work of him that sent him while it was day? He went about doing good. Godliness was his meat and drink: 'I have meat to eat which ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' He wrought so hard that he forgot to eat his bread, and was taken by his kindred to be mad. It was his sleep and rest. He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. He prayed with strong cries and groans; and being in an agony, he prayed the more fervently. He was taken to be about fifty years old when he was little above thirty, so much was he worn out with labour for his God, Acts x. 38; John iv. 34; Luke vi. 12; Mark i. 34; Heb. v. 7.

O reader, let Christ be the copy after which thou wilt write, and the pattern which thou wilt follow, and be a follower of others as they are of Christ Jesus. Did Christ work so hard for thee; did he lose his food, and sleep, and wear out himself, that his strength was dried up like a potsherd, and his heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels, and wilt not thou spend and be spent for thy Saviour?—I would say for thy own soul; for in serving him thou servest thyself. Think of it when thou art trifling away thy time, and neglecting thy spiritual watch, and dull and dead in holy duties. How eager and earnest, how zealous and sedulous, thy Lord Jesus was in working out thy salvation! He did not play,

nor dally about the work of thy redemption, but made it his business, and did what he was called to with all his heart, and soul, and strength.

CHAPTER XV.

The excellency of this calling, and the conclusion of the treatise.

Fourthly, Consider the excellency of this calling. As it is said of God in respect of beings, 'Who is like thee, O God? Among all the gods none is to be compared to thee;' so I may say of godliness in respect of callings, What is like thee, O godliness? Amongst all callings none is comparable to thee.

1. It is the most honourable calling. The master that thou art bound to is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the fountain of honour, and Lord of glory; one of whom the greatest princes and potentates of the world hold their crowns and sceptres, to whom they must kneel and do their homage; one to whom the whole creation is less than nothing. The work that thou art employed in is not servile and mean, but high and noble; the worship of the great God, walking and conversing with his blessed Majesty, subduing brutish lusts, living above this beggarly earth, a conversation in heaven, a conflict with, and conquest over, this dreggy flesh and drossy world, and powers of hell, to which the greatest battles and victories of the most valiant warriors that ever drew the sword are worse than children's play. To conquer our passions is more than to conquer kingdoms. Themistocles is renowned by Cicero for telling some who disparaged him for his ignorance in playing on the lute, that he knew not how to play on the lute, yet he knew how to take a city. To subdue one lust, is more than to subdue a thousand cities. Thy fellow-servants are the elect of God, glorious angels and saints, who are higher than the kings of the earth, princes in all lands, a crown of glory, a royal diadem, a chosen generation, the excellent of the earth, vessels of gold, the children of the Most High, of whom the world is not worthy. The privileges of this calling and company are eminent. Adoption, remission, growth in grace, divine love, perseverance in holiness, an eternal kingdom, are all contained in the charter granted to this corporation. The covenant of grace, that hive of sweetness, that mine of gold, that cabinet of jewels, to which all the world is but a heap of dust, is their part and portion, and contains more in it for their comfort than heaven and earth is able to contain.

To serve God is one of the fairest flowers in the saint's garland of honour. Hence the Lord's kinsman glorieth in being the Lord's servant; and the Lord's mother calleth herself his handmaid, Jude 1; Luke i. 38. If the meanest offices about earthly princes are esteemed honourable, what an honour is it to wait on the King of heaven! The saints' duty is their preferment, and that service which is commanded them a privilege. The great apostle boasteth of his chain for God as his glory and credit, and holdeth it up as a mark and badge of honour: 'For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain,' Acts xxviii. 20, and begins one of his epistles with this honorary title, 'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' Philem. 1.

It is not earthly riches that make a man honourable; we mistake in calling and counting rich men the best men in the parish. Riches without godliness are but a gold ring in a swine's snout, for which the brute is nothing the better. It is not airy applause or worldly preferments that will make a man honourable. Titles are but like feathers in the hat, or glistening scarfs under the arms, which add not the least worth to the man that wears them. A great letter makes no more to the sense of the world than a small one. Worship, honour, grace, highness, majesty, make nothing to the real intrinsic value of any person. The great monarchs of the world are but beasts in God's account. Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name signifieth illustrious, whom the Samaritans styled the mighty God, is called by the Holy Ghost, because of his ungodliness, a vile person, Dan. xi. 21; 'In his days shall stand up a vile person.' All honour without holiness is fading, as well as fancied rather than real. External nobility, though it glitter in the face of the world, is but, as Seneca saith, *vitrea*, brittle as glass, and compounded of earth. The potentates of the world are often like tennis-balls, tossed up on high to fall down low. Hence some of the wiser heathen have called them *ludibria fortune*, the scorn of fortune. Haman honoured one day, the next day hanged. Gelimér, the puissant prince of the Vandals, Belisarius, Charles the Fifth, and Henry the Fourth, emperors, and many others, experienced the brittleness of worldly glory. But that honour which is from above is true and eternal. Plutarch tells us the Roman nobles, as a badge of their nobility, wore the picture of the moon upon their shoes, signifying, as their nobility did increase, so it would decrease. All privileges, all prerogatives, all titles, all dignities, without godliness, are vanishing shadows. It is the new creation that rendereth the children of Abraham like the glorious stars in heaven.

The world looks on the saint (possibly he is poor and mean in the world) as the Jews looked on Christ, as a root out of a dry ground, and so saw no form nor comeliness in him; but they who could pierce into the inside of Christ, could see that in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and they who can see into the inside of Christians, behold the King's daughter all glorious within. As the precious stone sandastra hath nothing in outward appearance but that which seemeth black, but, being broken, poureth forth beams like the sun, so the church of Christ is outwardly black with affliction, but inwardly more bright and glorious than the sun, with thriving virtues and celestial graces. The power of godliness in a mean Christian is a rich treasure in a mean cabinet, but vice in robes, in scarlet, is poison in wine, the more deadly and dangerous.

Tamerlane's tomb was rifled by the Turks, and his bones worn by them for jewels, though their enemy, and one that had conquered them in divers combats, and captivated their emperor, and carried him up and down in an iron cage for his footstool. God makes his people honourable in the eyes of the wicked: 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou art honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. The sons of them that afflicted thee shall bow before thee, and thine enemies shall lick the dust,' Isa. xliii. 4. A wicked king, Jehoram, honoureth and waiteth on a servant of God, Elisha; Herod reverence the Baptist. Grace is a powerful, though silent orator, to persuade all that see it to love and honour it. What Diogenes spake of learning is truly applicable to grace, or the knowledge of God in Christ. It makes young men sober, old men happy, poor men rich, and rich men honourable.

When Agesilaus was ready to die, he charged his friends that they should not make any picture or statue of him: For, saith he, if I have done anything that is good, that will be my monument; but if otherwise, all the statues you can make will not keep my name alive. The Egyptians, in their funeral orations, never commended any for his riches, because they thought them the goods of fortune, but for his righteousness and justice.

Piety is a lasting pillar, that causeth the righteous to be had in everlasting remembrance. Time shall not outlive the saint's honour: grace renders him more illustrious than ever the Mausolean mountain did that Carian. As the hairs of Tarandrus are not to be pierced with any weapon, so the name of a saint cannot be hurt by all the slanders and calumnies of the wicked. They

who are sainted in heaven's calendar, and whose names are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, are truly honourable and eternally glorious, maugre the malice of men and devils. The disgrace which the wicked cast on the righteous is, at worst, but like the noise of some loud-tongued gun, ceased as soon as heard; but the honour which God and Scripture put upon the godly is a pillar which endureth to all eternity; such a monument as neither age, nor time, nor envy, can waste or wear out. Demetrius, under all the obloquy and contempt which his countrymen cast upon him, could comfort himself in this, that though the Athenians demolished his statues, yet they could not extinguish his virtues, the cause of raising them.

Sin is so base and beggarly, so loathsome and shameful a thing, that not only the children of God, but even wicked men, have been unwilling to own it, and ashamed to be taxed with it, or found out at the commission of it; when godliness is so high and honourable, so noble and excellent a mistress, that those who deny the power of it, will take upon them the form of it; they who hate its work, will wear its livery. There are hardly any jewels of grace, but for each of them vice hath counterfeit stones. Oh how noble a mistress, how honourable a lady is that, whom all pretend relation to, and even those that hate her would not be thought her enemies, but blush to be taxed as strangers to her!

2. It is the most comfortable and delightful calling. Satan would represent Christians under ugly vizards, and Christianity frightful, to make men loathe both the one and the other. As he transforms himself, the prince of darkness, and his ways, which are darkness, into an angel of light, and seeming light, so he endeavours to transform Christians, who are children of light, and their holy ways, which are paths of light, into children of darkness and paths of darkness. He endeavours to make men think the power of godliness antipodes to all cheerfulness; but holiness is far from such a crabbed face and austere countenance as he would have us fancy. No trade hath so much mirth with it and in it; joy is one essential part of this calling: 'The kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. The servants of God do not only rejoice in the forethoughts of their reward, to think of the time when their indentures shall expire, and they shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God—'We rejoice in hope of glory;' but also in their work. They are joyful in the house of prayer; they sing at their work, 'Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;' nay, at the hardest and most tiresome of their work: 'We rejoice in tribula-

tion.' 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Joy is the beam which is darted from the sun, the stream which floweth from the fountain of godliness. It is observable that the beginning, the least degree of grace, causeth joy, great joy ; what, then, will its growth and perfection do ? When Christ did but call to Zaccheus, he came down hastily, and received him joyfully, Luke xix. 6. When the eunuch was converted, he went home rejoicing, Acts viii. 39. When the Samaritans had received Christ into their hearts at Philip's preaching, there was great joy in that city, Acts viii. 6-8. The jailer, after his heartquake, rejoiced, believing in God with all his house, Acts xvi. 34. The joy of the saints, as it is invisible, so it is unutterable : 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8. For the measure of it, it is compared to the joy of harvest, to the joy of the bridegroom and bride on their wedding-day, Isa. ix. 3 ; Hosea ii. 19.

Hence it is that grace and godliness are compared to, and set forth by, those things which are pleasant and delightful, and bring joy with them : as music, the joy and delight of the ears ; a feast, the joy and delight of the taste ; to light, the joy and delight of the eyes ; life, wine, which rejoiceth the heart ; perfumes, which delight the scent ; good, the joy of the will ; truth, the joy of the understanding. Godliness hath joy proper and suitable for every sense, whether outward or inward. As the higher the sun is, the greater its light is, so the holier the Christian, the greater his joy is. The more clear the fire burns, the more comfortable it is ; smoke fetcheth tears from our eyes. When grace burns clear, it is refreshing indeed ; it is the smoke of sin that turns our houses into *bochims*, places of weeping. When good men step awry, not pondering their goings, then they wrench their feet, or put their bones out of joint, and so put themselves to much pain.

Indeed, wicked men who are ignorant of the mystery of godliness, because they see no sunshine in the faces of godly men, judge it to be foul weather in their hearts. As the Roman soldiers, when they entered into the *Sanctum sanctorum* and saw no images, presently reported the Jews to worship the clouds ; but a Christian's joy is as far out of wicked men's sight to discern it, as out of their power to remove it. A stranger intermeddleth not with his joy : 'Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.' A wicked man's joy is most in his face. As a blackamore, he is white nowhere but in his teeth. Seneca compares him to a commander in a desperate battle, who, lest his soldiers should run away, sets a good

face on it, when he is inwardly terrified and full of fear. He is like one in a high desperate fever, having a good colour, when his heart is heavy, and he is at the gate of death. The godly man's joy is most in his heart: he is like that fish which hath a rough outside but a pearl within. When there are storms without, there is music within—peace of conscience, which passeth all understanding. A wicked man is as a book of tragedies, bound extraordinary, gay and gilt on the outside, but full of doleful, dreadful stories within; or, as Alexander said of Antipater, he was white without, but purple within; his face may be white and smiling, but his conscience is red and fiery. But the godly man's inside is his best side; though his full sacks of joy and delight are not opened till he comes to his Father's house, yet the blessed Jesus gives him, as Joseph the patriarchs, sufficient provision for the way. The law gave the first fruits of the earth to God; the gospel gives the first fruits of heaven to men, which are both an earnest and a taste of their glorious and everlasting harvest.

All sorrows proceed from sin. As the shadow followeth the body, so doth grief follow guilt. Lust, like rotten flesh or wood, will breed worms to gnaw in the sinner's bowels. Therefore it is no wonder that Nabal, Saul, and Belshazzar, when their lusts flew in their faces, died, or were ready to die, with horror. If a godly man sin wilfully, and wound his soul, it is no wonder if he feel the smart and pain of it. When David steps awry, and slips with his feet, and falls dangerously, he may well keep his bed, and water his couch, and cry out of his aches and broken bones; yet the very sorrow of a saint for sin against his God, hath more real joy and delight in it than all the skin-deep pleasures of giggling gallants. Crates could dance and laugh in his threadbare coat, and his wallet at his back, which was all his wealth. The saint can rejoice in his saddest afflictions; though he seldom live in palaces, yet he always lives in a paradise, having, if he be careful to keep a good conscience, a constant youth of joy and perpetual spring, as that place they write of under the equator. The tears of those that pray, saith Augustine, are sweeter than the joys of the theatre.

It is true, godliness doth abridge men of sinful pleasures, but it is the more pleasant for separating itself from that which is worse than poison. Agesilaus could taste by a natural appetite that such pleasures are more fit for slaves than freemen. Averroes and the rest of the Arabian philosophers are ashamed of that sensual and beastly paradise which their Mohammed provided for them, as most unworthy the soul of man, and infinitely short of true delight.

Godliness doth not deny us our natural delights, only rectify and regulate them, lest we should surfeit on them. It doth not deny us drink, but drunkenness: nor meat, but gluttony. Nature, even in things in themselves lawful, would run out unlawfully if she were not restrained. Grace only keepeth the reins in its own hands, lest that skittish colt should, through its wantonness, break its own neck. It is as the pale to the garden, to preserve the flowers in it from beasts, or as a hedge to a field, to keep what is in it within bounds. As Leonidas the captain, perceiving that his soldiers left their watch on the city walls for the ale-houses, commanded that the ale-houses should be removed to the city walls, that they might both enjoy their pleasure and discharge their duties together. Godliness alloweth men the comfort of their relations and possessions, only it so limiteth our delight in them, that we may not by them be hindered from working the work of God, and minding our eternal salvations.

Godliness brings more noble and excellent pleasures. Others are puddle-water; those pleasures which godliness giveth are pure and clear streams, such as flow from God himself. There is more sweetness in one drop of the fountain, than in all the waters of the sea. There is more joy, more comfort, in a little communion with God, than in the greatest confluence of creature enjoyments. Augustine saith,¹ How sweet was it to me on a sudden to be without these sweet vanities! thou, Lord, who art the true sweetness, didst take them from me and enter in thyself, who art more pleasant than all pleasure, and more clear than all light. The world, as they say of fairies, deprives of true children, and puts changelings in their room; deprives men of true substantial joy, and gives them shadows in the room; but godliness, on the contrary, deprives of painted poisons, and gives them wholesome and real pleasures. All the comforts of this world, to a person void of grace, are but as a sack of perfumes and medicines, and cordial drugs to the back of a galled horse, which may vex and enrage his sores with their weight, but do not ease or abate his pain with their virtue. A saint's life, notwithstanding his greatest sufferings, whilst it is blessed with the smiles of his Father, is a heaven upon earth; but the sinner's life, notwithstanding his honours, and pleasures, and riches, and relations, whilst under the wrath of an infinite God, and anguished with the gripings of a guilty conscience, is little less than an earnest and taste of hell. Grace is sugar to sweeten all our crosses, and sin is vinegar to sour all our comforts. The iron seems to

¹ Conf., lib. ix. cap. 1.

embrace the loadstone with great delight, and to be rapt with an amorous ecstasy ; so as Thales thought it animal. And yet that motion is void of the least sense of pleasure. The wicked man seems, by his smiling face and giggling countenance, to be the only merry man, when he is as far from true pleasure as from true piety. The least bee finds more delight in making and tasting a little honey, than the great sun and all his glorious attendants in their high and perpetual courses. The meanest Christian hath more comfort in making sure his salvation, and tasting the sweetness of his Saviour, than the kings of the earth and their courtiers in their abundance of all earthly comforts.

The wise man tells us concerning the ways of wisdom, wherein a Christian's daily walk is, ' Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 17 ; and the saints find them so by experience. The word of God, which is the rule of their work, is sweeter to them than the honey and the honeycomb, and they delight to do the will of God. The sinner's life is an uncomfortable life ; besides those inward gripes and horror which sin causeth in the conscience at present, and its end, the sting in the tail, which is the eternal fire, there is trouble, and fear, and shame, and vexation in the very act or commission of many sins. To forgive an injury, which is one piece of Christianity, is pleasant and delightful ; but to revenge an affront, what heats and colds, what passions and perturbations, doth it cause ! To love our neighbours, and wish their welfare, is a sweet thing, a reward in itself—it hath meat in its mouth ; but to envy my neighbour, because he is richer or more honourable, or hath larger gifts and more friends than myself, is as rottenness to the bones ; it wasteth and consumeth the inward parts, as rust eateth out iron, according to Solomon's phrases. A contented man hath a heaven upon earth ; all the year with him is spring-time or summer ; like a child, he takes no carking care for food, or raiment, or house-rent, but minds his duty, and leaves all to his Father, who knoweth what he hath need of. But the covetous, who, like the barren womb, hath never enough, pines with fear of want, and can neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep quietly, lest he should lose what he hath, or not have sufficient to hold out ; nay, he will not allow himself convenient food or raiment, though he have never so much ; but, like a beast, feeds on thistles, when he hath all sorts of provision upon his back. Temperance hath health and strength with it, and thereby renders the other comforts of this life savoury and comfortable ; so also chastity. But gluttony, and drunkenness, and whoredom bring

weakness and sickness on men's bodies, and embitter all other blessings, besides the fear of being discovered, to the shame and disgrace of the authors, which tormenteth not a little. There is comfort in dealing honestly and righteously ; but if a man will cheat, and cozen, and filch, and steal, no wonder if he tire his head with plots and projects to carry it on cunningly and secretly, and terrify his heart with apprehension that it will be known, and then he shall be branded for a knave, or suffer the penalty of law in a more severe degree.

The sinner is hurried hither and thither by his opposite lords and contrary lusts, and torn piecemeal by them, as a man by beasts, which draw the parts of his body contrary ways. The commands of sin are harsh and heavy ; no tyrant ever put his subjects upon more crabbed, painful work ; but the commandments of God are not grievous, 1 John v. 3. Sin is slavery, and its servant worse than those that row in Turkish galleys ; but God's law is a law of liberty, and they walk at liberty who seek his precepts. The ways of sinners are called crooked ways, rugged ways, which are unpleasant to travel in ; but the ways of God are called straight ways, plain paths, which are delightful to passengers. I am confident the true Christian hath more true pleasure in suffering for Christ, or one act of mortification, or victory over one lust, than the highest earthly potentate hath in his largest dominions, in the multitude of his subjects, in the richness of his kingdoms, and in all the honour that is done him, or good things enjoyed by him all his days.

3. It is the most profitable calling. Reader, this argument is *Achilleum*, or *instar omnium*, the strongest argument, and instead of all ; with most men gain is the great god of this world, that commandeth all their heads, and hearts, and hands, to whom they bow down the knees both of their bodies and souls. The thief and murderer are quickened by this to their hellish trade : ' Come, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil,' Prov. i. 11, 13. The Shechemites, upon this ground, will endure the pain of circumcision, and throw up their former religion : ' Shall not their beasts, and their cattle, and their substance be ours ? ' The soul for this will scale the walls, and leap upon the pikes, and run upon the mouth of the cannon. The husbandman for this will rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of carefulness, toil and moil all day, and make a drudge, a slave, a pack-horse of himself all the year. The merchant for this will plough the ocean, dance upon the surging billows, suffer many dangers and deaths through his

whole voyage. The shopkeeper for this will crowd into any hole of the city, break his sleep, waste his health, run about hither and thither, early and late. Gehazi, Achan, Judas, Balaam, for this will venture their bodies, their souls, any things, all things. Profit is such a bait that all will bite at. The devil, that arch-politician, who hath had so many thousand years' experience, besides his extraordinary natural knowledge, could not judge any topics more likely than this to take with our blessed Saviour: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' The gods themselves were said by the Athenians to be corrupted with Philip's gold, that their oracles still were in favour of him. Money is the absolute monarch, which can put men upon the most dangerous designs. Therefore Cassius, surnamed the Severe, one of the wisest of the Roman judges, in all doubtful causes that came before him, would demand, *Cui bono*, Who gained, or had the profit? well knowing that that is the bias which turneth men aside to wrong others; and the heady, wanton horse, which breaks through the fence to trespass upon neighbours.

Now, reader, if profit will prevail with thee, godliness with contentment is great gain. All the gold of the world is dross, all the diamonds of the world are dirt, all the gains of the world are loss, to this gain of godliness. Egypt watered by Nilus hath four rich harvests, say some, in less than four months. Solinus saith the Egyptian fig-tree beareth fruit seven times in a year. Godliness brings forth thirty, sixty, a hundredfold increase; it giveth a hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting, Mat. xix. 29. 'After ye had your fruits unto holiness, in the end everlasting life,' Rom. vi. 22. Did the sinner but believe Scripture, that speaks the infinite reward of holiness, he would quickly set up this trade. Pindar the poet saith, in regard of the fertility of Rhodia, and the wealth of the inhabitants, that it rained gold in that country. 'The fruit of wisdom is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all thou canst desire is not to be compared to her,' Prov. iii. 14, 15.

Lucian fancieth all the heathen gods and goddesses sitting in parliament, and each making choice of that tree which best pleased them. Jupiter chose the oak for its strength; Apollo, the bay-tree for its greenness; Neptune chose the poplar for its length; Juno chose the eglantine for its sweetness; Venus chose the myrtle-tree for its beauty; Minerva, sitting by, demanded of her father Jupiter, why, since there were so many fruitful trees, they all had

chosen barren ones. He answered, *Ne videantur fructu honorem vendere*, Lest they should seem to sell honour for fruit. Minerva replied, Well, do what you please; I for my part make choice of the olive, for its fatness and fruitfulness. They all commended her choice, and were ashamed of their own folly. This fiction doth fitly represent the foolishness of men at this day, in choosing the honours, and preferments, and glory of the world, which are barren and unfruitful things, of no worth in the other world, before that honour which is from God, and the eternal weight of glory, and also the convictions of their consciences another day, which will force them to be ashamed of their own folly; and to commend the choice of a Christian for preferring grace and godliness, which will stand him in stead in an hour of death and day of judgment, and bring him in unspeakable gain, before the airy honours and withering vanities of this life.

Reader, if thou wilt give conscience free liberty to speak its mind, I know it will tell thee that no calling is comparable to this for profit.

The gain of godliness is real gain, rich gain, certain gain, eternal gain.

1. It is real, if the word of truth may be trusted; its fruit is therefore called substance, in distinction from earthly riches, which are shadows: 'I will cause them that love me to inherit substance.'

2. It is called also true riches; other riches are feigned. Hence also godly men are said to be rich towards God, and other men to be rich in this world. It is rich gain, as it hath relation to the best part; it makes the soul of man truly precious, as it is most serviceable to our last end, and prepareth man for the fruition of God, and also as its reward is unconceivable. The vessels of mercy shall swim in an ocean of glory: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him,' 1 Cor. ii. 9. Its reward is beyond all expression, above all apprehensions; no comparison can fully resemble it, no understanding conceive it.

3. It is eternal gain. Other gains are fading, deceitful brooks, dying flowers, withering gourds, and vanishing shadows: 'Riches are not for ever,' Prov. xxix.; 'Man in honour abideth not,' Ps. xlix. 12; 'The pleasures of sin are but for a season,' Heb. xi. 25; but this gain is for ever. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever, both in the nature of it, it is incorruptible seed, and in the fruit of it, which is the gift of God, eternal life. Though other

trades shall all fail, as useful only in this needy world ; though other callings shall vanish, and time itself shall be no more, yet this trade, this calling, shall run parallel with the life of an immortal soul. Though gold be a corruptible metal, the gain of this calling is better than much fine gold ; it is an inheritance, undefiled, incorruptible. Our work, whether in doing or suffering the will of God, is but for a moment ; but it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Oh what a happy good, what an excellent gain, is that which is eternal ! Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall never be taken from her. When thy lands and houses shall be taken from thee, thy place and dwelling shall know thee no more ; when thy friends and relations shall be taken from thee—‘ Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke ; ’ when all the comforts of this life shall serve thee as vermin and lice do a dead man, though they stick close to him in his life, run from him at death ; this calling will stand by thee, encourage thee, never leave thee nor forsake thee. In other things thou choosest for that which is most lasting. If thou buyest a house, or beast, or suit of apparel, thou art desirous to have that which is most durable and strong. Oh, why shouldst thou not choose that good which is everlasting ! When Demetrius had taken Megara, and his soldiers plundered the city, he, fearing the philosopher Stilpo might receive some loss, sent for him, and asked him whether any of his men had taken anything of his. Stilpo answered, No ; for I saw no man that took my learning from me. Godliness is such wealth, such learning, as will abide with thee in general plunder ; indeed, neither men nor devils can rob thee of it.

4. It is certain gain. He that sets up of this trade may be trusted, for none ever brake of this calling. God himself, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, is bound for them, and hath undertaken for their preservance, and growth, and gains. The merchant that trades into the other world, is not properly a merchant venturer ; for the gospel, which is the insurance office, hath engaged infinite power, and love, and faithfulness for the security and safe return of all the vessels which he sends forth. The promises are all yea and amen, the sure mercies of David ; the covenant of grace, which containeth all their gains and riches, is stable in all things, and sure, 2 Cor. i. 20 ; Isa. lv. 6 ; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

If there were a free trade proclaimed to the Indies, and every man that went promised as much gold as he would desire, and a certainty of making a good voyage, who almost would stay at

home? What crowding would there be to port towns, and what haste to take shipping.

Reader, though God will not suffer this to be in reference to earthly treasures, knowing out of his infinite wisdom how hurtful they would be to immortal souls, yet he offereth thee all this, and infinitely more, in calling upon thee to mind godliness. He saith to thee, as Joseph to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 18, 'Come unto me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.' Come unto me, and I will give you the good of Canaan, and ye shall eat the pleasant fruits of that land flowing with milk and honey.

O reader, didst thou know the worth of this jewel, thou wouldst trample upon all the wealth of this world as dung in comparison of it. Little dost thou think or imagine the advantage, the virtues, of this diamond. It is the true loadstone that draweth all good to it. Luther saith of one psalm: This psalm hath done more for me than all the potentates of the world. I may say to thee, This calling will feed thee with bread that came down from heaven, and clothe thee with fine linen, the robes of God's own righteousness; it will protect thee and maintain thee, it will advance and honour thee, it will enrich and ennoble thee in life, refresh and rejoice thee in death, crown and reward thee after death, do more for thee than all the princes or potentates, relations or possessions, persons or comforts upon earth can do.

In thy prosperity and enjoyment of outward good things, godliness would, like sugar and spice, correct their windiness, and make them wholesome and profitable to thee. It would, like Elisha's meal and salt, make thy meat sweet and savoury, and thy drink pleasant and refreshing to thee. It would make thy bed soft and easy, thy garments warm and sweet-scented. It will so far abate thy appetite to this luscious food, that thou shouldst not feed immoderately, to the surfeiting thy soul.

As the fiery bush which Moses saw in the mount Horeb, though it was in a flaming fire, did not consume; or as the shining worm, that, being cast into the fire, doth not waste, but is thereby purged from its filth, and made more beautiful than all the water in the world could make it; so affliction should not ruin, but reform and purify thee. In the greatest danger this will be thy defence. Though others, like the old world, are drowned, are destroyed in these waters, yet thou shouldst ride safely in a well-pitched ark; and to free thee from any fear of miscarrying, the Lord himself would shut thee in. When others are in the open air, on whom

storms and tempests have their full force, thou shouldst be housed in God's presence-chamber, and kept secret by his side. As Gideon's fleece, thou shouldst be dry, when all about thee are wet. The whale of destruction might digest thousands of mariners, but one godly Jonah is too hard for him. The torrent of fire that ran from Ætna, and consumed the country, yet parted itself to safeguard them that relieved their aged parents. When the Grecians had taken Troy, and given every man liberty to carry out his burden, they were so taken with the devotion of Æneas in carrying out first his household gods, and, upon a second license, his old father Anchises and his son Ascanius, instead of treasures, which others carried out, that they permitted him to carry what he would without any disturbance.¹ Jeremiah, in the Babylonish captivity, was tendered and regarded highly by the king of Babylon. When Sodom was destroyed, Lot was preserved. It was storied of Troy, that so long as the image of Pallas stood safe in it, that city should never be won. It is true of godliness, so long as the fear and love of thy God are within thee, so long as thou makest religion thy business, nothing shall hurt thee, everything shall help thee. Godliness will bring in all gain, and at all times: 'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' A child of God, by adoption, is in some sense like the Son of God by eternal generation, heir of all things: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' Nay, the Christian's riches are not only unsearchable, Eph. iii. 8, but also durable, Prov. viii. 15. When a wicked man dieth, all his riches die with him. His treasure is laid up on earth, therefore, when he leaves the earth, he leaves his treasure, Ps. xlix. 17. When a godly man dieth, his riches follow him, Rev. xiv. 13. His treasure is in heaven, and so when he dieth he goeth to his gains.

O reader, what an argument is here to provoke thee to piety. Godliness is profitable in all conditions, in all relations, in both worlds. In prosperity, it will be a sun to direct thee; in adversity, a shield to protect thee; in life, it will be thy comfort, and, which is infinitely more, in death, that hour of need, it will be thy enlivening cordial. The smell of trefoil is stronger in a cloudy, dark season, than in fair weather. The refreshing savour of the sweet spices of grace is strongest in the saints' greatest necessities.

When death, the king of terrors, comes to enter the list, and fight with thee for thy soul and eternal salvation, for thy God, and

¹ Dares Phryg. de bello Trojano.

Christ, and heaven, and happiness; when all thy riches, and honours, and friends, and relations would leave thee in the lurch, to shift for thyself, as dogs leave their master when he comes to the water, godliness would be thy shield, to secure thee against its shot, and make thee more than a conqueror over it. Thou mightst call thy dying bed, as Jacob the place through which he travelled, Mahanaim, a camp, for there angels would meet thee, to convey thee safe through the air, the enemy's country, of which Satan is lord and prince, to thy Father's house, where thou shouldst be infinitely blessed in the vision and fruition of thy God and Saviour for ever. Godliness would be the pilot to steer the vessel of thy soul aright through those boisterous waters to a happy port. The Arabic fable mentions one that carried a hog, a goat, and a sheep to the city; the hog roared hideously, when the other two were still and quiet; and being asked the reason, gave this account of her crying: The sheep and goat have no such cause to complain, for they are carried to the city for their milk, but I am carried thither to be killed, being good for nothing else. The ungodly person may well cry out sadly when sickness comes, for then guilt flieth in his face, and conscience tells him death will kill him; he is good for nothing but to be killed with death, Rev. xi. 5; he never honoured God in this world, and God will force honour out of him in the other world. He may well screech out dreadfully at the approach of death, whose body death sends to the grave, and his soul to intolerable and unquenchable flames; but the godly man may bid death welcome, knowing it will be his exceeding gain and advantage.

Reader, when others, like the Israelites, are afraid, and start back at the sight of this Goliath, thou mightst, like little David, encounter him in the name of the Lord, and overcome him. Thou mightst triumphantly sing in the ears of death, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' The Lord of life would sweeten death to thee, and subdue it for thee; nay, make it at peace with thee, that thou mightst say to death, as Jacob to Esau, 'I have seen thy face, as if it had been the face of God,' who hath made thee to meet me with smiles instead of frowns. Death would help thee to that sight, to that knowledge, to that state and degree of holiness for which thou hast prayed, and wept, and fasted, and watched, and laboured, and waited many a day; as it is said of Job, there was none like him in the earth, so I may say of this calling, there is none like it upon the face of the earth, the very enemies of it, in their hours of extremity, being judges. Ah, who

would not work for God with the greatest diligence, and walk with God in the exactest obedience, and wait upon God with the greatest patience, when he is assured that, in the doing of his commands, there is such great reward; and those that 'sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

THE CONCLUSION.

Reader, I have now ended this treatise; but whether thou, if a stranger to this calling, wilt put an end to thy carnal, fleshly ways, and begin this high and heavenly work or no, I know not. If thou art ambitious, thou hast here encouragement sufficient; godliness will ennoble thee, and render thy blood not only honourable, but royal. If thou art voluptuous, here is a bait which may take thee; godliness will bring thee to a river of pleasures, to such dainties and delights as take the hearts of perfect and glorious angels. If thou art covetous, here is a golden weight to turn the scales of thy desires and endeavours: 'Godliness is profitable unto all things;' it hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. When thy house, and lands, and honours, and neighbours, and wife, and children, and flesh, and heart fail thee, and forsake thee, godliness would say to thee, and stand to it also, as Peter to Christ, 'Though all forsake thee, yet will not I.' When the world's trinity—credit, profit, and pleasure—serve their lovers and worshippers as rats and mice do a house, leave it when it is on fire, fly from them in their need and extremity, godliness would stick to thee as close, as fast as Ruth to Naomi; where thou goest it would go, where thou lodgest it would lodge; nay, it would follow thee into the other world, and abide with thee, a cordial, a comfort for ever; it would give thee cause to say to it, as she to her daughter-in-law, 'Thou hast shewed more kindness to me at the latter end than at the beginning.'

What canst thou have to object against godliness, that sets thee at such a distance from it? Wilt thou believe a lying world, a deceitful flesh, a destroying devil, or the God of truth? Who is thy greatest enemy, God or they? Who will do thee most good, God or they? If thou wilt be tried by the confessions of the greatest enemies that godliness hath, even they, in their hours of extremity, will tell thee grace is of infinite worth; godliness is the best of all. Ah, how happy had we been at this hour, had we been as faithful servants to religion as we have been slaves to foolish lusts and pleasures!

If reason may be heard, thou wilt not defer one moment the entering thy name in this society, and binding thyself apprentice to thy Saviour; thou mayst see plainly that it is thine interest as well as thy duty; and all thy happiness for this and the other world dependeth on it. If Scripture may be heard, thou wilt quickly set about thy general calling, and make religion thy business; it calleth loudly to thee to turn thy back upon earth, and face about for heaven; to forsake the flesh, before the flesh forsake thee. It telleth thee plainly, under the hand of thy Maker, that if thou livest after the flesh, and sowest to the flesh, thou shalt die eternally. If the conscience within thee may be heard, thou wilt presently give a bill of divorce to thy carnal, brutish delights, and strike a hearty covenant with Jesus Christ; it often warneth thee of thy duty and danger, and terrifieth thee with the forethoughts of that fire and fury which thou art hastening to feel. If thy friends and relations, who have any sense of a jealous God, and eternal estate, may be heard, then thou wilt immediately hearken to the counsel I commend to thee from God, and exercise thyself unto godliness. They advise, and persuade, and entreat thee to turn over a new leaf, and lead a new life, and to mind in thy day the things of thy peace. If the God upon whom thou livest, by whom thou movest, from whom thou hast thy being, may be heard, thou wilt now wink on the world, crucify the flesh, loathe thyself for thy filth and folly, and devote thy heart and soul to his fear. He commandeth thee by his dominion over thee, and thy obligations to him; he threateneth, promiseth, affrighteth, allureth, and all to make thee mind thy allegiance to him, and the work he hath given thee to do in this world. If thy Saviour, who humbled himself for thy sake, and took upon him the form of a servant, and in thy nature was buffeted, scourged, and crucified, may be heard, then thou wilt immediately take the counsel that is given thee, and turn to the Lord with all thy heart, and loathe thyself for all thine abominations. He pleads with thee most pathetically, presenteth to thee the stripes and wounds which sin caused in his blessed body; the blood which he shed, the ignominy he endured, the agony, the death he suffered, and all to satisfy for sin, to make himself Lord both of the dead and living. He tells thee he gave himself for thee, to redeem thee from all iniquity, and to purify thee to himself a peculiar child zealous of good works. If the daily, and nightly, and hourly mercies that thou enjoyest; if the sickness, or pain, or loss, or disgrace, or afflictions which sometimes thou sufferest, may be heard, there would not be so much

ado to persuade a wretched creature to be blessed, and an ungodly person to be holy and happy. If the inanimate and irrational creatures, the earth beneath thee, the heavens above thee, the beasts and birds about thee, might be heard, thou wouldst, whilst it is called to-day, now, after so long a time, attend to the call and command of him, in whose hand is thy life and breath, and follow after holiness, without which thou shalt never see the Lord. Shall a centurion's servant go, when he bids him go, and come, when he bids him come; and wilt thou not go and come at the voice of God? Did Balaam's ass speak at God's command, and reprove the madness of the prophet? Did ravens at God's command feed Elijah? Did caterpillars, and locusts, and frogs, and lice, execute God's judgments upon Pharaoh? Do fire, and hail, and snow, and vapours, and stormy winds fulfil his word? Doth the earth open, the rocks rend, the stars fight in their courses, waters stand up in heaps as a wall, the moon stand still, the sun go backward, wildernesses tremble, things cross the course of nature to obey his pleasure, and wilt not thou obey him? O man, bethink thyself! wilt thou be worse than these irrational and inanimate creatures? are not thy engagements to God infinitely above theirs? What wilt thou have to say for thyself, when every stone in the street, as well as star in the heavens, when every bird, and beast, and fowl, will condemn thee? Oh where wilt thou appear?

I must tell thee that a perilous time, a day of extremity, an hour of trouble and anguish, is hastening upon thee, which thou canst no more escape or avoid, than thou canst fly from thyself; when the pleasures, and delights, and honey, and beautiful countenances of those scorpions, thy fleshly lusts, will all be past and gone, but the sting remain to pierce and torment thee; when those dreggy waters in which thou bathest thyself now will all be dried up; when all thy possessions, and preferments, and friends, and relations will serve thee, as women their flowers when they are dead and withered, who throw them away, or as sinking floors, that will fail men when their weight is on them. And then, oh then, what wilt thou do? Thou wilt wish that religion had been thy business, and call and cry to it, as the elders of Gilead to Jephtha, when the children of Ammon made war with them: 'Come thou and be our captain, and save us from our enemies.' Come thou and be my captain, to save me from the curse of the law, the terrors of my guilty conscience, the wrath of the infinite God, and the torments of the eternal fire. But godliness will answer thee, as Jephtha did them: 'Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my

father's house? and why are ye come unto me now ye are in distress?' Didst not thou hate me, and expel me out of thy heart and house? Didst thou not deride, and jeer, and persecute me, against all the commands, and threatenings, and promises, and entreaties of God and his word? And why art thou come to me now thou art in distress? I must tell thee, thou wilt then weep, and howl, and lament to God, as the Israelites did in their extremity: 'Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.' Lord, help me, Lord, save me, deliver me this day from the jaws of the roaring lion; Lord, let not hell shut her mouth upon me. Who can dwell in everlasting burnings? who can abide devouring flames? But thou mayest expect the same answer which God gave them: 'Go and cry to the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. Go to the flesh, and the world; go to thy riches, and honours, and sinful delights, which thou hast chosen and preferred before me; and let them deliver thee in this time of thy tribulation.' 'Where are those gods, the rocks in which thou trustedst? Let them rise up, and help thee, and be thy protection,' Judges xi. 6, 7, and x. 14, 15; Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.

A saint can sing in such a day of trial, knowing that death is come to him as the angel to Peter, striking on his side, not to hurt, but to awaken him, to beat off his fetters, and set him in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The saint and the sinner never differ so much, at least in open view, as in their ends. Sin in the bud is sweet, but in the fruit bitter; and holiness, though at first draught seems not so pleasant, yet afterwards is all sweetness.

Though the path of sin be smooth, and pleasing to thy flesh, yet thou wilt find it slippery, and killing to thy spirit: it is like an evening star, to usher in a night of blackness, of darkness, for ever. The way of holiness is more harsh to the body, but the only nectar of the soul. Ah, reader, if thou wilt but choose it, thou wilt find by experience that it will be like Hannibal's passage over the Alps, a way which will require some pains, but it will lead thee into the heavenly paradise, as that did him into the world's garden, Italy.

Reader, let me therefore bespeak thee, or rather God himself: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto thee, saith the Lord of hosts,' Zech. i. 3. After all thy neglect and contempt of God and his word, after all thy wanderings and wickedness, thou hast one call more to turn and live, in which thy Maker doth three times pawn and

interpose the authority of his name to confirm his word. The Lord of hosts: three times he doth as it were bring his angels, his hosts with him, in this precept and promise, as once to Sinai at the delivery of the law. 1. As witnesses of his truth; 2. As avengers of him on them that despise his call; 3. As rejoicers for those that turn unto him. O friend, consider it, that God, who might have turned thee into hell, commandeth thee now, after all thy folly and lewdness, to turn to him; yea, he promiseth that if thou dost come at his call, he will meet thee half way, and turn unto thee. It is not for his own sake that he is so earnest with thee, for he can be happy without thee; he hath no addition by thy salvation, he suffereth no diminution by thy damnation; but he calleth on thee for thy good, that thou mightst be happy in his favour. It was the saying of Antigona, that she ought to please them with whom she hoped to remain for ever. Ah, doth it not concern thee to please that God upon whom thou dependest for thy eternal weal or woe?

When Antiochus was in Egypt, in arms against the Romans, they sent P. Popilius with other ambassadors to him, where, when he had welcomed them, P. Popilius delivered some writings to him containing the mind of his masters, which he commanded Antiochus to read, which he did. Then he consulted with his friends what was best to be done in the business. Whilst he was in a great study. P. Popilius, with a wand that he had in his hand, made a circle about him in the dust, saying, Ere thou stir a foot out of this circle, return thy answer, that I may tell the senate whether thou hadst rather have war or peace. This he uttered with such a firm countenance, that it amazed the king; wherefore after he had paused awhile, he answered, I will do what the senate hath written, or shall think fit.¹

Reader, I shall only allude to it, and conclude. Thou art, if in thy natural estate, a rebel against God; thy heart is full of enmity, and thy life of treason against his blessed Majesty; thou art daily discharging whole volleys of shot against him; he hath sent me as his ambassador to offer thee terms of peace, and to require thee in his name to throw down thine arms, and to submit to his mercy. I know thou art ready to consult with thy seeming friends, but real enemies, the world and the flesh, what thou wert best to do in this case; but whilst thou art thus musing, I charge and command thee in the name of God, and by his authority who sent me to thee, that before thou closest the book, thou return to thy

¹ Justin, lib. xxxiv.; Jos., lib. xii. cap. 5.

Maker in thy conscience thine answer, whether thou hadst rather have peace with him, whose wrath is infinitely worse than death, and whose favour is better than life, or war ! If, considering the excellency, necessity, and profit of godliness, thou sayest, I will, through the help of Christ, do all that the Lord hath written, or thinketh fit to be done, in order to my recovery out of this estate of woe and misery, I shall inform thee that God is ready to receive thee, the Spirit to assist thee, thy Saviour to embrace thee, the rich and precious promises of the gospel, containing pardon, love, peace, eternal life, are all ready to welcome thee. But if thou deniest thy God, thy real, able, and faithful friend, and wilt gratify thy professed, though politic enemy, the devil, so much as to continue in thine ungodly courses, I must assure thee that, Phrygian-like, thou wilt repent when it is too late, and be taught by woeful experience that it had been far better to have hearkened to the counsels and commands of God ; that with prudent Prometheus thou mightst have foreseen a danger, and shunned it, than to walk on in the broad way to hell with foolish Epimetheus, without any consideration, till thou art unconceivably and irrecoverably miserable, and plunged in that lake, and amidst those dreadful torments, of which there is no end.