

Sermon 1 (29)

Sermon 2 (30)

Sermon 3 (31)

Preached at
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Maries.

SERMON XXIX.

PSAL. 73. 28.

But it is good for me to draw near to God.

THe Text is a Conclusion strongly inferred upon two great Truths premised in the foregoing part of the Psalm, (summed up *Isa. 3. 10, 11. Eccles. 8. 12, 13.*) The first was that notwithstanding all the evils that the godly endure, yet *God is good to Israel*, vers. 1. and therefore it's *good to draw near to God*. It's *good to draw near to a good God*; nay best of all (as the *Arabick* reads it) to *keep close to that God*, who is so good notwithstanding the worst evils.

The second was that notwithstanding the wicked's present flourish, yet their *end is destruction*, vers. 2, 3, &c. and in the Verse immediatly before the Text, *For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*; and therefore again it's *good for me to draw near to thee*. Bernard sums up both in his double *Quere, Ubi enim bene erit sine illo? aut ubi male potest esse cum illo?* If it cannot be ill with him, nor well without him, then it's best to *draw near to him*. If it be no less than *destruction* to *go a whoring from him*, then the Spouse, that in running away after her lovers hath met with a *sharp Thorn-Hedge*, had need *return home to her first Husband*, *Hos. 2. 6, 7.* If they *perish* that are *afar off*, then it is my safest course to *get and keep near*. When they of *Pharaoh's* servants, that were in *the field*, were *smitten* with the *bail*, it concerned those of them that *feared God to keep home*, *Exod. 9. 20, 21, 25.* When the sword of man or Angel will destroy them that are abroad, it behoves *Israel*, and *Rahab's family* to *keep within doors*, *Exod. 12. 22. Josh. 2. 18, 19.* If the out-lying Deer be in danger to be hunted by every Dog, and the stray-Sheep or Chicken to be snatched and torn by every Wolf or Kite; it's best to keep within the Pale and Fold, and under the Wing. To get and keep as near and close to God, and under his Wing as may be. The Psalmist's own comfortable experiences of God's goodness, whilest

Sermon I.

whilest he kept close to him, and the sad events of others going and keeping far from him, made him so wise as elsewhere to resolve, *Return to thy rest, O my soul*, and here feelingly to conclude, *Mibi autem adherere Deo bonum est*: but it's good for me to draw near to God. *Redi anima mea in requiem tuam. Psal. 116. 7.*

In which Proposition the Predicate טוב מאד signifieth טוב. By Good is not meant any lower degree or kind of goodness, but that דו אַגאַדן that *summum bonum*, that chiefest good, in the enjoying whereof mans highest happiness consists.

And accordingly in the Subject of the Proposition are three things observable,

1. *Beatitudo Objectiva*: that chief Good, in the enjoyment of which our Happiness consists, and that is אלהים, God. For so, *None good but God only*, Matth. 9. 17. and so he is the *Psalmist's goodness*, Psal. 144. 2.

2. *Beatitudo Formalls*, our Union with, and Enjoyment of that chief Good, whereby we are actually made happy and blessed, in these words קרבת, *drawing near*: for the meaning whereof, please to take notice of two things. 1. That in the Hebrew Text it's indifferent to be understood either of God's *drawing near* to us, or of our *drawing near* to God; the former the cause of the latter, and the happy meeting of both makes up our blessedness. The Summer's Sun draws near to the Marigold, which makes it turn to the Sun, and that makes out its full flourish. God in Mercy draws near to us, and as a Load-stone draws, makes us draw near to him, whence ariseth our chiefest, nay only happiness in Union with him. For that likewise is secondly to be observed for the meaning of the word קרבת, that it signifieth not only *Motum*, to draw near, and so by *Apollinaris* here rendered *πλάσσεμεν*, and by some Copies of the Lxx *ἐγγίζειν*: but also it signifieth the Rest and firm Posture of the Soul upon such an advance and approach, not only *appropinquare*, but then *adherere*, to keep close and cleave fast, *agglutinari*, so *Euthymius*, *πρὸς κολληθῆναι*, as ordinarily as it is here in the Lxx, by which word the nearest and straitest ty between *Husband* and *Wife* is expressed, Eph. 5. 31. and which suits well with the Text, which, to what was said in the foregoing Verse of the destruction of them that go a *whoring from God*, opposeth the goodness and happiness of an humble loyal *drawing near* to him, and an inseparable fast cleaving to him for ever. Here, *O quam bonum*! how good is it thus to draw near and thus to cleave fast, both

begun whilest we are here in the way, but completed in Heaven at our Journeys end.

τὸ ἀγαθόν,
ἢ πάντα
ἐφίεται.

Luke 10. 42.

De Civit.
l. 19. c. 1.

3. But the third particular tells you the Subject or Person to whom such an approach is so good : and that, according to the Philosopher's definition of the chief good, should be every man : yet the *Psalmist* doth not inclose the Commons, when he more particularly applies it to himself, *its good for me*. &c. for although all men are ready to enquire after it, with a *who will shew us any good* ? Psal. 4. 6. Yet in their pursuit of it, they start so many false Games, that instead of that *nam necessarium*, in Varro's time Philosophers did so differ, that by ringing the changes of their several Tenents, as *Austin* sheweth, there might be not fewer than 288 Opinions about it : but whilest most men mistake, and in the foregoing Verse account it good for them to keep *asr off*, and go a *whoring from God* ; it's the happiness of the Faithful so to be guided as to pitch right, and to make that his first main Principle and last resolved Conclusion, which the Prophet here makes the beginning and ending of this *Psalm*, that *God is good to Israel*, and therefore whatever other do *יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים* *Quod ad me spectat*, for my part it's that which I have felt the comfort of, and therefore am resolved to abide by, *Mibi adherere Deo bonum est*, It's good for me to draw *near* and cleave fast to God.

Doct.

A divine Apophthegme, which it seems *St. Austin's* heart was much taken with, that he so oft and in so many places of his writings toucheth, yea and runs descant upon ; a sweet posie, that he so oft smelt to, a sweet friend, whom he cast's about how again and again to meet, and to have some parly with, as well he might, it containing a compleat sum of both our Duty and Happiness both here and in Heaven.

Whilest here Travellers in the way,

What's our Duty ? But as in Conversion at first to turn to him, so still to walk with him ; and to *draw nearer* and nearer to him.

What's our Comfort ? but when in Prayer or otherwise we can get nearest, into the inner Court, and *touch the top of the golden Scepter*, or, but *the hem of Christ's garment* ? But might we get into the Apostle *John's* place, into our Saviour's bosom, softest Beds and gloriousst Thrones would be but stones and dung-hills. It's our Spring and Summer when the *Sun of Righteousness* draws near, and our Heaven here when we may *draw near*, rejoicing, but not playing the wantons in this Sun-shine.

And

And what's our highest Heaven and Happiness at last? but to be caught up into the Clouds to meet with Christ in the Air, and so ^{1 Thess. 4. 17.} for ever to be with the Lord: In nearest approach, to see him as he is, and in closest Communion to enjoy him, there alwayes to be experimenting, and yet ever learning the truth of this Text to all Eternity. It's the Λ and Ω of a Christian course, in his first setting out Godward *bonum est mihi appropinquare*, it's good for me to draw near who am so far off; in his progress yet better to draw nearer; at death the dying Christian's Swan-like Song is καλὸν μοι ἐγγίζειν, and the Saints Antiphony in Heaven is καλὸν μοι προσκολληῖσθαι: so that whether you listen to the voice of the mourning Turtle here below, or to the joyful Quire of Heaven above, they in this are perfect Unisons; however in other respects they have different strains, yet in this one Note they all agree; There's not a Saint on Earth, or Angel in Heaven, but the whole *Chorus uno Ore, Corde*, with one mouth and heart feelingly heartily say or sing aloud to God's praise, *Mihi autem appropinquare, adherere Deo bonum est*, It's good; it's best for me to draw near and cleave fast to God. Which being the joynt vote of Heaven and Earth, the very natural Heart-Language of the New-born Convert when as yet he cannot speak, and of the dying Christian when he now lyes speechless, of the conflicting Martyr at the Stake, and of the Saint Triumphant before the Throne, it needs less proof, when encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרֶה, O the blessedness of that man whom thou chusest and causest to draw near to thee! saith the Psalmist, Psal. 65. 4. it seemeth he made account it was a multiplied admirable blessedness. Acquaint thy self now with God, and thereby good shall come unto thee, saith Eliphaz, Job 22. 21. The very word there translated Acquaint hath profit included in the signification of it, and well may, when so much good is תְּבוּאָה *proventus* (as the word there is) the proper fruit of it: for here, if ever, *Bonum propter vicinum bonum*; much good by so good acquaintance. Good will proportionably come to us, as we come and draw near to God. Good will come he meaneth universally, all good will, but he speaks indefinitely, because he cannot define how much. But as the Psalmist saith, Taste and see how good the Lord is, Psal. 34. 8. So he bids Job acquaint himself with God, and try how much good will come by that acquaintance, which they know best who have tasted and tried most, and they are such as have got nearest, and kept closest. They'll tell you there's so much

Usile.

השכן

A Treasure

much, that whatever others mean by their *bonum utile, jucundum, honestum*, is herein formally, fully, eminently comprehended.

If we measure *goodness* by *profitableness*, O the blessed gainful incomes of Grace, Peace, Glory, yea of outward good things so far as they are indeed good to us, by our *drawing near* to God in Christ Jesus! The Summer-Sun drawn near to us doth not so load the Earth with Fruit, as the *Sun of Righteousness* doth us in his approaches to us, and ours to him, with the *Fruits* of his *Bounty*. *Ctesius* his *ποταμός φέρων πάντα τὰ ἀγαθὰ* is but one of his Fables, but in this *River of Paradise* is a real truth; else *Paul* would not have counted *the loss of all things gain*, that he might come so near, as to be found in Christ, Phil. 3. 8, 9. Nor would *David* have reckoned a day in God's Courts better than a thousand, Psal. 84. 10. but that by experience he found in God's Courts what others found in his, that a Courtier near to the King can get more by a word, than another at a further distance with far greater pains and industry. When *Jacob* was near to *Joseph*, he was nourished by him, Gen. 45. 10, 11. but not so, as that soul is feasted and fatted, that sits near to Christ, and lieth in his bosom.

Jucundum.

And that tells you there is Pleasure, as well as Profit; Light in such a Goshen, as well as nourishment. In God's presence fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore, Psal. 16. 11. Away with the empty vanishing pleasures of Sin and the World; here's both fulness and everlastingness in these joys together, a full cup, which can never be drunk to the bottom, but only the deeper the sweeter. It's Christ's presence and our nearness to him, that makes Heaven it self a Paradise of delights, and not *Mahomet's* Chrystal Fountains, and pleasant Orchards and Gardens, and Fruits, and the like, which he like a beast accounts the greatest happiness in his. When the Sun is sett, how dark is the night? and when it's gone far from us, how cold is the Winter? but when it draws near in Summer; how pleasantly do the Birds sing, and the Plants flourish, and the Flowers smell? as in those Climats that are nearer to it is a *Ver perpetuum*. And all these but shadows of that solid joy and delight, which the faithful soul feels and enjoys in the approach of the *Sun of Righteousness*. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, saith the Spouse, Cant. 2. 3. and would be loth to leave God's blessing in that shade for the warmest Sun-shine, and to be haled or forced from such sweet Enjoyments by any other most pleasing delights; would account it

Et hæc est
maxima mer-
ces, & inter-
minabilis.
Alcoran Azora
2. 28. 47, 48.

As it's expres-
sed, Cant. 2.
3, to 14.

it as a banishing of it from a Paradise into the howling *Wilderness*. *Cum inhaesero tibi ex omni me, omnino nusquam erit mihi dolor & labor, & viva erit vita mea tota plena. te, faith holy Angustin.* Confess. l. 10. There's no grief in him, when he is all in God: he hath a lively c. 28. life of it, when he can sit so near the Fountain of Life, as to be filled with the blessed inflowes of it. If David cannot tell how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, you had Psal. 133. 1. need of the tongue of an Angel, and not mine, to tell the unutterableness of that delight and Joy, when Children and Father, Spouse and Husband, Head and Members cleave together in closest Union.

And if Honour use to go in the first rank of the World's excellencies, then he that's nearest to God must needs herein have the upper hand: Our blessed Saviour is exalted to highest Honour, in that he is at the right hand of God: and then sure that soul is no base one, that lies nearest to the heart of Christ. Seemeth it a small thing to you (said Moses to Korah) that the God of Israel hath brought you near to himself in the Ministry of the Tabernacle? in which respect Nazianzen highly extolls the now despised Ministry, and Chrysostom lifts it up above Crowns and Scepters: but how much more honourable is it to draw near to God in saving Grace, than in that Sacred Office, which sometimes they that are most unworthy climb up to? They were the Grandees of Persia, who sat next to the King, and saw his face, Esth. 1. 14. May I never affect greater Grandure in this World, than in nearest approaches to see the face of God in Christ, though the great ones of the World set me under their footstool. Honorificum.

I might add a word of Beauty, which, according to the Hebrew phrase, hath a kind of goodness in its comeliness. But even that is, when the parts of the body are joyn'd together amongst themselves, and all united to the head, which, if parted, or dislocated, occasion horror rather than delight. But O the ravishing Beauty of Christ mystical, when from him and with him the whole body is fitly joyned together! Ephes. 4. 16. when met together to meet with Christ, they are the Beauty of Holiness, Psal. 110. 3. This made Moses's face shine when he talked with God, Exod. 34. 29. This encompasseth the Saints in their approaches to Christ with rayes of Divine lustre, that they need not be beholden to the Limner or Painter for a painted glory. Though the Moon be at the full of her light and beauty, when she is in furthest opposition

to the *Sun*, yet our *Full* is in our nearest *Union* with the *Sun* of *Righteousness*.

I forbear further instances. But that you may further see how good it is to *draw near to God*, give me leave to propound these two convincing Arguments.

Argument 1.

The soul is
then in *Apogeo*.
2 Cor. 3. 18.

2 Pet. 1. 4.

Luke 15. 13.

That's indeed *good*, and *good to me*, that makes me better; but so do not the profits, pleasures, honours and the rest of those things which the World calls good. A man may be extremely bad with them, and too often (whilst they prostitute his body, and debase his mind) is made the worse by them. But was it ever so by our humble *drawing near to God*? Doth it not elevate the mind, enlarge the heart, innoble, spiritualize and by a Divine Metamorphosis transform the soul into the *Image* of Christ in its nearer approaches and interviews? *Intellectus fit idem cum objecto*. The understanding is made one with him in its Divine Contemplations: and love makes him one with it in its cordial embraces, not in *H. N.* his mad phrase *Goddied with God*, but yet in the Apostles divine expression *made partakers of the Divine Nature*. Here's cure by coming *near* and *touching*, Luke 8. 44. *Healing under his wings*, Mal. 4. 2. *Life and Joy in his Presence*, Psal. 16. 11: The *Prodigal* dare not be so bad as he would be, unless he run far from his *Father's house*. And that tells you the good child is better for keeping in his Father's presence. When we keep *near to God*, Heaven is not only near to us, but Heaven is in us: we then have not only heavenly Joyes, but also heavenly Hearts; and is it not good to be there? and therefore to draw nearer?

Argument, 2.

And again *good to draw near*, because best when nearest, and worst when farthest off.

1. First, *best when nearest*.

Angels and Men by nature the *best* of God's Creatures, because in nature they are *nearest* to him, and most resemble him, and are capable of *communion* with him.

Math. 18. 10.

Of Angels they are the *good* ones, that continually behold him, and they the *best* that are *nearest*; and therefore the chief of them are wont to be called *Assistentes*.

Of Men, as first, when was *Adam* best, when now created and enjoyed converse with God? or when fallen and then run away from him?

Of all *Men*, the *Saints* that are most *honoured by him* are a people *near unto him*, Psal. 148. 14. their first beginning to be *well* being when at first in conversion they begin to turn towards him,

and

and how *well* are they ? never better than when in the exercise of Grace, performance of service in Meditation, Prayer, Word, Sacrament, in doing, nay though it be in suffering, they can get nearest to him ; let it be upon the Canon's mouth (saith the soul that is truly *touch'd*.) if I may but so make my approaches to my God. Let my Father whip me, if, whilst he so doth, he takes me into his Arms. The Child is not afraid in the dark ; if then he have his Father by the hand : nor is *David* in the valley of the shadow of death, if his good *Shepherd* be with him, Psal. 23. 4. The whole World is not worth a Dungeon's light and a Prison's enlargement, when Christ shines in, and his Spirit sets the soul at liberty to go out to him. The Martyr is not bound when tyed to the stake, his soul is upon the wing to take her flight to her Saviour. It seems then that it is so good to draw near to God, that in so doing the *Serpent* hath lost it's sting ; the *Lion* is become a *Lamb* ; the *Gridiron* a bed of *Roses* ; *Darkness* is no *Darkness* ; the worst evils are not themselves. Its good to be afflicted, tormented, to suffer, to dye : good to be, to do, to suffer any thing, if thereby we be set nearer to Christ who is *all in all*. Lam. 3. 25, 26, 27. Psal. 139. 12.

But how good then, when in a better conditon, when once come nearest in Heaven's full vision and perfect communion there, and so to be with Christ ? what saith *Paul* of it ? he wants words, and yet multiplies them, it's πολλὰ μᾶλλον κρείσσον, *multo magis melius*, Comparative upon Comparative, which riseth higher than a Superlative. It's much more better, even *best of all*, Phil. 1. 23. which when *Peter* in Christ's transfiguration had only a glimpse of, he half translates my Text, and cryes out in an Extasy, Lord it's good to be here, Mat. 17. 4. And so when the elevated soul is got into the Holy Mount, and there having a nearer stand takes a fuller view of the glory of Christ, is so near that being in the Spirit it's carryed out to him in strongest workings and heavenly raptures, as the inferior Orbs are carried about by the motion of the *Primum mobile*, and when in inward peace, can quietly ly down in its Saviours bosom : whilst others are anxiously asking, who will shew us any good ? their Corn and Wine is nothing to such a *lifting up* of the light of God's Countenance, it sweetly sings its requiem, and knows what it saith (which *Peter* did not) and crieth out, κύετε καλὸν εἶναι ἡμῶς εἶδεν εἶναι, Lord, it's good to be here, *frui et usque morari*. Let us here not make a *Tabernacle*, but a *Mansion* for ever. Rev. 1. 10. Psal. 4. 8, 7.

SSf

For

For first it's best to be nearest.

2. Secondly, many now do, and many more at last will find it worst when farthest off.

If Devils of all Creatures are in the worst condition, I am sure they are at the furthest distance, and therefore Satan in ancient Liturgies stiled ἀλλότριος, a far-off stranger to Christ and his Kingdom.

And for Men; our first unhappy step towards misery was in our first retrograde from the God of our Mercy, whence we came to be estranged from the womb, and to go astray as soon as we were born, Psal. 58. 3. So as the further we go, it's the further from God, and nearer to our own destruction, leaving him, and forsaking our own mercy together, Jonah 2. 8.

And so at last, when we are furthest run from him, we are arrived at the lowest pitch of our own misery. So when the rich man is in Hell, it was ἀπὸ μακρόθεν, as far off that he saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, Luke 16. 23. And accordingly that infernal dungeon is called τὸ σκότος ἐξώτερον, outward darkness, Matth. 8. 12. As Prisons were wont to be without the City, Acts 12. 10. So those unhappy souls in this sett at the remotest distance from Christ's presence and Kingdom, as the Apostle describes everlasting destruction to be ἀπὸ πρὸς ὧν κρύβεται, From the presence of the Lord, 2 Thess. 1. 9. When the Lord Jesus at the last day shall ἀποσκηνοποιήσῃ, chide those undone Miscreants into Hell with those soul-sinking words, Depart from me ye cursed, Matth. 25. 41. Then at least the truth of this Doctrine, that it's good to draw near to God, (though now not heeded) will be by such fully but most uncomfortably resented, of which truth, had we no other proof, we need no better evidence than this double witness

1. Of an humble soul in desertion, which had formerly felt the sweetness of Christ's nearer presence, and is now fainting and swooning away by reason of his absence; how is it starved with such a cold blast, when removed out of that warm Sunshine? would not the poor Woman, when she feels her self fainting and her Issue running, say, it would be well with me, if I could draw near? would not the least touch of the utmost ben be a rich mercy?

2. Of a forlorn soul in the estate of despair and damnation. Was it not a trembling Cain's saddest Note? Thou hast driven me from

from thy presence, and therefore my punishment is greater than I can bear, Gen. 4. 13, 14. Though malice, guilt, and horror make such *bid* God depart from them, and make them fly from him, yet their own present feelings cannot but make them sensible how good it would be to be nearer to him, when they find it the extremity of all evil to be utterly and for ever removed from him.

The ground of all which may be taken principally, 1. From the Nature of God. 2. Of the Creature in general. 3. Of Man in particular. And 4. More especially from that new Nature or gracious frame, which God works in the new Creature.

For God :

1. First he is an *Omnipresent God*, not far from any of us, Acts 17. 27. but more inward than our very souls to every one of us : So that there is now no flying from his presence : And therefore think whether upon this ground it be not best to draw near to his goodness. When Jacob could not escape Esau as an enemy, it was his wisdom so to apply himself to him, as to make him his friend. Because we cannot meet God as an enemy, be we as suppliant to make him a friend, Amos 4. 12. There is no escaping from God, but by running to him, nor escaping his Wrath, if we betake not our selves to his Mercy. If we draw no near to the Throne of his Grace, we shall be drawn to the Bar of his Justice. In a word, he is an *infinite* God ; so that we cannot avoid him, and is it not then good to make a virtue of necessity, and so to draw near to him?

Reas. 1. From God. As Omnipresent. Psal. 139. 7.

Gen. 32. Hei mihi quam excelsus es in excelsis ! & quam profundus es in profundis ! & nusquam recessus, & vix redimus ad te. August. Conf. lib. 8. cap. 3.

2. But that we may not be so much driven by fear, as drawn with Cords of Love, Consider we, as his greatness, so especially his goodness, and that's a strong *Attractive*, hath a wonderful *Magnetick* force to draw the soul to love, and the mind to assent, that it's so good to draw near to a good God, that it's a Conclusion above Demonstration. Particularly :

1. As God, he is *Bonum Universalissimum* ; All in all, 1 Cor. 15. 28. which contains all good in him, and so is able to make an universal supply of all that good, which we stand in need of from him *Christus meus & omnia*, My God is my All : my all-sufficient portion ; who, as such, *sufficiens movet & implet voluntatem*, as Aquinas speaks, like the huge Ocean that fills every Creek ; which the shallow narrow Rivolets of the Creature's largest *perfections* cannot reach ; cannot supply all ; and the want of any good thing ministers more *disquiet*, than the enjoyment of

1. Aq. 105. A. 4. As in Haman, Esth. 5. 11, 12, 13.

SSS 2

many

Psal. 119. 96.

many Satisfaction. I have seen an end of all perfection, saith the Psalmist, but it's well that he adds *thy Commandments are exceeding broad*. One God more than enough to fulfil our desires and wants: And why then should I not prefer God before my self, as the *whole* before the *part*? Why should I not be nearer to God than to my self? How well would it be to have the *Head* of all our *Springs* ly in this immense *Ocean*? How good is it to *draw near* to that God? when by enjoying of him, who is more than all, we may be sure to want nothing.

Vide Schedium

2.

* Seneca vid.
Heinsii exorcist.
Sacr. 16. in
A&A. 17. Est
aliquid quo
sapientia antecedit
Denim.

2. As God, he is *Summum Bonum & Finis ultimus*; the *chiefest good* and *last end*, Psal. 73. 25. Prov. 16. 4. We Christians must needs believe it, seeing all the Sects of the Heathen Philosophers (except the proud * Stoick, who thinks his wife man is in some thing above his God) do joyntly acknowledge it. Now it's *Austin's* true rule, *Rei cuiusque perfectio est in adhaerentia ad suum principium*, that it's the goodness and perfection of every thing to adhere to its principle, and to be in a tendency to its last end, which therefore makes God the *Load-stone* of the soul, that it cannot rest till it point to him; the very *Center* of it, that it cannot be quiet till it rest in him as the *chief good*: our chiefest happiness can consist in nothing but in nearest Union and fullest Communion with him.

Judg. 14. 14.

Matth. 7. 16.

Prov. 16. 7.

2 Cor. 1. 5.

2 Cor. 12. 7, 9.

3. As God, he is so *Omnipotently good*; that either as a *ὄψις ἀλεξικακή*, whilst he is *near*, he can keep evil *far* from us, Psal. 91. 7. or so abate it, that it doth not *hurt* us, Dan. 3. 27. & 6. 22. or so change it, that it shall be a means of *good* to us, as *Joseph's* brethrens bad intention, a means of his and their *preservation*, Gen. 50. 20. and *Esth. 9. 1.* turns Balaam's curse into a blessing, Deut. 23. 5. So that *out of the eater, comes meat*, and *out of the strong, sweetness*: *Grapes are gathered of Thorns, and Figs of Thistles*: *makes my Enemy my Friend*, my Wound my Cure, my Affliction my Consolation, and even my *weakness* my strength, whilst I being so weak, that I cannot stand on mine own legs, am cast into my Fathers arms. And was not the Psalmist then upon a safe-guard, when at the same time that in one Verse his Enemies *drawing near* made his heart tremble, in the very next Verse, his God being *as near* made his Faith confident, Psal. 119. 150, 151. O how good is it to *draw near* to this Omnipotent God, who, when the *Flouds come*, and the *Winds blow*, can either *still the Storm*, or make it *blow* us into the *Harbour*: is so good.

Matth. 7. 27.

good as either to cause all evil to be far away, or when near to be far from burning us!

4. As God, he is *purely* and *only* good, so as *no evil* is either in him, or *dwells with him*, Psal. 5. 4. אֵל טוֹב, saith the Psalmist in the first words of this Psalm, and they may indifferently be rendred either, *Truly God is good*, or *God is only good*: and indeed he is most truly good, that is only good, and so God is a most simple being without the least intermixture of any evil; *no evil in him*, none proceeds from him; all is good that God sends. His good Word, 2 Kings 20. 19. His good Spirit, Neh. 9. 20. His Creatures good, as he made them, Gen. 1. 31. Nay, his very *Chastisements* good, as he improveth them, Psal. 119. 71. All good, and as they come from him, *only good*: *wish the pure be is pure*, Psal. 18. 26. A pure heart and way without mixture of sin shall have pure Mercy without mixture of wrath: *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*, Jer. 25. 6. But now in all other things, even in our best Contentments by reason of their and our *vanity* there is an untoward mixture of evil and good; it may be of a great deal of evil with a little good, of the worst evil with the choicest good: a very *Polypus* head, in which

Πολλὰ μὲν ἐθλὰ μίμνυμένα, πολλά δ' ἐ λυγρὰ.

Either in them or in our use of them bitterest choler of sweetest *Thucydides*, honey; a most infectious Plague. (as once at *Athens*) after a most healthful year. Worst carriages and best parts in the same man: as in the same *Cataline* Virtue and Vice were at a Combat, *See Piccart. Observat. Historicopolitic. Decad. I. cap. 8.* but that the latter unhappily got the Victory: an Antidote and a Poyson in the same Viper: in the same Toad, in which is (if you could find it) the most *Precious Stone*, you may be sure to find the rankest Vcnom; that you have more cause not to touch it for the one, than to take it up for the other. Such staves of comfort are the Creatures, like *Moses's*: take them at the one end, and they will be a *Staff* in your hand to support you: but if at the other, a *Serpent* to sting you to the heart: So that instead of drawing near to them, you have need with him to fly from them. But how safely then may we, and how confidently ought we with Humility to draw near to God, who though of our selves are evil, and only evil, and continually evil, yet shall find him good, and only good, and everlastingly good? If it be good marrying that good Wife, which will do her husband good, and not hurt all the days of her life, Prov. 31. 12. Then, how much better is it in chaste love to dwell with and cleave to this God, who is
so

so purely and simply *good* in himself, that if thou wilt let him, he will do no *hurt*, but *good*, and *good only*, and that to *Eternity*.

Cap. 8. 6.

5. As God, he is *Infinitely good*, and *Infinitum non potest transiri*: We cannot pass over and get through that which is *Infinite*, or get to the *end* of that, which hath none: so that though every day we get nearer, yet still there is a *Plus ultra*, that thou mayest still be called on (as the Angel did *Ezekiel*) to *see yet more*: We are soon at the bottom of the shallow Creature's greatest depth, and indeed at the first in our *expectation* gotten far beyond what we after find in the *possession*; so that the beauty of it is best seen at a distance, and the nearer we come to it, the more blemishes we see in it; and on the contrary in our approaches to God's infinite goodness, as we cannot think so much before as we find after, so the nearer we come, the more we meet with; so that when thou hast gone so far and gotten so much of God, as thou dost want, and he can afford no more, I'll give thee leave to sit still, but till then I must advise thee, that it's *good* for thee to get *nearer*.

Luke 18. 13.

6. But it may be this Infinite goodness will overpour our weakness, and therefore the trembling soul with the poor *Publican* in the Gospel yet *stands afar off*, and dares not draw near, whilst it thinks that as God is *Optimus*, so he is *Maximus*, though *infinitely good*, yet *infinitely great*, and therefore although my badness stands in need of his *goodness*, yet my *baseness* and guiltiness had need stand off from that *greatness*. This bottomless Ocean will drown me, and although the nearer to this Sun the more warmth and light, yet in such nearer approaches that heat will melt my waxen wings; and that light will dazzle and put out my weaker eye: True in our bold and curious approaches *Scrutator Majestatis opprimetur à gloriâ*. But in our humble addresses we shall find it far otherwise, *viz.* God to be *bonum conveniens atque: ita maxime appetibile*, so good as most suitable to our desires and wants.

Prov. 25. 27.

Partly as in his own infinite sweetness and condescension he stoops so low, that the lowliest heart may freely *draw near*, and *touch the top of his golden Scepter*, as noblest Princes have given freest access to their meanest Subjects: His greatness no obstruction to his goodness:

But principally and (to us by our sin estranged from him) only,

only, as in Christ our *Emmanuel*, *God with us*, we come to have near and close Communion with *God in him*: an holy God and sinful man were at an unapproachable distance. But therefore our Saviour *God-man* came between us a *Mediator*, that we, who were afar off, may be made near by the blood of Christ, Ephes. 2. 13. That as the same *Israelites*, whom the brightness of *Moses* his face drove away, *Exod.* 34. 30. when he had put a *Vail* on it, drew near to him, Verse 31, 32, 33. So the same sinner, who must keep aloof off from his *Majesty*; especially as he looks out in a fiery Law, need run far away to escape his wrath and curse, as now he hath put on the *Veil* of his flesh, may safely and comfortably approach, and have blessed Communion with him, and experimentally say with the *Psalmist*, that it's good to draw near to him. Deut. 33. 2.

SER-

At St. Marius;
Sep. 9. 1649.

SERMON XXX.

PSAL. 73. 28.

• *But it is good for me to draw near to God.*

Reas. 2.

This

אלהים

in the Text is
alone.

אל שרי

God Almighty
is only God
All-sufficient.

Αὐτοθεός,

and therefore

Αὐτάρκους,

God of him-
self, and there-
fore alone Self-
sufficient,

יהוה that
hath so his Be-
ing from him-
self, that all
else have their
beings from
him.

Gcn. 1. 2.

מרחפת.

Confess. l. b. 13.
cap. 8.

THe second ground whereof is taken from the Nature of the Creature in General, which at best is but a depending being, not sufficient in and of it self for its own Happiness, and therefore must go out of it self, to find it in another; which ultimately, nay, immediately is God only. Now that it may have it of him, it must be some way or other united to him; and so from a natural Tendency, proportionably to the nature of it looks and moves towards him, and as it can, draws near and cleaves to him, according to that of the Psalmist, *The eyes of all wait upon thee.* Psal. 145. 1, 15. As the Vine to the Elm, and the Ivie to the Oak, how fast doth it clasp and cleave? How doth it insinuate? Like the Rivers to the Ocean, or *Ezekiel's Cedar-branches to the great Eagle,* Chap. 17. 6. The Sovereign Lord and Creator leaving in the most perfect Creature some defect, either for being, well-being, or continuing in both, that it may have recourse to Him for a supply; as the Child that cannot defend, or (it may be) carry it self on its own Legs, when left, crieth to the Father: Well were it if we could cry more after ours, for that might make God *draw near to us*, when we cannot *to him*. What a dark frozen thing is such a Northern Clime, where the Sun's Light shines not, and whither its warm Beams reach not? But what a very nothing is every thing without a God creating and supporting it? The very Chaos could not continue in its imperfect confused being without the Spirit of God brooding upon it: And therefore when we see the Flowers opening to the Sun, and the Birds in Winter-Season flying away into warmer Countries; they tell us, that (as we are Creatures) for our being, and well-being, it's good to draw near to God; and teach us to make *Austin's Confession, Male est mihi prater te, non solum extra me, sed in meipso, & omnis mihi copia, quæ Deus non*

non

non est, egenus est, Lord, without thee how ill would it be with me? And that not only in regard of what's without me, but also within me. Without thee, my greatest Plenty is errant Beggary; and therefore such a poor Creature stands in need to dwell near to such a Good Neighbour, to be warmed by his Fire, and fed at his Table. Lord, it's good for me to beg an Alms at thy *Bethesda*; though I creep on my Knees, to get as near as I can to thee.

And this the rather, if, in the third place, we consider the Nature of Man, as in himself, and in reference to God; in a special manner made by *him*, and for *him*, and therefore unquiet and restless till it return to him. The right Line is turned into a Circle, in which the Line is so reflected, that in its return it stays not, till it return from whence it first came.

Of a *Spiritual*, Immortal, and Understanding Soul, of vast apprehensions and desires.

Of a *Sociable Nature*, pity it should not have acquaintance with God. If not good for *Adam to be alone*, without a *Meet-help*, כִּנְרָא Gen. 2. 18. as always before him, with whom he might be made *one flesh*: How ill to be without a better help nearer at hand, with whom he may be made *one Spirit*?

Made after *Gods Image*, Gen. 1. 26. and therefore best when he can come nearest to that first and best Copy.

With an *understanding Soul*, Job 35. 11. And therefore the more he knows, the more he understands his own Dependency, and therefore seeth a greater necessity of *drawing the nearer* to the Fountain of his Being and Welfare.

Of a *Capacious Apprehension*, which nothing but this *Primum Verum* can fill, and therefore wearys himself (*Eccles. 12. 12.*) in an endless search after Truth in several Arts and Sciences: The *World is set in his heart*, *Eccles. 3. 11.* but it's but *little* that he can attain, *Job 26. 14.* and not without a great deal of difficulty is tired out in gathering up the Rays of Light and Truth, which this Sun hath scattered among the Creatures; but is not satisfied till he find them all, and more than all in himself. This is *eternal Life*, to know thee, and whom thou hast sent, *Jesus Christ*, John 17. 3. In the Study of the Creature is a *toilsome* task, *Eccles. 1. 18.* It's in the *near Vision of God*, which the understanding of a Man doth fully acquiesce in, and so *Intellectus est in quiete*. And as he is of a *Capacious Apprehension*, which nothing but this *Primum Verum* can fill: So he is of a *large heart* and vast

Reas. 3.

Fecisti nos ad te, & irrequisitum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.

Augustin.

Confess. 4. 1.

c. 1.

See Dr. Field of the Church.

lib. 1. c. 1.

Scattered as Israel over Egypt, to gather stubble.

T t t

desires, which nothing but this *Summum bonum* can satisfy; God only being *El Shaddai*, Exod. 6. 3. Gen. 17. 1. The God *All-sufficient* either to his own or our Happiness. Whence it is, that when the Soul is once put off from him, *Per devia errans*, like the *evil Spirit* in the Gospel, Mat. 12. 43. goes *through dry Places, seeking rest, and finds none*; till with the Psalmist, he looks Home-ward to God, and saith, *Return unto thy rest, O my Soul*, Psal. 116. 7.

Sometimes, as *Solomon* in *Ecclesiastes*, he seeks and searcheth for what may satisfy him in the Creature, and what content it can afford; and as there was no *Nation* and *Kingdom*, in which *Abab* did not hunt for *Elijah*, 1 Kings 18. 10. and yet he *could not be found*: So there is no Creature in or under Heaven, which in this busie search is not as it were unlapt and ransacked, if possibly by the Profit or Pleasure of it *content* may be found lapt up in it. This busie Bee sits and sucks on every Flower, and like a Chymist makes Extractions of all sorts out of all things, if from any from all he might gain such an *Elixir* as may serve his turn. But *the deep saith, it is not in me*. In all the inferiour Creatures *Adam* could not find a *Meet-help*, Gen. 2. 20. It's pity that in any he should meet with his Happiness. *Solomon*, when tired out with this wild and eager pursuit, is glad at last to turn in to God: *Let's bear the conclusion of the whole Matter, Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole 'of Man*, Eccles. 12. 13. all one with this in the Text, *It's good for me to draw near to God*.

But before that, when vain Man hath been wearied out in seeking that in the Creature, which will not be found, before he will *draw near to God*, with *Saul* he will rather apply himself to *Satan*, and *dig as deep as Hell* to find it, trying whether that may be overtaken in a way of sin, which could not be met with in the lawful Content of the Creature, and here he runs countermain Hell-ward, till he hath quite wearied himself in that Course, *Isa. 57. 10. adds Drunkenness to Thirst*, and Thirst to Drunkenness; when he hath been most drunk, yet thirsts the more, and the more he drinks, the more he thirsts; most unhappy in that he *seeks the Living amongst the Dead*; mistakes Misery for Happiness, and Hell for Heaven. But it's this *Good* that he looks and gropes for; though now Blind-folded and turned off from God, he goes a quite contrary way:

as Psal. 118. 1. But yet as *Austin* well observes, *Mali propterea sunt mali ut sint boni*

boni nempe beati: The wickedest Men do ill, that they might fare well. It's a Goodness and Happiness, that they make after. It's *Ἀγῶς* *ἑρῶς* to which they Sacrifice, a Deity which they serve; unhappy in this, that they grasp the *Cloud* for *Juno* in their Hunting after the vain Creature, and worship the *Devil* instead of the true *God*, 1 Cor. 10. 20. in their thus questing with open Mouth after sinful Contentments; but yet whilst misled with these *fowl Errors*, they bear witness to this *Fundamental Truth*, that whilst they so eagerly, but in vain, pursue such false Goods, they plainly say, that it's *good* to *draw near* to the True; so that the Man hath lost himself when he hath lost this Principle, is rather a Beast, or a Devil, than a Man, that in Profession and Conversation will not say, that *it's good to draw near to God*.

Especially if we consider that new *Nature*, which God works *Reas. 4.* in the *new Creature*, the holy frame of a Godly heart: As those Men, whose *hearts God had touched*, followed *Saul the Lords Anointed*, 1 Sam. 10. 26. So those blessed Souls, which Christ (that true Loadstone) hath indeed *touched*, whilst it *draws*, they *run after him*, Cant. 1. 4. Such Divine Sparks must needs move upward to their proper Element, as the *Virgula Divina* bends that way that the *Mine* lieth. And this,

1. Partly from the inward Instinct of that *Divine Nature* which they *partake of*, which makes them *γυνώσκω* (as the *Ap- 2 Pet. 1. 4.* file's word is, *Phil. 2. 20.*) even *naturally care for the things of God*, and propend towards him, which appears by this, that whilst with others

—*Trahit sua quemque voluptas*:

Ad unum omnes, All of them, though of never such different Ages, Parts, Conditions, nay, though of quite contrary Tempers and Dispositions otherwise, yet *ἀπὸ μιᾶς*, with *one joynt consent* look, and according to their several abilities *draw towards God as near as they can*. The *Swallow* doth not more naturally flie to the *Saladine* when hurt, or the *Chicken* run to the *Hen* when in danger, than a Right-born Heir of Heaven to God his Father. The new-born Babe crys, and the dying Christian now breathing out his Soul, gasps and breaths after him: The one in the beginning of his Race thinks it long till he comes at him, the other almost at the end of his, with *Paul Phil. 3. 13, 14.* the further he goes, makes the more haste to him [in several Paths,

but all in one Road God ward]: the one though he hath not yet had such experience of him, yet thinks how good it were, if he could get near him; the other upon his long experience, thinks it best to keep close to him: when in Affliction, he accounts his Presence more than all other things that he wants, and when in Prosperity, he values the same Presence above all else that he enjoys. I might Instance in many other Particulars: But these may suffice to shew, that amongst never so many *Discords*, they yet altogether make up this *Harmony*, and from the general Instinct of that *new Nature* all cry out with the Psalmist in the Text, *It's good for every one of us severally, for all of us (the whole Chorus) joyntly, to draw near and keep close to God.*

2. But especially upon their deliberate Resolutions upon long trial and experience, they thereby come more fully to know what they have found good to *apply themselves to*; they cannot but conclude that it's best to *draw near to God.*

Hos. 2. 6, 7.
Jer. 3. 22, 23.

At their first Conversion, they were sufficiently convinced of the Vanity, and oft-times of the Mischief of all other Applications, of the Creatures utter Insufficiency for any saving Good to them. *John Baptist*, that made way for Christ in their hearts, cried, *All flesh is grass*, Isa. 40. 6. The first saving Breath, that breathed Life into them, blasted the Creature to them: As soon as they began to *live to God*, the *Flesh* was mortified, and the *World crucified.*

But further, In their after frequent Experience they have been herein more confirmed; that, when their Souls have gone out to any Creature to support them, they find the best so weak that they cannot, or nothing in comparison of God; not at all without God: *Father and Mother cast off, when God alone takes up*, Psal. 27. 10. (and therefore *Cease from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. 2. 22.)

Gen. 37

And for others, so bad, that if they could, they would not, so that oft-times they are the worse, the nearer they come to them. The *Reed breaks*, and *pierceth the Hand*, when *leaned* upon for support, Ezek. 29. 6, 7. the *Briar scratcheth and pricks*, when gone to for shelter: They get as much good by applying themselves to them, as *Joseph* did by going to his Brethren; or the *Levite* by turning in to *Gibeah*. Of all others the *Godly* are deserted by Friends, and pursued by Enemies, and

and they themselves a poor shiftless he'ple's People, and therefore it's good for the *Comers*, that feeble folk, and so much hunted, to make their Houses in the Rock, Prov. 30. 26. It's good for the Vine, so unable to subsist of it self, and so much pluckt by others, to clasp fast to the Elm: For me, that am plagued all the day long, and chafed every morning, as the Psalmist said of himself, v. 14. for me, at least, it's good to draw near to God. This by experience they find; and therefore as Joshua said to Israel, *If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, chuse you whom you will serve: but I and my House will serve the Lord*, Josh. 24. 15. So will every right-born Heir of Heaven, however others take offence and go away, Joh. 6. 66. yet when asked, *Whether they also would go away*, (v. 67.) with Peter be ready resolvedly to answer, *Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ*, &c. ver. 68. We know, and have found and felt, what thou art in thy self, and what thou hast been to us in our keeping close to thee, and therefore there's no talking or thinking of leaving thee. The faithful Soul from the very Heart saith, what the Psalmist v. 25. expresseth; *Lord, whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on Earth that I desire besides thee*. And therefore when others, v. 27. by their dear-bought experience, find at last nothing but destruction is gained by being afar off, and going a whoring from thee, *IN*, *Quod ad me spectat*, I that know this, and have had experience both of the mischief of my being estranged from thee, and of the blessing of keeping close to thee, I must hold to it, and shall ever (by the Grace of God) bide by it, that it's good for me to draw near to thee.

Which teacheth us with all humble thankfulness to think *Use 1.* and acknowledg, how good God hath been to us in giving us Jesus Christ, by whose Mediation alone we may have this access; and without which, as we now are, it would be as good for us to draw near to God, as for a guilty Malefactor to the Bar of an angry Judge, or for Briers and Thorns to a consuming fire, Isa. 27. 4. for so God is to Sinners out of Christ, Heb. 12. 29. And then; *Who among us is able to dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. 33. 14. His Majesty is so infinitely glorious, that (as the Apottle speaks) *he dwells in Light unapproachable*, 1 Tim. 6. 16.

His Holiness so impatient of sinful defilement, that he cannot endure to behold it, Hab. 1. 13. so that even the impudent sinner

gets

gets as far as he can out of his sight, that he may more freely commit it, *Isa. 29. 15.* and the humbled blushing sinner cannot stand before him by reason of it, *Ezra. 9. 6, 15.*

His Justice is so strict, and his Wrath so dreadful, as makes Adam, when now under guilt, *hide himself*; Cain run out of his presence; the poor humbled Publican stand afar off; and the forlorn damned Souls at the last day desire Mountains and Rocks to fall upon them, rather than he should see them, and, as Basil thinks, wish rather to lie still in the Prison of Hell, than to be brought out before him to his Judgment-Seat.

How awful is that sad word of God's being sanctified in them that draw nigh to him, *Levit. 20. 3!* And how dreadful is that Threat of God's drawing near to Judgment, *Mal. 3. 5!* And can it then be so good, to draw near to such a God so glorious and terrible? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, said the Apostle in alike case; and so doth the faithful Soul in this, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*: Through him my Propitiatory I find my Judgment on a Mercy-Seat: and so it's good to draw near: happy that we may, and more happy if we will. It was he, that engaged his heart to approach to God, *Jer. 30. 21.* That Son of Man, that drew near to the ancient of days, *Dan. 7. 13.* and so brings us with him, as Joseph did his Brethren into the King's presence. As our near Kinsman taking our Nature into the nearest Union of his Person, so as in this Glass we see the Glory of God so refracted and attuned to our weakness, that instead of being oppressed with it, we are changed into it, *2-Cor. 3. 18.* By our blessed Emmanuel God is so with us, as that we may have free and near access to him.

Whilst his Holiness and Obedience become a Vail to cover our Defilement.

And his Blood hath so fully quenched the fiery Indignation of his Father's Wrath, that we, who by the Law are kept at a distance afar off, *Exod. 20. 18. & 24. 2.* have by the Gospel of Christ brought to us a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God, *Heb. 7. 19.*

Use 2. And what now remaineth? but that seeing it is so good to draw near to God, we be all exhorted in his fear to be so good to our selves, as to keep no longer at a distance. Let Strangers, yea Enemies, draw near, and let Friends draw yet nearer. Let not our sins any longer separate us, and then let not unbelief dishearten us. Remember, that as on the one side the Spirit and the

*the Bride say, come; and he that heareth saith, come, viz. in the desires and out-goings of their Soul to Christ; so he on the other side, in his desire of their union with him, ecchoeth back again, And he that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely, Rev. 22. 17. And then, as the Lord saith, Jer. 30. 21. Who is he that engageth his heart to approach unto me? So I in the Name of the Lord, whilst I look upon this great Congregation, am bold to ask the Question; But who amongst you all is such an Enemy to his own good, as will not now and henceforth ever hereafter engage his whole heart to make yet nearer approaches to this God, who is so good, and in drawing near to whom consists our everlasting happiness? Some Interpreters upon that Text, think that the Question, *Who is he that engageth his heart, &c.* is made by way of a troubled admiration that so few do. But I beseech you let it not so be, but that (as others rather think) by way of encouragement, as though he had said, But *who is that blessed Man, that I may see him, and go out to meet him?* And therefore as *Jesus* in another case said, *Who is on my side? who?* and it's added, That *two or three Eunuchs looked on.* Though I desire not in other things to make any *sidings*, (there are too many already) yet in regard of our *drawing near to God*, I make no *fastidious* question, if I ask of you all; But *who will be on the Lord's side? who? Who of you will now engage your hearts to approach to God?* Let it not, I beseech you, be *two or three*, but *many*. O that I could prevail with you all. Here say one and all, I and I, and (as it's said in the Prophet) *I will go also*. Let the forwardest Christian, that hath advanced furthest, say, I by the Grace of God will make *one*; and let the humbled sinner, that is now but first looking after Christ, say, and I fain would make *another*. Instead of our present uncomfortable estrangements from Christ and one another, happy we, if *with our faces Zionward* we could *take hold one of another*, the strongest of the weakest, and those that are estranged of them with whom they have been most at odds, and so go hand in hand together, saying, *Come, let us join our selves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant never to be forgotten.* This joint *drawing near to God* in the good old way of the Power of Godliness (which by our new Devices is now too much out of fashion) would make us leave off our *crooked by-paths*, and cross walkings, in which we now so juggle, and at last so quite loose one another.*

2 King. 9. 32.

Zech. 8. 21.

Jer. 50. 5.

Loud

Loud calls and strong perswasions in this kind are not wanting.

1. In this blessed Motion, the *Terminus ad quem* is God ; who is so good, as that there is in him *vis infinita magnetica*, such a wonderful attractive power and force, as may *trahere*, nay, *rappare animam*, draw and snatch the Soul to him, in a way of a sweet but irresistibile violence. Our Saviour said, That *when he was lifted up, he would draw all Men to him*; John 12. 32. Even so, Amen; Lord Jesus, thou faithful and true Witness.

Especially as God in Christ looks out, and comes out to us ; how earnest is he to call us ? how glad to welcome us ? how ready more than half way to meet us ? When the Prodigal began to come, the Father ran, Luk. 15. 20. Desperate Prodigal, when thy Heavenly Father *draws near*, wilt thou *draw backward* ? Oh take heed of it, lest God's Soul take no pleasure in thee, Heb. 10. 38. Think what a step thy Saviour took in his Incarnation to come to thee ! *Inestimabilis dignatio, & penitus inexcogitabilis, quod in carceris huius horrorem descendere dignata est Celsitudo*, as Bernard speaks. When he cannot express it, he cannot think of it without admiration : *Non est Consuetudo divinum ut ad pauperes veniamus, &c.* At least therefore, though we cannot go, being lame and blind, at *saltem conetur erigere caput & aliquatenus assurgere in occursum tanti Medici*. And yet besides, in all the after-travel of his Soul think how he came leaping over Mountains, and skipping over Hills, that he might get to thee before thou perishedst eternally. By his Word and Spirit doth he not sometimes come very near thee ? In the Sacrament, though there be no *Transubstantiation*, yet is there not a very near union with thee ? And is not all this enough to draw thee ?

2. If not, consider then the *Terminus a quo*, that estate, which of thy self thou art in, and think if it may not drive thee. It may be thou art of their mind, who, when God bad them return, return'd this answer, *We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee*, Jer. 2. 31. Though God be never so good, and it be very good to draw near to him, yet we are so well, that we need not trouble our selves in making out after him. I, so ? woful blind Creature, that hast lost thy self and thine eyes together that thou canst not see it ; wer't thou not deadlily *lethargical*, thou wouldst be more sensible of thine own wants : wert thou not wholly a stranger at home, thou wouldst see nothing but misery and beggary there, that would thrust thee out for supply elsewhere. So far

Serm. 1. de
Advent.

far as thou art off from Christ, so far from Righteousness, Isa. 46. 12. and just so far from blessedness. And what then ? so deadly sick, and not so much as to send for thy Physician ! such a Sinner, and not so much as to look out for a Saviour ! Doth the Avenger of Blood pursue thee, and dost thou not fly to the City of Refuge ? to the hope that is set before thee ? Doth Hell behind thee gape for thee ? and no need, no care of Christ and Heaven to receive thee ?

But had we less need in that kind, yet even in outward respects the World is never so good, but, when at best, it's *good to draw near to God* : But it's now so bad, that I think David's Prayer will not sound ill in any of our Mouths, *Lord, be not thou far off, for trouble is near*. I delight not to read State-Lectures out of a Pulpit ; I am not of the Privy-Council, either of God or our Governors, to tell you what will be ; but without me your own hearts will tell you what very probably *may be* : though the Weather for the present be somewhat fair, yet at best it's very doubtful. If we consult our sins, they'll tell us that there is likely to be a *Storm* ; and then if we would consult our own peace, we cannot but think it *good* to be provided of a *shelter*. Our sad experiences of all that hitherto we have had recourse to fully evidence to us, that none of them are tight enough, but it may and will *drop through*, save God only : and therefore in such doubtful Circumstances, I think it safest to join with the *strongest Party* : But mistake me not, I mean not such as Men out of self-interests are wont to close with ; that's falseness and baseness ; but I mean in a way of Faith and Obedience to God, and I am sure that he is strongest. Neither is it cowardize in such a Storm, to thrust the Head into such a Corner. *David* was no Coward, and yet, as the weak fearful Chick, he gets himself under the shadow of God's Wings, till calamity be over-past, Psal. 57. 1. Till then, because we may yet live to see and say, as in the Verse before the Text, *Lo, they are perished that are far from thee*, let every faithful Soul conclude in the words of the Text, *Therefore it is good for me to draw near to God*.

And if so, it is further matter, 1. Of Comfort to some ; 2. Of Reproof and Humiliation to others ; 3. Of Instruction and Direction to us all.

Comfort to such as do *draw near* and keep close. If it be so *Use 3.* good, how well may they be apaid with their condition, whatever it is for the outward Man, if for the inward, God and they

be not at a distance? Though Enemies be *near* to accuse and condemn, if Christ be but *near* to justifie and acquit us, *Iſa.* 50. 8. though thou beeſt *far from Peace*, if not far from God; though others thrust us away, as *Iſa.* 65. 5. and *caſt us out*, if Christ will but then draw near and find us, as he did him, *John* 9. 34. 35. The Proclamation of old was, *Rejoyce greatly, O Daughter of Zion, ſhout, O Daughter of Jeruſalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, having Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Aſs*, *Zech.* 9. 9. May there be but an happy meeting of my Lord and King coming to me, and of my Soul drawing and keeping cloſe to him, *I'll rejoyce and ſhout*, to ſee my Saviour ſo near to me, *though upon an Aſs-Colt*; whatever outward Meanneſs, or Wants, yea, or Dangers and Miſeries, theſe nearer approaches and interviews are accompanied with; yet *therein I do rejoyce*, yea, and *will rejoyce*; nay, *cannot but rejoyce*, ſaith the Experienced Chriſtian, that knows what this *goodneſs of drawing and keeping near to God* (in the Text) meaneth. When he ſaith, *it's Good*; he could not ſay a *better word*; and when he adds to *draw nigh to God*, he could not, I am ſure, mention a *better thing*. It's *Good*, ſpoken Indefinitely, meant Univerſally. It's ſo only *Good*, that nothing is good without it (though the Torch-light be very great, it's Night till Sun-riſe) ſo univerſally *Good*, that nothing with it can be ill; or be things never ſo ill, yet he is far from being ill, who hath God ſo *near him*. It was *Iſrael's* Comfort in a Wilderneſs, *Dent.* 4. 7. The lamenting Church's Stay when ſinking, *Lam.* 3. 57. At the laſt Day, when the whole World ſhall be on Fire, we are even then bid *lift up our Heads, becauſe our Salvation draweth nigh*; *1. Theſſ.* 4. 17. When Chriſt cometh again to us, and we *ſhall be caught up into the Clouds to meet him, and ſo for ever to be with the Lord*. *Viſio, amor, gaudium*, you know, make up Heavens Happineſs, but all ariſe from God's and Chriſt's *neareſt Union and Preſence*. There indeed we ſhall come to *neareſt* approaches, and they ſo near as utterly for ever to drive all evils away as the Noon-day-Sun all Miſts and Clouds. That's Heaven, which we are not yet got into. It's well if we be ſo far on our way, as to be in the *Gate of Heaven*; if we that were *aſar off*, be made *near by the Blood of Chriſt*, *whiſt we here walk by Faith and not by Sight*. Such Morning-Suns may admit of ſome over-cloudings, but more Light than Darkneſs, when the Sun is up and *drawn ſo nigh*. I may in other reſpects, be in a *dry thirſty Wilderneſs*: But I ſhall not die for *Thirſt*, if I

Ezek 1. 28.

1. Theſſ. 4. 17.

lie so near the Fountain Head. I shall not be Heart-sick, if I may come so near, as to lay my aking Head in my Saviour's Bosome. Joseph's encouragement to his famished Brethren was, Gen. 45. 10, 11. that they should be *nigh to him* in *Goshen*: It shall be comfort enough to me, if my Jesus will but tell me, that I shall be *nigh* Him, though it be in a *Wilderness*; whilst cold Northern Climes (because far from the Sun) have a desolate horrid Aspect: With what a virdant Flourish do those Countries smile, and laugh, and sing, that are nearer, and lie more directly under his Beams? Let frozen-hearted Sinners, that are far from the *Sun of Righteousness*, be as far from Heart-melting joys; but such as upon whom He hath Risen, and have got so near as to be under *his Wings*, let them get so much lively Warmth and *Healing* from them, that where-ever you read those words, a *People near unto him*, the next word may be *Hallelujah*, as *Psal. 148. 14*. Let God hear *the Voice of Joy* and Praise from them that are *near about him*; Whilst uncomfortable Dejections would better becom them that are estranged from him. Such *Sack-cloth* becomes not the *King of Heaven's Court*, nor them that are so *near to him*, as to *behold his Face*, and to *be before him*. It's an Aguish distemper, if, when near the Fire, or in the warm Sun, thou tittest shivering. Leave such kind of amazed Pallid-shakings to profane *Cains*, that run out of God's Presence, *Gen. 4. 16*. to Strangers and Enemies, who know not how good it is to draw near to him, and justly deserve the worst of all Evils for their foolish and froward withdrawing of themselves from him. Which leads me,

To the next Application, which speaks Terrour to some, and Humiliation to us all, that by following after lying Vanities, *Jonah 2. 8*. and departing from the Living God, we so much forsake our own Mercy. If so good to draw near to God, then it is an evil thing, and bitter, to forsake him, *Jer. 2. 19*. This the fore-going Verse compared with the Text suggests to us; there we read, *For loe, they that are far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*: And then the Text adds, *But it's good for me to draw near to God*. Just so much Good as comes by our drawing near to him, so much Evil and Mischief befalls us by being far from him. As much Warmth and Life, Flourish and Fruitfulness, as the Summers Sun brings in its drawing near to us; so much Cold and barren Deadness doth it leave beind it, when in Winter it with-draws it self from us. *Wo to you when I depart from you*, said God to *Israhel*, *Hos. 9. 12*.

And, Lord, wo to us, say we, that we should have such *evil hearts of unbelief*, that we should so *depart* from thee. For if so much Good follows upon such happy Approaches and Meetings, then nothing less than utter Ruine can be the Consequence of a mutual Parting. When thou leavest the Blessed God, give a *Longum vale*, and adieu for ever to thine own Happiness: For just as far from the one, as from the other. And (which is worst) because by our Out-runnings we cannot get out of his Reach; the further we are from God in one sense, the nearer we shall be in another; the further from *Righteousness*, Isa. 46. 12. the nearer to a *Curse*, Heb. 6. 8. It will be the saddest learning the truth of this Point, what a Blessed thing it is to *draw nigh to God*, to be chid from Christ's Presence with that Soul-sinking word, *Depart from me, ye Cursed*, at the last Day. They are deep and heavy words, ὁλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου Κυρίου, 2 Thess. 1. 9. It's *everlasting Destruction*, if *Expulsi a facie*, as Beza renders it, if it be so, *from the Presence of the Lord, and his Glorious Power*. And therefore that we may prevent that Howling then, how tuneable would it be sweetly, and yet sadly, to bewail and mourn over

Matth. 25. 42.

Psal. 58. 3.

Isa. 7. 16.

i. Our natural Estrangement from God, which the *Psalmist* saith, we were acquainted with from the very Birth? מִן הַבֶּטֶן מִבְּטֶן רָעָה; They are Estranged from the Womb, they go astray as soon as they are Born. Now what Monsters are we all from the Birth? That before we know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, by a kind of natural Instinct we can tell how to refuse the Good and chuse the Evil; before we can go, can run away from God. See this in a three-fold Instance.

i. When Nature is left to its Swing without renewing, or some measure of restraining Grace; for were there none, we should be very Devils to God and one another; מְלֹאִימָה לְמִשְׁכֹּבֹתָי, Hos. 11. 7. Even bent to Back-sliding: That may express a more stiff bent of a perverse Heart from a further contracted Averseness, but yet so as implies the ῥοπή, and natural propensity of the Heart, *Animus pendulus, dubius hesitat circa conversionem meam*, as Grotius renders it: When (as it's there expressed) called upon to turn home to God, the Heart naturally sticks, and stops, and hangs off, as you may see some Trees do from others planted by them, which from some occult quality in Nature agree not with them. What else mean all these Stirs in our Hearts, and Tumults in the World, but when called to God,

*Dupponfi ha-
rent aversioni
ame. Jun.*

God, all is in an uproar? Acts 16. 19, 20. & 19. 28. & 21. 28. Wretched Creatures, that have an Antipathy to their Creator! graceless Natures, that do not more ungraciously than unnaturally start back from a Saviour!

2. Or if any be more *ingenuous*, and (as you call it) a little *better-natured*, that with him in the Gospel they be *not far from the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mark 12. 34. yet even that, rested in, keeps them from ever coming up to *Jesus Christ*. Pity that *Rachel* should die, when it was now but a *little way to come to Ephrath*, that an *Almost* should altogether keep so many a towards Man from Heaven: But a thousand pities that my *drawing* so near the Goal should set me down as having gone far enough, and so keep me from ever attaining the *Prize*, that *Ingenuity*, because it's so near akin to Grace, should prove so *Disingenuous*, as to keep a Man from ever being truly *Gracious*.

Gen. 35. 16.

3. Even in the Godly themselves, in whom this perverseness of Nature is not wholly subdued, what is their greatest Burden and Moan? But, as *Rom. 7. 18, 21, 23, 24.* that makes us so listless, and sometimes so averse from *drawing near to God* in holy Duties, and especially in those in which *nearest Communion* is to be had with him. Rather read than hear the Word, rather hear than pray and meditate; and rather pray than examine our Hearts. Mourn we therefore over our bad, nay, our best Natures; that if they walk not *contrary to God*, yet at best cannot be drawn up the Hill *near* enough to him. Mourn, I say, over our *natural Estrangement* from God.

Levit. 26. 23.

ק
in occursum.

2. Over our *actual Out-runnings*, and more wild and endless Vagaries in our sinful Courses and Practices. It's a wicked *departing from God*, יָשַׁעַר, 2 Sam. 22. 22. And here, as in sin, there is a double Irregularity, an *Aversio a Deo*, and a *Conversio ad Creaturam*; so in this our sinful not drawing near to God, there is a double Miscarriage, which we are to be humbled for.

ἐλκομεν
δὲ λεζόμε-

1. Our inordinate Conversion, and *Turning* to the *Creature*; ὧς, Jam. (a hankering after something else, when a hanging off from God) that instead of God, there are so many other things which we draw so near, and keep so close to, as Sin, Self, the World, &c. Indeed any thing rather than God.

1. 14.

Not a sinful Lust, but a corrupt Heart is in the earnest pursuit of it, *Prov. 11. 19.* rests not till it overtake it, and it then proves a Member, cleaves so fast, is such a *right Eye*, and *Hand*, and *Foot*, that it's death to part with it; here the unchaste Soul

am-

amplexibus heret: We are drawn to an Holy God, and off from an unholy Lust, with the like and very same difficulty.

For *Self*, *Proximus egomet mihi* holds here, and holds us so fast, that too oft it with-holds us from *drawing near to God*. Nothing shall come between us and our selves, when any thing almost can be suffered to put in between our God and our Souls. We hug *Self* in the warmest Bosom, and clasp about our selves with lovingest Embraces: Our own Opinions we do *mordicus tenere*; our Votes we adhere to, *Our own understandings we lean to*; *Dicebat Epicureus, mihi frui carne bonum est*; *dicebat Stoicus mihi frui meâ mente bonum est*. But for our Psalmist, *Mibi adherere Deo, bonum est*. So St. Austin.

Prov. 3. 1.

De Verbis

Apost. Ser. 13.

And for the *World*, Solomon saith, *God hath set it in Man's heart*, Eccles. 3. 11. He means to contemplate him in it; but we pervert his meaning, whilst the whole desire and bent of the Heart closeth with it, and is fastned in it. It's the Market which you see all going to. They say the Earth hath *vim magneticam*; and some think, that if you should dig deep enough into it, you should find it a *perfect Loadstone*. Sure I am, some Men's hearts are so deeply buried in it, that they find a *perfect Loadstone* of it. It's not so much the *Centre* of the *World*, as of our *Hearts*, as the chief Good which they move to, and rest in, and cannot be parted from, instead of accounting it our chief Good to *draw near to God*.

The covetous too-good Husband makes his *Goods* his *chief Good*. You call him a *near Man*, and not amiss, because he desires to be *nearer* to himself than to *God*, Jer. 22. 17. The Idle Drone with *Ass-like Issachar*, saith, *That rest is good*, Gen. 49. 15. And the wanton Epicure places his best good in his Pleasure, and a Turkish Paradise. *Hæc est maxima merces & interminabilis*, is the highest Point of the *Alcoran's* Divinity.

I omit to shew how in point of honour and preferment (in which the ambitious place the highest pitch of their happiness) such statelier *Plumes* lure high-soaring Spirits, how Beauty draws after it many Men's eyes, the *loving Wife*, the *pleasant Child*, the *faithful Friend* take our very hearts, and that too often from God. In company and enjoyment of them our Souls are so *snatched* to them, so *immersed*, do so dwell in them, that we are ready to sit down and say with *Peter*, and more inconsiderately than he, *it's good to be here*, rather than to advance on, and with the Psalmist in the Text to say, *It's good to draw ne ar to God*.

2. Which

2. Which is the other part of our sin; namely our *Aversio a Deo*, our froward *aversness*, and awke hanging off from God, as from the greatest *Stranger*, or worst *Enemy*. So false-hearted, that after fair Advances we often draw back in a fly *retrograde Motion*, Heb. 10. 38, 39. So peevish, that when he reacheth out the hand, we *pluck away the shoulder*, Nehem. 9. 29. when called to him, we run the faster and farther from him, Hos. 11. 2. So proud, that *we are Lords, and will not come at him*, Jer. 2. 31. So profane, that we are either afraid or ashamed to be near him; and therefore such *bid the Almighty depart*, Job 21. 14, 15. and the Prodigal gets himself into a *far Country*, that so he might be further out of his Father's sight; and so with more freedom satisfy his lusts, and will rather join himself to a Farmer to *feed Hogs*, and to be *fed with Husks*, than to come home to his Father to have *Childrens Bread*: any way rather than home, and any thing rather than a Father's presence. Fond desperate Soul,

— Nescis temeraria, nescis
Quem fugias, ideoque fugis. —

Sub oculo Ca-
tonis.
Cupidi-
tai — junxit
porcum, a patre
piissimo quem
sejunxit, Chry-
solog. Serm. 1.

Didst thou but know what thou leavest, thou wouldst draw nearer; and what thou pursuest, thou wouldst stand further off. Will a fainting *Man* leave the *Snow of Lebanon*? And shall the *cold flowing Waters* be forsaken? Jer. 18. 14. Do not such Shadows, the faster thou pursuest them, fly the faster from thee? Like the foolish *Boy* running after the *Bee* to catch it, *sequendo labitur, assequendo leditur*. Have not all such things, which draw out thy Soul so after them, as to withdraw it from God, have they not either a *Wing* to fly away, that thou never overtakest what thou seekest, or a *sting* to hurt thee, when thou hast overtaken them? that thou gettest more hurt than good by them? Is not *Dina ravished*, thy Soul abused and defiled by such *out-gaddings*? Is not (I say not Health, Estate, Esteem, but it may be) thy Life, thy Soul lost in such ramblings, and (which is worst of all, and above all) God lost too? Cain went out of the presence of the Lord; but he thereupon dwelt in the Land of Nod, as a trembling amazed vagrant Wretch in a most *unsettled* condition ever after, Gen. 4. 14, 16. Jonab also fled from the presence of the Lord; but a tempestuous Wind is sent out with *Hue and Cry* after him; and when laid up in the close Prison of the *Whale's belly*, he then confesseth he had *forsaken his own mercy*. The Prodigal

went

In Psal. 63.

went into a far Country; but the further from his Father, the nearer to Ruine. Though we are studious to *put far from us the evil day*, Amos 6. 3. Yet, *as the Lord liveth*, there is but a step between us and death, as long as we keep at such a distance from the God of our Salvation; mischiefs then *near at hand* to come, and irrecoverable when come. It's said, that *Laish* had no Deliverer, because *it was far from Zidon*, Judg. 18. 28. But who will be thy Deliverer when Enemies are *near*, Ezek. 9. 1. Death *near*, Psal. 107. 18. *Judgment near*, Heb. 10. 25. And thou further from God? In this case *H. de S. Vittore* tells us, what Men usually betake themselves to; *Aliis in necessitate bonum est consilium suum, aliis in prosperitate bonum est gaudium suum, mihi unicum bonum est adherere Deo*. In Prosperity they think it's good for them to betake themselves to their delights, and in straits to their shifts. But πολλ' ὄδον ἀλάττης, ἀλλ' αἰλαργεῖς ἐν μέγα. This one direct course of *drawing near to God*, will be of more use than all their other Shifts and Applications. *Illos consilium non liberat, gaudium non conservat*; as the same Author there adds: all other nearest and dearest Friends may fail us, may not come at us, *Nebem.* 4. 19. may cast us off, as *Psal.* 27. 10. It's God only *drawing near* that must relieve us. And then, wo to us, if he only *draw near* to us as an Enemy or *Judg.* (as *Mal.* 3. 5.) to take vengeance, not to rescue us as our best Friend.

Use 5.

And therefore in the last place, this is of special use for direction

1. Of our Judgment in a right estimate of true *goodness*, which most Men are inquisitive after. It's the Voice of Nature, *Who will shew us any good?* Psal. 4. 6. and yet which very few are well resolv'd in, according to that of *Solomon*, *Who knoweth what is good for Man?* &c. *Eccles.* 6. 12. But the Psalmist affords a full Answer to both those great Questions, when after a long and strong debate in the foregoing part of the Psalm, he concludeth, *It's good for me to draw near to God*: and by *good* (as we have shown) he meaneth the prime and chiefest and best Good; *mibi quidem optimum*, so the Arabick hath it. Now then *primum in unoquoque genere est mensura reliquorum*, The first and chiefest in every kind is the Rule and Measure of the rest. Let this therefore be the Standard, by which we always measure the goodness of every thing that we most value and set the highest price on: and let this be the Rule, which in such prizings we go by, that that is indeed *good*, by which we are *drawn near to God*, and that

best

best by which we get nearest. My God is my goodness, Psal. 144. 2. and therefore that only (at least that principally) I must call good, by which I am drawn nearer to God. Indeed because *Bonum & Ens convertuntur*, we are ready to call any thing good; and because *finis & bonum convertuntur*, accordingly every thing is good, at least in our eyes, which either is an end we aim at, or a means conducing to it: And so, as the Apostle said in another kind, *There be Gods many, and Lords many; but to us there is but one God*, 1 Cor. 8. 5, 6. So there are many things which in Scripture-phrase, and ordinary use, are called good: a good Day, good Company, a good Work or Employment; and so of the rest. But in a Believer's estimate there is but one main chief good, and that's to draw near to God; and all other things are only good *reductive*, as either they may be reduced to this, or we led to God by them. Some call it a good Time, and the Scripture calls it a good Day, that's a day and time of feasting and rejoicing; but if they be *Festivals*, rather than *Holy Days*; times in which we run *awhoring* from God, rather than draw near to him; account that day to thee the worst in the year, in which thou runnest furthest from God; and let that ever be accounted good Company, and good Employment, &c. in and after which thy heart was most drawn out after God; but if more deaded and straitned, God and thy Soul more estranged by it; either certainly it was bad in it self, or at least unhappily it proved not good to thee. If Jacob take a Wife of the Daughters of Heth, what good will my life do me? said Rebekah, Gen. 27. 46. And what good will the goodliest Beauties, and most delightful Objects in the World do thee, if (as the Daughters of Heth did Esau's, so) they draw off thine heart from God, whom to draw near and keep close to is so good, as nothing is good without it; nothing so bad as that which comes most cross to it. And this for direction of our Judgment in a right estimate of true goodness.

2. Of our practice in our earnestest pursuit after our own happiness. Let this Text (*It's good for me to draw near, and keep close to God*) be ever our *Vade mecum* to quicken us, still and ever to draw nearer and cleave faster. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you, saith the Apostle, Jam. 4. 8. The Promise is very heartning, that in these our approaches God (as the Father to the Prodigal) will meet us the half way: but therefore it layeth a greater engagement upon us to mind the Duty. Let us draw near with a true heart, and full assurance of Faith,

X x x

having

Luk. 18. 13.

Exod. 3. 2.

having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, Heb. 10. 22. Happy that we may, that such, as whose unworthiness is such, as their place is with the Publican to *stand afar off*, and whose Guilt is such, as with Cain may make them *run from God*, may have liberty and boldness of access to draw near to God; that the Bush should burn and not be consumed, was not so great a Miracle, as that such dry Stubble as we are should draw nigh to that God which is a consuming Fire, and not perish in everlasting Burnings. That Blood of Sprinkling, which hath quenched the Fire of God's Wrath, being sprinkled on us hath so cooled the inflammations of our wounded and afrighted Consciences, that we with humble boldness may draw near. We had need therefore look to it that we do.

Psal. 143. 8.

Psal. 27. 8.

Jer. 3. 22.

And here now the faithful Soul breaths out the Psalmist's Prayer, *Lord, cause me to know the way, for I lift up my Soul unto thee.* Thou sayest unto me, *Seek ye my Face*; and my heart echoes back again, *Thy Face, O Lord, will I seek.* When thou callest to us, *Return ye back-sliding Children*; from our Souls we return this Answer, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Thou hast fastned Cords of Love upon our Hearts, thou hast savingly touched them, that they strongly move towards thee, they cleave to thee, or they follow hard after thee, as it is *Psal. 63. 8.* But the distance between thee and us is great, the obstacles many, and the way hard we are to be found, yet so to walk in it, as by it to attain to these blessed Approaches; and therefore here the main Query is, in what way, and by what means we may so draw near to thee, as to cleave close and abide with thee for ever?

SERMON. XXXI.

PSAL. 73. 28.

III. Sermon,
Preacht at St.
Maries. De-
cemb. 2. 1649.

It is good for me to draw near to God.

THe best Prospect to take View of the Creature's Beauty is at a greater Distance, and in a tranſient Glance, whilst nearer ſtanding and longer looking discovers Blemishes and Deformities in choicest Beauties. But *Moses* bids *Israel stand still*, if they would see *God's Salvation*: Here *Fuati usque morari*, when gotten upon the Mount to a Glymps of this *Transfiguration*, *Peter* thinks it's good to be here: He was not well awake, when he spake of making a *Tabernacle*; he should have said a *Mansion*. Which, I hope, will excuse my longer dwelling upon this Text, which speaks of our *drawing near to God*, with *whom* it's best to *abide* for ever. In two former Sermons I have endeavoured to shew how *Good*, how every way *Good* it is to *draw near to God*, and that it might come the *nearer* to us, I have endeavoured also to set it home in the Application.

Now as to that Question, which in the Close of the last Discourse was but barely propounded, *viz.* In and by what Way and Means we may *draw near to God*, I say, as to that Question, when *Thomas* was stumbling on it, our Saviour returns this full Answer (*John* 14. 5, 6.) *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no Man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* We come to God by *Christ*, *Heb.* 7. 25. But of this before. And therefore it now only remaineth to shew by what Means, and after what Manner we may by *Christ* thus *draw near to God*.

And here let me Premise in general; That

1. First it must be in due time, according to that, *Isa* 55. 6. *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.* That Glorious God, who in the perfection of his Essence and Majesty is at an infinit Distance from us; and yet further removed by our sins, is pleased so far to humble himself and stoop to us, as graciously to look towards us, and some-

X x x 2

times

Cant. 5. 4.

John 10. 27.

Mark 13. 29.

times especially to *draw* very near to us, as the Sun from on High in the *Firmament* by darting down his warm Light and invivifying Beams, especially in his Summer-approaches. In the Ministry of his Word God *holds out his Hand*, Rom. 10. 21. and by the Inspirations of his Spirit he lays hold on our Hearts. In both our Beloved puts in his Hand by the hole of the Door, and saith, as unto *Thomas*, *Reach hither thy Finger, and put thy Hand into my Side*: Or as to his Spouse, Cant. 2. 13. *Arise my Love, my fair One, and come away*. When thus Christ by his Spirit comes a-wooing to the Spouse, and after this manner whispers in thy Heart, he is come very near thee, (as our Saviour said) *even at the Doors*: And now that this Door stands open, and Christ is coming out to meet thee; now come forth ye *Danghiers of Jerusalem*, and behold King Solomon, Cant. 3. 11. *Now lift up your Heads, O ye Gates*, Psal. 24. 7. *Now, now* is the time of Access. How deep mayst thou get into thy Saviour's Bosom, when thus wide opened? How much way mayst thou rid, when thy spread Sail is filled with such a Gale? The *Golden Scepter* is reached out; no danger or fear now to draw near, but only of missing the Opportunity. *When thou bearest the sound of a going on the top of the Mulberry Trees*, then bestir thyself, as God said to *David*, 2 Sam. 5. 24. when Christ thus knocks, and would come in.

Now a wicked and froward Locking the Door against him may lose him for ever, so that although thou shouldst after knock and strive to enter, his Door may be shut as well as thine, Luke 13. 24, 25. and all the answer thou hast, be as it is, v. 27. *Depart from me, I know you not*. God (saith *Aben Ezra*) may be found in any place, and at any time, but it must be *ante ob-signationem decreti*: When the Door of Mercy is Sealed up, look for no Entrance; so desperate is a wilful refusal: Nay, so dangerous is a careless neglect, that in this our Advance it may give us such a Back-cast, as will very hardly again be recovered, but that we may come limping behind, and go halting to our Graves. The very Spouse's Drowiness and Coyness, cost her many a both wearisome and dangerous Step, before she could again meet with her Beloved. There was indeed a Provision in the Law, that they, who being far off in a Journey, could not keep the Passover in the first Month, might do it in the second; and the like Custom was among the Romans, but remember that (but in that Case) it was Death to the Jews, [and that

See *Crutius*;
in *Numb.* 9.
10. &c.

Case

Cafe cannot be here, for we may *draw near* to God in a *Journey*, when far from *Home*,] and with the Romans, they were called *Stultorum ferie*. Let us therefore in these our *drawings near* to God walk not as *Fools*, but as *Wise*, redeeming the time by laying hold of every Opportunity. They are wont to say, a *Wise Man* will make more Opportunities than he finds: What *Fools* then shall we be, if we take not such as we find? Especially if we may be so advantaged to find God, and *draw near* to him by them?

2. This *drawing near*, and keeping close to God, as it must be in *due Season*, so with all *Sincerity*; as *Barnabas* exhorted the Disciples, τῇ πρὸς θεοῦ τῆς καρδίας προσηύμεν τῷ Κυρίῳ, *to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of Heart*, Acts 11. 23. Our approaches to God, should be out of an inward and real tendency of our Souls to him, as of the *Iron* to the *Loadstone*, or the *Stone* to the *Center*, not forced, or feigned.

Either out of *Malice*, to have advantage to do the more *Mischief*, as *Judas drew near* and *saluted* Christ, when it was to *betray* him; or those *false Brethren*, Gal. 2. 4. who *crept in* to *espie* the Disciples *Liberty*. Christ and his Church have too oft such *Snakes* in their *Bosom*, as venomous *Spiders* in *Kings Palaces*.

Or out of *Hypocrisy*, as Men *draw near* and *salute* in a *Complement*, so some cleave to the Church, but it is with *Flatteries*, Dan. 11. 34. nay, some compass God himself about with *Lies*, Hof. 11. 12. *draw near to him with Mouth and Lip*, whilst the Heart is far from him, Isa. 29. 13. How prodigiously profane is the Hypocrites Impudence, that with such *Vizards* dare approach so *piercing* an *Eye*, and *draw so near* to play with such *consuming Flames*. Mat. 15. 8.

3. This *drawing near* to God, as it is to be with this *sincerity* of *Heart*, so with all the *intention* of the *Soul*. This that πρὸς θεοῦ καρδίας also imports, when it is not *Frigide* & *simulate*, sed *sincero* & *ardenti studio*, as *Beza* paraphraseth it, with full purpose of Heart, כָּל אֶרֶץ נִפְשׁוֹ with all the desire of the *Mind*, as that of the *Levites*, Deut. 18. 6. It's no *lazier* pace, but a *rapt motion*, in which the *Soul* is *snatched* from all else to be *fixt* in God. It's upon the *Chariots* of *Amminadab*, shuns all *Delays*, over-masters all *Difficulties*, is impatient of any thing to come between it and its *Beloved*. Nihil libidinosi amatores, nihil conflata Vulcano e duobus unus, &c. None of the most loving *Pairs*, Cant. 6. 11.

Dr. Field, of
the Church,
l. 1. c. 3.

Pairs, that either the Scriptures exprefs, or Poets fable, come near thefe passionate Out-goings of the Soul, or thefe former Unions, *Omnia illa naturalia, hyperbolica, fabulofa, turpia, &c.* as *Aufin* fpeaks: There is an invincible irrefiftible Power in thefe mutual *Cords of Love*, to draw hard and bind fait, as he faid excellently, *Grace winneth infallibly, holds infeparably, leads undeclinably.* The Union is fo clofe, that it's a mutual *Inhabitation*, John 6. 56. The Ty is fo ftrong, that it's come to *Paul's* *ἐνπνεύματος ἀπερίσπαστος*, 1 Cor. 7. 35. *The Soul cleaves*, Pfal. 63. 8. as *Jonathan's* to *David* his sweeteft Friend, 1 Sam. 18. 1. or as the loving *Husband* to his deareft Wife, Gen. 2. 24. fo *cleaves* to God, as it *leaves* all for him.

But this leads me off from this manner of *drawing near* to God, to the *Way* and *Means* of fuch approaches.

1. Negative.

1. For the firft is *Removendo prohibens*, a careful avoiding of that which fets God and us at a diftance, and that is Sin only: It's not thy outward Meanness, which may indeed occafion proud Men to bid thee keep back, and *ftand there* at a diftance, *Jam.* 2. 3. Nor thy Poverty, which *Solomon* obferves is wont to *feperate the poor Man* from his Neighbour, Prov. 19. 4. Not the moft dangerous and infectious Sicknefs, which may make thy *Lovers and Friends* (as *David's*) *ftand aloof off from thy Sore*, Pfal. 38. 11. But Blessed be our God, who ftoops lower than Man will, and *draws nearer* than beft Friend fometimes either can or dare. It's neither Prifon nor Peft-Houfe, that the *Son of Righteoufnefs* difdains to look in at, or keeps the God of Heaven out from keeping his poor dejected Servants company. Chrift meets his cured Patient, when Men had *caft him out*, John 9. 35. Vifits St. *John*, when *Banifhed* to the *Iſle of Patmos*, Revel. 1. 9. and goes all along with his *Israel* in the *Wildernefs*. The poor *Begger* that is ſhut out of the *Rich Man's* *Gates* is received into *Abraham's boſom*, and admitted into the King of Heaven's Prefence. The Mourner *clothed with Sackcloth* let in to his *inward Court*, when thruſt out of *Abſuerus* his outward. Yea, the *Poor, the Blind, the Halt, and the Lame*, have they but on a *Wedding-Garment*, invited to the Marriage Feaſt. It's our *Sin* only that ſeparates *between us and our God*, Iſa. 59. 2. It fixeth that *great ſeparating Gulf* at laſt, and cauſeth all *Eſtrangement* now. The Scripture ſaith ſo, and we by too ſad and frequent Experience find it ſo. On Gods part with *whom no Evil dwells*, ὡς περ ἀνθρώπου πνεύματος, καὶ δυνά-

Luke 16. 20,
21, 22.

Luke 14. 21.

Luke 16. 26.

ἡ καὶ μέλισσας φυγάδνεις, as *Basil* speaks: Smoak and ill Savours drive not Doves and Bees more away, than our lothsome Pollutions do the *Holy God*. In Scripture we find, that it makes him *forsake*, Jer. 23. 33. and *depart from us*, Hof. 9. 12. even quite *cuts off his Soul from us*: *Luxata est anima mea a te*, Jer. 6. 8. Insomuch that the *Holy Ghost* makes account, that whilst we go on in our sins, it's our meaning and intention (at least *Intentio operis*, if not *operantis*) that we should have God gone from us, according to that, Ezek. 8. 6. *Son of Man, seest thou the Abominations that the House of Israel committeth, that I should go far from my Sanctuary?* As he plainly saith, that he would have that Guest gone, who entertaineth him with that which he knoweth his Stomach riseth at only to look on. So blessed a Guest is God, that he thinks he deserves a better Welcome; and therefore makes haste away from such an unkind Entertainment. That for his part.

And for ours, it makes the Estrangement mutual, as God saith, Zech. 11. 8. *My Soul loathed them, and their Soul also abhorred me.* Sets us as far from God, as it doth God from us. For Instance, it makes us,

1. Unfit, that we may not. Unfit for the Begger with his Rags and Filth to press into a King's Presence-Chamber: But more unfit for the more polluted Soul to come near before those purer Eyes, that cannot endure to look on such Filthiness. A *Miriam*, if leprous, her Father spits in her face, and thrusts her out of the Camp, Numb. 12. 14. *We cannot stand before thee, because of this*, Ezra. 9. 15.

2. Guilty, that we dare not draw near: Makes *Adam* hide himself from God in the Bushes, as an unhappy Child, when in fault, from his angry Father's presence.

3. Weak, lame, and blind, nay, quite out dead, that we cannot: And therefore they that were dead in *Trespasses and Sins* must be quickened, Ephes. 2. 1. If ever they that were afar off come to be made nigh by the Blood of Christ, ver. 13.

4. Peevish and froward that we will not. *We are Lords, we will come no more at thee*, Jer. 2. 31. And therefore our Saviour imputes it to the Jews perverse Will, that they do not come unto him that they might have life, John 5. 40. There is not more in God, that by reason of our sin we fear, than what naturally we dislike and hate: we fear his Power and Wrath, and that makes

us run from him : We loath his *Holiness* and *Righteousness* and commanding Authority, and that makes us more averse, and sets us off further from him.

Great Sins, like violent Blasts, blow us far from God on the sudden ; and lesser sins, by little and little, work us off more insensibly, as it is with a Ship whose fast is loosed ; every Wave puts off a little more from the Shore, till it hath quite lost the sight of Land, and is at last sunk *in the depth of the Sea.* * If ever therefore we would indeed *draw near to God*, we must *put away a perverse Lip*, Prov. 4. 24. for God cannot endure to come near so stinking a Breath. And listen to that Counsel which Zophar gives to Job, Chap. 11. 14. *If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away*, and say unto it, *Get thee hence*, as it is Isa. 30. 22. or as 2 Sam. 20. 20. *Far be it, far be it from me.* The Loadstone draws not the Iron, when rusty ; nor were the *Virgins* admitted to *Abasuerus* his Company, till after a *twelve-months perfuming and purifying*, Esther 2. 12. The like course God prescribes for our nearer approaches. So the Apostle, Jam. 4. 8. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you* : But mark what follows, *Cleanse your hands, and purifie your hearts.* Till then God stands off at a distance from the lothsome sinner, Isa. 1. 10, to 16. But do but *wash, and make you clean*, and then *come now, and let us reason together*, v. 16, 18. If we would *draw near to God*, we must leave our sins behind us.

* With God

חטאת
is נר

Zech. 13. 1.

A defiled Soul is like a Woman put away for her uncleanness ; or as a Man thrust out of the Camp for his Leprosie.

2 Positive.

But for positive means and helps.

1. There is a *drawing near to God* in Place and Office ; to Magistrates, Jer. 30. 21. and so Ministers, Numb. 16. 9. are said to *come near to God*, as menial Servants are near to a King, who daily *stand before him*, and *minister unto him*. But I insist not on this, only let me hence take occasion to mind such whom it concerns as of their *Advantage*, so of their *Engagement* ; that Ministers and Scholars, who by their Calling and Employment have the honour and benefit of a *nearer standing* to God, would by it labour for the happiness of a *saving Approach* ; that they never make good that blunt, if not profane, saying ; *The nearer the Church, the further from God* ; that the more like to God we are in Knowledge, we come not nearer to the Devil in Malice and Wickedness. The Eye in Heaven, and the Heart in Hell, what a real Solæcism ! They of old were wont to *sacrifice in their high Places*, as taking the advantage of the Ground to be nearer Heaven : It were well that from our higher standing our Souls

could take a better rise for an higher flight to get the *nearer* to God. *It's good* (not more profitable than seemly) for me, a Minister, a Scholar, to *draw near to God*.

2. There is also a *drawing near to God* in Profession; according to that, *Jer. 12. 2. Thou art near in their Mouth, but far from their Reins*. Pity that the Heart should be so far from the Tongue, and yet farther from God. Christ desireth to lie next the Heart; though he would also have the *Mouth kiss him* in an outward Profession.

3. There is also a *drawing near to God* in his Ordinances, *Psal. 65. 4. 2 Chron. 29. 31. Mibi vero accedere ad cultum Dei bonum est*; so the *Chaldee*. They are the *Bed of Love*; it was called the *Ark of his Presence*: *Israel met with him at the door of the Tabernacle*, and he *spoke with them from the Mercy-Seat*. *David* accounts himself driven from God, when banished from his Courts, and therefore he *faints and longs for them and him* together, *Psal. 84. 2*. Nor is God more absent now from Gospel Ordinances, in which Christ and his Spirit are more fully and comfortably present. Christ is there present in the midst of his Servants; and the happy Soul, that finds there the powerful impressions of God upon it, reports that he *is amongst them of a truth*, *1 Cor. 14. 25*. As on the contrary, the woful experience of our unhappy days gives too sad Examples of many, who have indeed got *as far from God*, as they think they are *above Ordinances*: but till we gain Heaven, where we shall at the next hand see and enjoy God without such *mediums*, let all sober-hearted Christians ever keep close to them, as they would ever *draw near to him*.

1. To the Ministry of the Word, in which if the Minister do not so much jingle in the Ear, as labour to fasten *Nails and Goads* in the Heart, *Eccles. 12. 11*. that it come to be λόγος ἐμψύχος, *Isa. 34. 7. & 58. 2.* as *ingrafted Word*, *Jam. 1. 21*. It then, and God in it comes very *near to us*, as we do to him, as Scholars *sitting down at his feet* to hear his Instructions, *Deut. 33. 3*. or as Servants *standing before him* to receive his Commands, as Children and Friends from his gracious Promises to carry away intimations of his Love, and his Threats *prick our hearts*, *Acts 2. 37. ἀπειλόντες*, *Luk. 4. 20*. fastning the Eye, and putting the Ear to his Mouth; as it was said of our Saviour's Auditors, *Luke 19. 48. ἐξενέμαρτο*, they *hung upon him to hear him*. By these mutual outgoings of the Soul to God, and God to it, they come in this Ordinance

dinances to an happy meeting; and then are very *near*.

2. As likewise in the Sacraments, it's very *near* that we either do or may *draw* on to Christ. In our Liturgy we say well, *Draw near*, &c. not so much to the Minister as to God. *He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him; and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me*, John 6. 56, 57. Though no Popish corporal Transubstantiation, yet there is a very *near* spiritual union set out by three very strong and almost strange Expressions.

Of a kind of *Concorporation*, as of the *Meat* and the *Body* that is fed by it, in that Metaphor of *eating* and *drinking*.

Of a mutual *cohabitation*, or *cohabitatio*n, in that other of *his dwelling in us, and we in him*. Nay, of a more divine *cohabitation* into the *same Nature*, as in that third expression of our *living by Christ, as he by the Father*.

In it with the Elders of Israel we go up to God in the Mount, Exod. 24. 11. And it's mercy that (as it's there said) he *doth not lay his hand upon us*; but that *we may eat and drink: draw so near* as Children to sit down at our Father's Table; with John to *lean on our Saviour's Breast*; and with Thomas he bid reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing, John 20. 27. It was our sin, that, when we more frequently enjoyed Sacraments, we *drew* no nearer to Christ in them, and therefore it's deservedly our misery, that we are cut short of such opportunities of these blessed Approaches now in our too much want of them.

3. In the *Communion of Saints*, if rightly improved, we may enjoy very *near* and full communion with God; and therefore the Apostle, when he had said, Let us *draw near with a true heart to God*; Heb. 10. 22. he adds, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*. Thither God comes down to us, Matth. 18. 20. and thereby our mutual help, as upon one another's shoulders; our hearts are gotten nearer up to him. The Saints are a *People near to him*, Psal. 148. 14. and therefore they that keep close to them, are not far from him, as they that dwell in the Court are near to the King.

4. I add Prayer; for Petitioners use to *draw near*, when they tender their Petitions, Numb. 32. 16. and so do God's Suppliants, when they present him with their Prayers, 1 Sam. 14. 37. In Prayer we seek him, fall down at his footstool, come into his presence.

presence. We speak to him, we lift up our Eyes, Hands, and Souls to him; we wrestle with him. These and such-like Expressions of it we meet with in Scripture; and they all speak drawing near to him, according to *Jamblichus* his description of it, that it's *Copula, quâ homines cum Deo conjunguntur, Clavis, quâ Dei penetralia aperiuntur*; the Soul's Wing, by which it mounts up to Heaven, and the Key that opens the Gate of Heaven, and lets us into the presence of the everlasting King: How deep doth it thrust both Petition and Petitioner into its Saviour's Bosom? And how often doth the loving Father with a sweet kiss take up the weeping Child from his knees into his Arms? How near doth he bow the Ear? and how low doth he reach down his hand to take us by ours, when it's lifted up to him? O the blessed interviews in this Duty, when God's and our Eye meet! *Thou drewest near in the day when I called upon thee*, said *Psal. 145. 18.* the lamenting Church, *Lament. 3. 57.* When for any other relief she could say, *The Comforter that should relieve my Soul is far from me*, Chap. 1. 16. In Prayer God draweth near to the Soul, and the Soul to God; and one of his main Suits, (as *Ezra's* first was for the King's company, and the second for it again the second time, so it is) that God would both draw nearer himself, and draw it also nearer. *Draw nigh to my Soul*, *Psal. 69. 18.* and draw my Soul nearer to thee; *write my heart*, *Psal. 86. 11.* With holy *Austin*, *Redde mihi te Deus meus, redde te mihi, ut currat vita mea in amplexus tuos. O convert me, and I shall be converted*, Jer. 31. 18. *Draw me, and we shall run after thee*, Cant. 1. 4. as well knowing that we cannot draw near to him, till he draw near to us first. We cannot come, till the Father draw, John 6. 44. and therefore the Child reacheth out the hand in Prayer, and layeth hold on the Father, that he may draw, and thereby it also may draw nearer.

And thus we see, how by these and the like Ordinances, as by means appointed and sanctified by God, we do (or at least may) draw near unto him. Which saith these things to us.

1. First therefore use them, and carefully attend on them, as ever we would draw near to God, who for that very end hath appointed them; and as we would not, with the Pharisees, *Luk. 7. 30. reject the Counsel of God against our selves*; it's there said, they did it in refusing one Ordinance of Baptism. Too many now reject not only that, but all Ordinances else. But do they

get the *nearer to God* by it? No; The *Autumn's* witherings tell us, that the Sun is withdrawn backward, and the woful decays of some of their both Professions and Practises saith, that *the Sun of Righteousness*, instead of *drawing nearer*, is got further off. Ordinances are sanctified Means of our approach to God. *His going is in the Sanctuary*, Psal. 68. 24. *He meets us in them*, and therefore make Conscience to use them.

2. Because *but means*, therefore *rest not in them*, till we find that we *draw near to God* by them. Not in *Prayer*, till either God *draw near* to us in a gracious Answer, or at least we get *so near* him, as by Faith to lay hold on him in a more serious *wrestling*. Not in *hearing*, till God speak something to our hearts; Nor in *receiving*, till we feel him *strengthening us with strength in our Souls*: Till we see the *glory of God filling the Tabernacle*, as Exod. 40. 34. the *Holy Ghost falling upon us whilst we are bearing the Word*, as Acts 10. 44. and Jesus Christ coming in and *breathing upon us*, when we are met together in such Ordinances, as John 20. 22. Let the Spouse abide in the *Bed of Loves*, but let her *seek her Beloved* there. Our falling short of this, and sitting down with the enjoyment of bare Ordinances,

Cant. 3. 1.

1. Makes others (as we see) undervalue and despise them, whilst we rest in them. We in so doing make them our *Idols*, and then they think they have thence just ground to make them their *Abominations*.

2. For our selves, instead of growing better, and *drawing nearer to God* by them; by this means we prove worse, and are set further off. None further from God and Salvation, than they that take up in means of Salvation, without enjoying God in them; as none more sure to fall short of his journey's end, than he that sits down, as having gone far enough, when he hath gotten on but the half way. My Friend may be gotten the further off, and (it may be) past hope of overtaking, whilst in the dark I take fast hold of his *Garment*, and think that by *so doing*, I keep him as fast by me.

3. At best, nothing at all the better, as your Phrase is, *never the nearer* for all those outward approaches. It will be but the grasping of the *Cloud* instead of *Juno*; a looking into the *Grave*, when *Christ is risen*; a *seeking in the Bed*, when the *Beloved is withdrawn*; an enquiring in the *Temple*, when the *Glory of the Lord is departed*. And what a poor empty forlorn thing

is

is the most Royal Palace, when the Court hath left it? The former Lustre and Majesty, which the King of Heaven's Presence conferred, to a heedful Eye makes his Court look the more Desolate, when he is *withdrawn*. So that whilst others jollily vaunt, and chant it, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these*: Yet the chaste Spouse, notwithstanding all these, is at a loss, and still upon the Inquest with her *Saw ye him whom my Soul loveth*? As long as she cannot find him there who is *greater than the Temple*, who too often finds cause enough in us on his part to *leave his House*, Jer. 12. 7. and then thou mayst come and *knock* hard, and yet not meet with him; but more often on our parts, when he is most graciously and powerfully present there to others, we are absent from him, because absent from our selves; our Thoughts *wandering*, and then the Mind is in another place; we *drowsie*, and the Man asleep is in another World: Though God be *in that Place*, yet *Jacob*, when asleep, is not aware of it, Gen. 28. 16. And *Lot*, when *drowsie* and *drunk* together, *knows* not when his *Daughters* lie down and rise up. And so we may come and go to and again to God's Ordinances, and yet whilst we are in like Distempers, he and we may continue very strangers. Ordinances are like those *Golden Pipes*, Zech. 4. 2. and yet but *Pipes*, do us no good, will be but empty to us, unless they empty into us that *Golden Oyl*, ver. 12. Sweetest *Breasts of Consolation*, but we shall suck *Wind* rather than *Nourishment*; unless, like the Suckling, we then find our selves in our Heavenly Father's Arms, and laid close to our Saviour's Breast to suck Life-Blood from his wounded Heart. *It's good thus to draw near to God*; and till it be thus, it will not be well with us, notwithstanding all outward Approaches and Ordinances.

Jer. 7. 4.

Cant. 3. 3.
Mar. 12. 6.

Gen. 19. 33. 35.

And therefore our chief care and endeavour should be in our enjoyment of them, that they may Instrumentally concur to the working and quickning such Graces in us, as whereby we may formally (I mean indeed and good earnest) *draw nigh to God*.

1. Amongst which (as it's most fit) *Knowledge* in the first place must lead the way, for he must needs go very *wide* that follows a *blind Guide*. He will *totò calo errare*, instead of arriving at God, or Heaven. The *blind Sodomites* will sooner stumble on *Lot's door*, and a Man in the Dark hit right in an unknown way, than that Man, whose Eyes the God of this World

Gen. 19.

hath

Mat. 8. 12.

both blinded, find of himself the way of access to God, or indeed find in his heart to draw nigh to him: For Ignorance usually is very profane, and so careth not to come into God's Presence, hath so much Candle-light of Sense, as to commit Works of Darkness by, and to see and follow that which leads off from God: But as long as it continues invincible, cuts off all hopes, because it plucks off all those *ansa* by which we might be laid hold on, and drawn nearer. And therefore gross ignorant Men are in a most desperate Condition; they that are so dark must needs be far from the Father of Lights now, as that τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξῆς (which in the very Name of it, denotes the remotest distance from God) will be their Portion hereafter.

Aquinas. 1. 9.

60. a. 5. ad. 6.

But on the contrary, the saving and clear Knowledge of God, and his Divine Excellencies, especially in Christ, approacheth so near, that the Understanding is in a manner made one with so blessed an Object. It indeed is so transcendently Glorious, that it bids Moses not come near, in regard of a reverential distance, *Exod.* 3. 5. and yet so infinitely ravishing, that it makes him desire to get as near as he may to see so great a Sight, *ver.* 3. as in Heaven a full Vision begets a perfect Love and Union. Angels that always behold God's Face, *Mat.* 18. 10. have the nearest Station. And if the lovely Creature's Beauty useth to draw after it many Eyes, sure the infinite Beauty of God so Glorious, of Christ so White and Ruddy, even the Brightness of his Father's Glory, if beheld with a clearer Eye, could not but much more strongly snatch our Hearts to it. They that turn away from him, do not see him. And if any be so desperate as to hate him (as the School determines) do so, because they only look at some particular in him, that is contrary to their own Lusts, which are nearer to them, and so blind them.

2. The second is a fervent and filial Love of God; for Spiritus post adheret Deo per intimum amorem, so *Alensis*: Love in its nature is Appetitus unionis, and as such, carrieth the Soul out of it self, to the desired Embraces of its beloved Object, *2 Sam.* 13. 39. תכל דויר לצאת אל אבשלם, David longed, or he was consumed with desire of going out to a beloved Absalom. The Love of God, I am sure, carrieth out the ravished Soul to God in Divine Extasies; as *Dionysius* expresseth it. This Glutinum anime, as Bernard calls it, How quickly doth it catch? and how fast doth it cleave? These Cords of Love, how strongly do they draw? And how firmly do they bind?

The

The loving Wife and Ch'd is not well, if not in the beloved Father's arms, and Husband's presence. Had we more of the *Love of God* in our Hearts, we could not *live without* him: It would be death to part with him. We could not be such aloof-off *Strangers*, if we were more *loving Friends*.

3. To *Love* add *Fear*; for although servile *Fear*. (as in *Cain*) Gen. 4. 16. makes the Slave run from his Master, yet a filial *Fear* brings the Child (as *Neb.* 1. 11.) into his Father's presence. *They shall walk after the Lord, and tremble from the West*, saith the Prophet *Hos.* 11. 12. *Trepidum accurrent*, they shall tremble, but they shall come trembling. This *Fear* will make us *flee*, but into our *Father's arms*; stand at a reverential distance, and yet even then on our Knees creep toward him. And how deep is the awful Child put into the Father's bosom? Whilst the bold Wanton is thrust away, and bid stand further off. God's *Salvation is nigh to them that fear him*, *Psal.* 85. 9. and where his *Salvation* is so *near*, he himself is not far off. In a word, this *Fear* is most of all afraid of *sin*, which alone *separates us from God*, as we heard from *Isa.* 59. 2. It cannot therefore but bring us very near, which removes that which only can keep us asunder.

4. Humility is wont to be the *Fear of God's* attendant, and when the one is *trembling* in its nearer approach, this much helps it to a more *safe and easie access*; for though it *fall low*, yet it *lifteth up* the Soul in the rebound much nearer to God. The *Psalmist* saith, that he *humbleth himself* in looking down upon us: *Psal.* 113. 6. But we by *humbling our selves* get nearer, and the higher up to him; who is wont to have respect to the *humble*, whilst the *proud* he useth to *behold afar off*, *Psal.* 138. 6. For if none of us can endure a proud Man's company, why should? How can God? We that are so *mean and low*; might better away with an insolent Superiour: But how can the most high God indure a proud Competitor? And yet such is every proud Man, contests with God about the two main Points of his *Royalty*; who should be the *Prima Causa*, and *Finis Ultimus*. But the nearer he aspires to be to God in one sense, the further he is from him in another; who *scorns the Scorners*, but *gives Grace to the lowly*, *Prov.* 3. 34. *Lucifer*, that climbed so high above the *Clouds* to get near to be like the most High, is cast down to the utmost possible distance, whilst *Michael* (whose very Name speaks humble Acknowledgment, and Adoration of God's Supremacy) is advanced

Isa. 39. 13.

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ced to his place, from which his Pride threw him; as our proud attempt in *Adam* to scale Heaven was (as I may use the Prophet's words) such a *swelling in an high wall*, that hath tumbled us down far off from God into this woful Ruine, wherein he now finds us. *At magna humilitatis virtus, cui etiam Deitatis Majestas tam facile se inclinat.* How gracious is this lowly Grace? or rather how Gracious is the High and Mighty God, that, when we in *humility* bow down, and as it were shrink back from him in sense of our own Baseness, he should then bow down *lowest* to us in nearest *Approximation*: So as Heaven should never be more clearly seen than in the *lowest Vault*, nor we ever *nearer* God, than when we are *furthest* from all proud Conceits of our selves!

Serm. 33:

5. Repentance and Humility are nearakin, and whilst these two lovely Twins are not parted, they will keep us closer united to God. The penitent *Publican* indeed stood *as far off*, Luke 18. 13. yet in their Addresses to God we know he got the upper hand of him, that thought and bragged himself to be the *better Man*. It's true, some of our now overgrown Men think repentant Crys and Tears *Childish*; yet let me be one of those *Children*, of whom is the *Kingdom of Heaven*. Nor let their scoffs babish us, as long as the *crying Child* is laid *closest* to the Mother's breast, and taken nearest into our Heavenly Father's Bosome. For so the Psalmist assureth us, that the *Lord is nigh* to them that are of a *broken heart*, Psal. 34. 18. *Deus delinquentium gemitus esurit, sitit lacrymas peccatorum*, so *Chrysologus*. Nothing more pleasing in God's sight, than a repentant Tear in Faiths Eye. Which leads to a Sixth Particular:

6. *Above all*, faith the Apostle, *take the Shield of Faith*, when you draw near to fight with your *worst Enemy*, Ephes. 6. 16. And I must advise you, above all bring *Faith* along with you, if you would ever draw near to your best *Friend*. There is nothing in *Faith* that hath not a strong tendency this way.

In its *justifying Act* it hath an Eye to *look* towards God, Isa. 45. 22. a Foot to *come* to him, John 6. 35. an Hand to *take* him, John 1. 12. to *lean on him*, Cant. 8. 5. to *lay hold on him*, Isa. 56. 4. 1 Tim. 6. 12. Heb. 6. 18. so *opens the Door*, Rev. 3. 20. that he may *come in and sup with us*.

And because *no walking together unless agreed*, and made Friends, Amos 3. 3. It *layeth hold on* Christ our Mediator, and Reconciler, which brings God and us together: Brings our

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Benjamin along with it, by whom we have access into Joseph's presence. By it we come to Christ, and by him to God. Through him we have access, but by Faith, saith the Apostle, Rom. 5. 2.

There is also the Prayer of Faith, Jam. 5. 15. and by it we heard we have access and entrance.

And the Scripture tells us, and Believers find, that there is such a thing as the Assurance of Faith, in which the Apostle exhorts us to draw nigh, Heb. 10. 22. In this Plerophory our Sail is so filled, that we go amain towards God and Heaven: We do, because it tells us we may, that whilst Infidelity dares not approach, (*She trusted not in the Lord, she drew not nigh to her God*, Zeph. 3. 2.) and despair in Horror and Amazement makes us run away from him, as from our Enemy and Judge, the assurance of Faith imboldens us to draw nigh to him, as our Friend and Father. Guilt of sin lying on the Conscience is like a Mist, that keeps Friends from seeing and coming near one the other; as the Pillar of Cloud kept the Israelites and Egyptians asunder. But the Son of Righteousness arising, and shining out in bright Beams of Assurance and Joy, sheweth us our Friend, and imboldens us *ruere in Amplexus*. When the Spouse can say, *my Beloved*, he is then as a bundle of Myrrh, lying all the night between her Breasts (Cant. 1. 13.) And that is very near her Heart.

7. I might here add Hope, which, though in nature it's of an object absent, yet as a Grace, it hath God very present: And so the Apostle calls it a better Hope, by which we draw nigh to God, Heb. 7. 19.

8. And Sincerity, which being *εὐμενής*, dare draw nigh to the Light, whilst the painted Hypocrite is like the Man clothed with a kind of course Stuff, which they called, *stand further off*; cares not for so near a view of so piercing an Eye. But I shall not Insist on any more Particulars.

9. But lastly add in general, That a course of sincere Obedience in the practice of all Saving Graces, is in Scripture-phrase, a *Walking with God*; and that implieth very near Communion. Every particular Grace in us is part of the Divine Nature, and so Alieth us to God: But in the general exercise of them, all God is ours, not only in surest Covenant, but also in closest Communion. It was the want of such a *Wedding-Garment*, that cast the Guest in the Gospel *εἰς σκότος ἐξ-ἑσπερ*, into utter Darkness, Mat. 22. 13. which signifieth the

John 3. 21.

Gen. 5. 22.
& 6. 9.

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utmost distance from God and Heaven, that *μέγα χάσμα*, that *impassable Gulf*, Luke 16. 26. being between. But whilst we are here in a gracious Course, we have the best Stand and Prospect, for the fullest and nearest view of God. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh Righteousness*, Isa. 64. 5. And *to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, I will shew the Salvation of God*, Psal. 50. 23. But when once Grace is made Perfect, and the *Bride* all over Cloathed, and fully made *Ready*, then shall be the *Marriage of the Lamb*, when Christ shall come from Heaven to us, and we shall be *caught up in the Clouds to meet with him*, and so for ever shall be with the Lord, when the whole Quire of Heaven, every one in his own Part, and all together shall sing aloud this sweet Note of the Text, *אֲנִי קִרְבֵּת אֱלֹהִים לִי* *נאני קרבת אל'הים לי* *It is good for me to draw near to God*, and to keep close to him for ever.

Even so, Amen, Lord Jesus.

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