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**MUGBRIDGE,
ALBION BAZAAR,
BRIGHTON.**

**THE ART OF
DIVINE CONTENTMENT.**

B. BENSLEY, PRINTER ANDOVER.

**THE ART OF
DIVINE CONTENTMENT.**

**BY THOMAS WATSON,
OF ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK.**

**PRINTED FOR L. B. SEELEY AND SONS;
AND HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.
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MDCCCXXIX.**

MEMOIR.

It is a remarkable fact that, although the Author of this valuable little work was educated at Emmanuel - college, Cambridge, where he was considered to be a very hard student; although in 1646 he became a popular preacher at St. Stephen's, Walbrook; and although this Art of Divine Con-

tentment in 1672 had reached the thirteenth edition, the precise time either of his birth or his death is nowhere mentioned.

At the restoration he was ejected from St. Stephen's, on account of his non-conformity: in other respects he appears to have been a man rather of loyal principles; for besides a vigorous opposition to the measures adopted against the life of Charles I. and a remonstrance to Cromwell against the murder of his Sovereign; he was concerned in what was called Love's plot to bring in Charles II. and was for some time imprisoned in the tower on that account.

After his ejection from St. Ste-

phen's, Walbrook, he occasionally preached where he could with safety; until indulgence being granted in 1672, he fitted up the great hall in Crosby House, Bishopsgate Street; which then belonged to Sir John Langham, and preached there several years. He at length retired into Essex, where he died suddenly, as is supposed, about 1689 or 1690.

“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,” for they *“rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”* If our Author had never written more than this short treatise, he would have well deserved a place among those faithful ministers of his blessed Lord, whom he

has raised up at various periods since the Reformation, to proclaim to this nation, and to the world at large, the sanctifying nature of a true faith in him. And as a contemporary author remarks, "Although other worthy divines have been helpful to the church of God by their discourses upon this subject; yet there is much of peculiar use in this Treatise; wherein the author hath exercised to good purpose, both the christian graces and ministerial gifts with which God hath enriched him. Herein the doctrine of Christian Contentment is clearly illustrated, and profitably applied; the special cases, wherein through change of providences dis-

contents are most commonly occasioned, are particularized, and preservatives applied to secure the soul."

Bishop Hall, in one of his meditations, speaking of a contented mind, adds—"I have somewhat of the best things; I will with thankfulness enjoy them, and will want the rest with contentment;" that the same sentiment was the habitual frame of Thomas Watson's mind, few will doubt, who have read any of his writings, but especially this of Contentment.

He published several other small works on practical subjects, which appear to have been well received, particularly a Treatise on the Lord's

Supper, and the Saint's Cordial; but his greatest work is his Body of Divinity in folio; consisting of a series of Sermons on the Assembly's Catechism; and reprinted a few years since in 2 vols. 8vo.

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TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,

HAVING seriously considered the great dishonours done to Almighty God, (as well as the prejudice which doth accrue to our own selves, by the sin of discontent,) it did at first put me upon the study of this subject. Nor is it incongruous to handle this next in order to the "Christian Charter." I shewed you *there* the great things which a believer hath in reversion, *Things to come are his*: And here, behold a Christian's holy and gracious deportment in this life, which discovers itself in nothing more eminently

than in *Contentation*. Discontent is to the soul, as a disease to the body; it puts it out of temper, and doth much hinder its regular and sublime motions heavenward. Discontent is hereditary, and no doubt but it is much augmented by the many sad eclipses and changes that have fallen out of late in the body politic; yet the disease is not to be pleaded for, because natural; but to be resisted, because sinful. That which should make us out of love with this sullen distemper, is the contemplating the beautiful queen of Contentment. For my part, I know not any ornament in religion that doth more bespangle a Christian, or glitter in the eye of God and man, than this of Contentment: Nor certainly is there any thing wherein all the Christian virtues do work more harmoniously,

or shine more transparently, than in this orb. Every grace doth act its part here, and help to keep the soul in its proper frame. This is the true philosopher's stone, which turns all into gold: This is the curious enamel and embroidery of the heart, which makes Christ's spouse "all glorious within." How should every Christian be ambitious to wear such a sparkling diamond! If there be a blessed life before we come at heaven, it is the contented life. And why not contented? "Why art thou wrath, and why is thy countenance fallen?" Gen. iv. 6. Man of all creatures hath the least cause to be discontented. Canst thou deserve any thing from God? Doth he owe thee any thing? What if the scene turn, and God put thee under the black rod? Whereas he useth a rod, he might use a

scorpion; he might as well damn thee, as whip thee: Why then art thou so querulous? Why dost thou give way to this irrational and unthankful sin of discontent? The good Lord humble his own people from nourishing such a viper in their breast, as doth not only cut out the bowels of their comfort, but spits venom in the face of God himself. O, Christian, who art overspread with this *fretting leprosy*, thou carriest the *man of sin* about thee; for thou settest thyself above God; and as if thou wert wiser than he, wouldst saucily prescribe him what condition is best for thee. O this *devil of discontent*, which whomsoever it possesses, it makes his heart a little hell! I know there will not be perfect contentment here in this life. Perfect pleasure is only

at *God's right hand*; yet we may begin here to tune our instrument, before we play the sweet lesson of contentment exactly in heaven. I should be glad if this little piece might be like Moses casting the tree into the waters, (Exod. xv. 25.) to make the uncouth bitter condition of life more sweet and pleasant to drink of. I have once more adventured into the public; *this* I acknowledge to be home-spun; some better hand might have made a more curious draft: but having preached upon the subject, I was earnestly solicited by some of my hearers to publish it; and although it is not drest in that rich attire of eloquence as it might, yet I am not about poetry or oratory, but divinity; nor is this intended for fancy, but practice. If I may herein do any service, or cast but

a mite into the treasury of the church's grace, I have my desire. The end of our living is to live to God, and to lift up his name in the word. The Lord add an effectual blessing to this work, and fasten it as a nail in a sure place: may he of his mercy make it as spiritual physic, to drive the ill humour of discontent out of our hearts, that so a crown of honour may be set upon the head of religion, and the chrystal streams of joy and peace may ever run in our souls: which is the prayer of him who is desirous to be a faithful orator for thee at the throne of grace.

THOMAS WATSON.

*From my study at Stephens
Walbrook, May 5, 1653.*

THE ART OF DIVINE CONTENTMENT.

PHIL. IV. 11.

*I have learned in whatsoever state I
am, therewith to be content.*

THESE words are brought in by way of *prolepsis*, to anticipate and prevent an objection. The apostle had in the former verses laid down many grave and heavenly exhortations; among the rest, to be careful for nothing. Not to exclude, 1. A prudential care: For "he that provideth not for his own house hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Nor 2. A religious care: for, we must give all diligence to make our calling

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and election sure. But 3. To exclude all anxious care about the issues and events of things; "Take no thought for your life what you shall eat;" and in this sense it should be a Christian's care not to be careful. The word in the Greek, *careful*, comes from a primitive, that signifies, To cut the heart in pieces; a soul-dividing care; take heed of this. We are bid to "commit our way unto the Lord:" the Hebrew word is *roll* thy way upon the Lord. It is our work to cast care, and it is God's work to take care. By our immoderacy we take his work out of his hand.

Care, when it is eccentric, either distrustful or distracting, is very dishonourable to God; it takes away his providence, as if he sat in heaven, and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go of itself. Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we

shall do to live, we forget how to die. Care is a spiritual canker, that doth waste and dispirit; we may sooner by our care add a *furlong* to our grief, than a *cubit* to our comfort. God doth threaten it as a curse, "They shall eat their bread with carefulness:" better fast, than eat of that bread. "Be careful for nothing."

Now lest any one should say, Yea, Paul, thou preachest that to us which thou hast scarce learned thyself; hast thou learned not to be careful? The Apostle seems tacitly to answer that, in the words of the text, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." A speech worthy to be engraven upon our hearts, and to be written in letters of gold upon the crowns and diadems of princes.

The text doth branch itself into these two general parts.

I. The Scholar, *Paul* : *I have learned.*

II. The lesson: *In every state to be content.*

I begin with the first. 1. The Scholar, and his proficiency; *I have learned*: Out of which I shall observe two things by way of paraphrase.

1. It is not *ἐκείσα* but *ἐμαθον*. The Apostle doth not say, I have *heard* that in every state I should be content; but, I have *learned*: whence, *It is not enough for Christians to hear their duty, but they must learn their duty.*

It is one thing to hear, and another thing to learn; as it is one thing to eat, and another thing to concoct. St. Paul was a practitioner. Christians hear much, but it is to be feared, learn little. There were four sorts of ground in the parable, and but one good ground. An emblem of this truth; many *hearers*, but few *learners*. There are two things which keep us from learning:

1. *Slighting what we hear*. Christ is the pearl of price: when we disesteem this pearl, we shall never learn, either its value, or its virtue. The gospel is a rare mystery; in one place

it is called the Gospel of Grace ; in another, the Gospel of Glory, because in it, as in a transparent glass, the glory of God is resplendent : but he that hath learned to condemn this mystery, will hardly ever learn to obey it. He that looks upon the things of heaven, as things by the by ; and perhaps the driving of a trade, or carrying on some politic design, to be of greater importance ; this man is in the high road to damnation, and will hardly ever learn the things of his peace : who will learn that which he thinks is scarce worth learning ?

2. *Forgetting what we hear.* If a scholar have his rules laid before him, and he forgets them as fast as he reads them, he will never learn. Aristotle calls the memory, the scribe of the soul ; and Bernard calls it the stomach of the soul, because it hath a retentive faculty, and turns heavenly food into blood and spirits. We have great memories in other things ; we remember that which is vain. Cyrus

could remember the name of every soldier in his huge army: we remember *injuries*: This is to fill a precious cabinet with dung; but *quam facilis oblivio boni?* as Hierom saith, how soon do we forget the sacred truths of God? We are apt to forget three things, our *faults*, our *friends*, our *instructions*. Many Christians are like sieves; put a sieve into the water, and it is full; but take it forth of the water, and all runs out; so, while they are hearing a sermon, they remember something, but *take the sieve out of the water*, as soon as they are gone out of the church, all is forgotten. *Let these sayings* (saith Christ) *sink down into your ears*; in the original it is *put these sayings into your ears*. As a man that would hide a jewel from being stolen, locks it up safe in his chest. *Let them sink*; the word must not only fall as the dew that wets the leaf, but as rain which soaks to the root of the tree, and makes it fructify. O how often doth

Satan, that fowl of the air, pick up the good seed that is sown !

Let me put you upon a serious trial ? Some of you have heard much, you have lived forty, fifty, sixty years under the blessed trumpet of the gospel : what have you learned ? you may have heard a thousand sermons, and yet not learned one : search your consciences.

1. You have heard much against sin : Are you *hearers*, or are you *scholars* ?

How many sermons have your heard against covetousness ; that it is the root on which pride, idolatry, treason do grow ? one calls it a metropolitan sin : It is *malum complexum*, it doth twist a great many sins in with it. There is hardly any sin but covetousness is a main ingredient in it ; and yet are you like the two daughters of the horse-leech, which cry, *Give give*.

How much have you heard against *rash anger* ; that it is a short phrenzy ; a dry drunkenness ; that it rests

in the bosom of fools ! and upon the least occasion do your spirits begin to take fire ? How much have you heard against *swearing* ! It is Christ's express mandate, Swear not at all ; this sin of all others may be termed the unfruitful work of darkness ; it is neither sweetened with pleasure, nor enriched with profit ; the usual vermilion, wherewith Satan doth paint sin. Swearing is forbidden with a *sub pœna*. While the swearer shoots his oaths like flying arrows at God, to pierce his glory, God shoots a flying roll of curses against him : and do you make your tongue a racket, by which you toss oaths as tennis balls ? Do you sport yourselves with oaths, as the Philistines did with Sampson, which will at last pull the house about your ears ? Alas ! how have they learned what sin is, that have not yet learned to leave sin ! doth he know what a viper is that plays with it ?

2. You have heard much of Christ ; have you learned Christ ? The Jews

(as one saith) carried Christ in their Bibles, but not in their heart; "Their sound went into all the earth," Rom. x. 18. The prophets and apostles were as trumpets, whose sound went abroad into the world; yet many thousands who heard the noise of these trumpets, had not learned Christ; "they have not all obeyed," ver. 16.

1. A man may know much of Christ, and yet not learn Christ. The devils knew Christ.

2. A man may preach Christ, and yet not learn Christ; as Judas, and the pseudo-apostles.

3. A man may profess Christ, and yet not learn Christ: there are many professors in the world that Christ will profess against.

Quest. What is it then to learn Christ?

Ans. 1. To learn Christ, is to be made like Christ, when the divine characters of his holiness are engraven upon our hearts; "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory

of the Lord, are changed into the same image :” There is a metamorphosis made : a sinner viewing Christ’s image in the glass of the gospel, is transformed into that image. Never did any man look upon Christ with a spiritual eye, but went away quite changed. A true saint is a divine landscape or picture, where all the rare beauties of Christ are lively pourtrayed and drawn forth : he hath the same spirit, the same judgment, the same will with Jesus Christ.

2. To learn Christ, is to *believe* in him ; “ My Lord and my God :” when we do not only *credere Deum*, but *in Deum* ; which is the actual application of Christ to ourselves, and as it were the spreading of the sacred medicine of his blood upon our soul. You that have heard much of Christ, and yet cannot with an humble adherence say, My Jesus ! be not offended if I tell you, the devil can say his creed as well as you.

3. To learn Christ, is to live Christ.

When we have bible conversations, our lives as rich diamonds cast a sparkling lustre in the church of God, and are, in some sense, parallel with the life of Christ, as the transcript with the original. So much for the first notion of the word.

II. This word *ἐμαθον*, I have learned, imports difficulty; it shews how hardly the apostle came by his contentment of mind; St. Paul did not comenaturally by it, but he had learned it. It cost him many a prayer and tear; it was taught him by the Spirit.

Whence, *Good things are hard to come by.* The business of Religion is not so facile as most do imagine: I have learned, saith St. Paul. Indeed you need not learn a man to sin, this is natural, and therefore facile, it comes as water out of a spring. It is an easy thing to be wicked; hell will be taken without storm, but matter of religion must be learned. To cut the flesh is easy; but to prick a vein, and not to cut an artery is hard. The trade of

sin needs not to be learned, but the *Art of Divine Contentment* is not achieved without holy industry ; *ἐμαθον*, I have learned.

There are two pregnant reasons why there must be so much study and exercitation.

1. Because spiritual things are against nature. Every thing in Religion is antipodes to nature. There are in Religion two things, *Credenda* and *Facienda*, and both are against nature. 1. *Credenda*, matters of faith : as, for a man to be justified by the righteousness of another ; to become a fool that he may be wise ; to save all by losing all ; this is against nature. 2. *Facienda*, matters of practice ; as *self-denial* ; for a man to deny his own wisdom, and see himself blind ; his own will, and have it melted into the will of God ; plucking out the right eye, beheading and crucifying that sin which is the favourite, and lies nearest to the heart. For a man to be dead to the world, and in the midst of

want to abound: For a man to take up the cross, and follow Christ, not only in golden, but bloody paths; to embrace Religion when it is dressed in its night-clothes, all the jewels of honour and preferment being pulled off; this is against nature, and therefore must be learned. *Self-examination*, for a man to take his heart, as a watch all in pieces; to set up a spiritual inquisition, or court of conscience, and traverse things in his own soul; to take David's candle and lanthorn, and search for sin; nay, as judge, to pass the sentence upon himself: this is against nature, and will not easily be attained to without learning. *Self-reformation*. To see a man as Caleb, of another spirit, walking antipodes to himself, the current of his life altered, and running into the channel of Religion; this is wholly against nature; when a stone ascends, it is not a natural motion, but a violent; the motion of the soul heaven-ward is a violent motion, it must be learned; flesh and

blood is not skilled in these things: Nature can no more cast out nature, than Satan can cast out Satan.

2. Because spiritual things are above nature. There are some things in nature that are hard to find out, as the cause of things, which are not learnt without study: Aristotle, a great philosopher, whom some have called an eagle fallen from the clouds, yet could not find out the motion of the river Euripus, therefore threw himself into it; what then are divine things, which are in a sphere above nature, and beyond all human disquisition: as the Trinity, the hypostatical union; the mystery of faith, to believe against hope? only God's Spirit can light our candle here. The apostle calls these the deep things of God; the gospel is full of jewels, but they are locked up from sense and reason. The angels in heaven are searching into these sacred depths.

Let us beg the Spirit of God to teach us; we must be *divinitus edocti*:

the eunuch could read, but he could not understand, till Philip joined himself to his chariot. God's Spirit must join himself to our chariot; he must teach, or we cannot learn: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." A man may read the figure on the dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes, unless the sun shines upon the dial; we may read the bible over, but we cannot learn to purpose till the Spirit of God shines into our hearts. Oh, implore this blessed Spirit. It is God's prerogative-royal to teach. "I am the Lord thy God, that teacheth thee to profit," Isa. xlviii. 17. Ministers may tell us our lesson, God only can teach us; we have lost both our hearing and eye-sight; therefore are very unfit to learn. Ever since Eve listened to the serpent we have been deaf; and since she looked on the tree of knowledge, we have been blind: but when God comes to teach, he removes these impediments. We are naturally dead; who will go about to

teach a dead man? Yet behold God undertakes to make dead men to understand mysteries! God is the grand teacher. This is the reason the word preached works so differently upon men: two in a pew, the one is wrought upon effectually, the other lies at the ordinances as a dead child at the breast, and gets no nourishment; what is the reason? because the heavenly gale of the Spirit blows upon one, and not upon the other; one hath the anointing of God, which teacheth him all things, the other hath it not. God's Spirit speaks sweetly but irresistibly. In that heavenly doxology, none could sing the new song, but those who were "sealed in their foreheads;" reprobates could not sing it. Those that are skilful in the mysteries of salvation, must have the seal of the Spirit upon them. Let us make this our prayer, Lord, breathe thy spirit into thy word; and we have a promise, which may add wings to prayer, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to

your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him !”

And thus much of the first part of the text, the *Scholar* ; which I intended only as a short gloss or paraphrase.

II. I come now to the second, which is the main thing. The *Lesson* itself ; in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Here was a rare piece of learning indeed, and certainly more to be wondered at in St. Paul, that he knew how to turn himself to every condition, than all the learning in the world besides, which hath been so applauded in former ages by Julius Cæsar, Ptolemy, Xenophon, the great admirers of learning.

The text hath but few words in it, “In every state be content:” But if that be true which once Fulgentius said, ‘That the most golden sentence is ever measured by brevity and suavity,’ then this is a most accomplished

speech; here is *magnum in parvo*. The text is like a precious jewel, little in quantity, but great in worth and value.

The main proposition I shall insist upon is this, *that a gracious spirit is a contented spirit*. The doctrine of contentment is very superlative; and till we have learned this, we have not learned to be Christians.

1. It is an *hard lesson*. Some angels in heaven had not learned it; they were not contented: though their estate was very glorious, yet they were still soaring aloft, and aimed at something higher; "The angels which kept not their first estate," Jude ver. 6; they kept not their estate, because they were not contented with their estate. Our first parents, clothed with the white robe of innocency in paradise, had not learned to be content; they had aspiring hearts, and thinking their human nature too low and homespun, would be crowned with the deity, and be as Gods: Though they had the

choice of all the trees in the garden, yet none would content them but the tree of knowledge, which they supposed would have been as eye-salve to have made them omniscient. Oh then, if this lesson were so hard to learn in innocency, how hard shall we find it, who are clogged with corruption!

2. It is of *universal extent*; concerns all. 1. It concerns *rich men*. One would think it needless to press those to contentment, whom God hath blessed with great estates, but rather persuade them to be humble and thankful; nay, but I say, Be content. Rich men have their discontents as well as others: as appears: 1. When they have a great estate, yet they are discontented that they have no more; they would make the hundred talents a thousand. A man in wine, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts: Covetousness is a dry dropsy; an earthly heart is like the grave that is never satisfied. Therefore I say to you rich men, Be content.

2. Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their estates (which is very seldom) yet, though they have estate enough, they have not honour enough; if their barns are full enough, yet their turrets are not high enough. They would be somebody in the world, as Theudas who boasted himself to be somebody; they never go so cheerfully as when the wind of honour and applause fills their sails; if this wind be down they are discontented. One would think Haman had as much as his proud heart could desire; he was set above all the princes, advanced upon the pinnacle of honour to be the second man in the kingdom; yet in the midst of all his pomp, because Mordecai would not uncover and kneel, he is discontented and full of wrath, and there is no way to assuage this pleurisy of revenge, but by letting all the Jews' blood, and offering them up in sacrifice. The itch of honour is seldom allayed, without blood; therefore I say to you rich men Be content.

3. Rich men, if we may suppose them to be content with their honour and magnificent titles, yet they have not always contentment in their relations. She that lies in the bosom, may sometimes blow the coals, as Job's wife, who in a pet would have him fall out with God himself, "Curse God and die." Sometimes children cause discontent; how oft is it seen that the mother's milk doth nourish a viper! and he that once sucked her breast, goes about to suck her blood! Parents do often of grapes gather thorns, and of figs thistles; children are sweet-briar; Like the rose, which is a fragrant flower, but, as Basil saith, it hath its prickles. Our relative comforts are not all pure wine, but mixed; they have in them more dregs than spirits, and are like that river Plutarch speaks of, where the waters in the morning run sweet, but in the evening run bitter. We have no charter of exemption granted us in this life; therefore rich men had need be called upon to be contented.

2. The doctrine of contentment concerns poor men. You that do suck so liberally from the breasts of providence, be content; it is an hard lesson, therefore it had need be set upon the sooner. How hard it is when the livelihood is even gone, a great estate boiled away almost to nothing, then to be content! The means of subsistence is in scripture called our life, because it is the very sinews of life. The woman in the gospel spent "all her living upon the physicians:" in the Greek it is *ὅλον τὸν βίον*; she spent her whole life upon the physicians, because she spent her means by which she should live. It is much when poverty hath clipped our wings, then to be content; but, *difficilia pulchra*, though hard it is excellent; and the apostle here had learned in every state to be content.

God had brought Saint Paul into as great variety of conditions, as ever we read of any man, and yet he was content; else sure he could never have gone through it with so much cheer-

fulness. See into what vicissitudes this blessed apostle was cast; "we are troubled on every side," there was the sadness of his condition; "but not distressed," there was his content in that condition; "we are perplexed," there is his affliction; "but not in despair," there is his contentation. And if we read a little further, "In afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, &c." there is his trouble: and behold his content, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." When the apostle was driven out of all, yet in regard of that sweet contentment of mind, (which was like music in his soul) he possessed all. We read a short map or history of his sufferings. "In prisons more frequent, in death oft, &c." 2 Cor xi. 23—25. Yet behold the blessed frame and temper of his spirit, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Which way soever providence did

blow, he had such heavenly skill and dexterity, that he knew how to steer his course. For his outward estate he was indifferent, he could be either on the top of Jacob's ladder or the bottom; he could sing either *placentia* or *lachrymæ*, the dirge or the anthem; he could be any thing that God would have him; "I know how to want, and how to abound;" there is a rare pattern for us to imitate. Paul, in regard of his faith and courage, was like a cedar, he could not be stirred; but for his outward condition he was like a reed, bending every way with the wind of providence. When a prosperous gale did blow upon him, he could bend with that, "I know how to be full;" and when a boisterous gust of affliction did blow, he could bend in humility with that, "I know how to be hungry." St. Paul was *ἀνὴρ τετραγωνός*, (as Aristotle speaks) like a die that hath four squares, throw it which way you will, it falls upon a bottom: Let God throw the apostle which way he

would, he fell upon this bottom of contentment. A contented spirit is like a watch; though you carry it up and down with you, yet the spring of it is not shaken, nor the wheels out of order, but the watch keeps its perfect motion: so it was with St. Paul, though God had carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other. The spring of his heart was not broken, the wheels of his affection were not disordered, but kept their constant motion toward heaven, still content. The ship that lies at anchor may sometimes be a little shaken, but never sinks; flesh and blood may have its fears and disquiets, but grace doth check them: A Christian having cast anchor in heaven, his heart never sinks: a gracious spirit is a contented spirit.

This is a rare art; Paul did not learn it at the feet of Gamaliel; "I am instructed," I am initiated into this holy mystery; as if he had said, I

have gotten the divine art, I have the knack of it. God must make us right artists. If we should put some men to an art that they are not skilled in, how unfit they would be for it! Put an husbandman to limning or drawing pictures, what strange work would he make! this is out of his sphere. Take a limner, that is exact in laying of colours, and put him to plough, or set him to planting and grafting of trees; this is not his art, he is not skilled in it. Bid a natural man live by faith, and when all things go cross, "Be contented;" you bid him do that he has no skill in, you may as well bid a child guide the stern of a ship. To live contentedly upon God in the deficiency of outward comforts, is an art which "flesh and blood hath not revealed:" nay many of God's own children, who excel in some duties of religion, when they come to this of contentment, how do they bungle! they have scarce commenced masters of this art.

For the illustrating of this doctrine, I shall propound these questions.

Quest. 1. Whether a Christian may not be sensible of his condition, and yet be contented?

Ans. Yes; for else he is not a saint but a stoic. Rachel did well to weep for her children, there was nature; but her fault was "she refused to be comforted," there was discontent, Christ himself was sensible when he sweat great drops of blood, and said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet he was contented, and sweetly submitted his will, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The apostle bids us "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," which we cannot do unless we are sensible of it.

Quest. 2. Whether a Christian may not lay open his grievances to God, and yet be contented?

Ans. Yes: "Unto thee have I opened my cause," Jer. xx. 12; and "David poured out his complaint be-

fore the Lord." We may cry to God, and desire him to write down all our injuries; shall not the child complain to his father? when any burden is upon the spirit, prayer gives vent, it easeth the heart: Hannah's spirit was burdened, "I am," says she, "a woman of a troubled spirit." Now, having prayed and wept she went away, and was no more sad; only here is the difference between an holy complaint and a discontented complaint; in the one we complain *to* God; and in the other we complain *of* God.

Quest. 3. What is it properly that contentment doth exclude?

Answ. There are three things which contentment doth banish out of its diocese, and can by no means consist with it.

1. It excludes a vexatious repining; this is properly the daughter of discontent, "I mourn in my complaint:" he doth not say, I murmur in my complaint. Murmuring is no better than mutiny in the heart, it is a rising up

against God. When the sea is rough and unquiet, it casts forth nothing but foam; when the heart is discontented, it casts forth the foam of anger, impatience, and sometimes little better than blasphemy. Murmuring is nothing else but the scum which boils off from a discontented heart.

2. It excludes an uneven discomposure: when a man saith, I am in such straits, that I know not how to evolve or get out; I shall be undone. Head and heart are so taken up, that a man is not fit to pray, or meditate, he is not himself: just as when an army is routed, one man runs this way and another that, the army is put into disorder; so a man's thoughts run up and down distractedly. Discontent doth dislocate and unjoint the soul, it pulls off the wheels.

3. It excludes a childish despondency; and this is usually consequent upon the other. A man being in an hurry of mind, not knowing which way to extricate or wind himself out of the

present trouble, begins *succumbere oneri*, to faint and sink under. For care is to the mind as a burden to the back, it loads the spirits, and with overloading sinks them. A despondent spirit is a discontented spirit.

Having answered these questions, I shall in the next place come to describe this *αὐτάρχεια* or contentment.

It is a sweet temper of spirit, whereby a Christian carries himself in an equal poize in every condition. The nature of this will appear more clear in these three aphorisms.

1. Contentment is a divine thing; it becomes ours not by acquisition, but infusion; it is a slip taken off from the tree of life, and planted by the Spirit of God in the soul; it is a fruit that grows not in the garden of philosophy, but is of an heavenly birth: It is therefore very observable, that contentment is joined with godliness, and goes in equipage; but godliness with contentment is great gain. Contentment being a consequent of godliness,

or concomitant, or both; I call it divine; to distinguish it from that contentment which a moral man may arrive at. Heathens have seemed to have this contentment, but it was only the shadow and picture of it; the beryl, not the true diamond: theirs was but civil, this is sacred: theirs was only from principles of reason, this of religion: theirs was only lighted at nature's torch, this at the lamp of scripture. Reason may a little teach contentment; as thus, 'Whatever my condition be, this is that I am born to, and if I meet with crosses, it is but a catholic misery; all have their share, why therefore should I be troubled?' Reason may suggest this; and indeed this may be rather constraint, than content: but to live securely and cheerfully upon God in the abatement of creature supplies, Religion only can bring this into the soul's exchequer.

2. Contentment is an intrinsical thing; it lies within a man; not in the bark, but the root. Contentment hath

both its fountain and stream in the soul. The beam hath not its light from the air: the beams of comfort which a contented man hath, do not arise *extrinsecè*, from foreign comforts, but from within. As sorrow is seated in the spirit, "The heart knows its own bitterness;" so contentment lies within the soul, and doth not depend upon externals. Hence I gather, that outward troubles cannot hinder this blessed contentment; it is a spiritual thing and ariseth from spiritual grounds, *viz.* the apprehension of God's love. When there is a tempest without, there may be music within: a bee may sting through the skin, but it cannot sting to the heart: outward afflictions cannot sting to a Christian's heart, where contentment lies. Thieves may plunder us of our money and plate; but not of this pearl of contentment, unless we are willing to part with it: for it is locked up in the cabinet of the heart: The soul which is possessed of this rich treasure of contentment, is.

like Noah in the ark; that can sing in the midst of a deluge.

3. Contentment is an habitual thing; it shines with a fixed light in the firmament of the soul. Contentment doth not appear only now and then, as some stars which are seen but seldom: it is a settled temper of the heart. One action doth not denominate: he is not said to be a liberal man, that gives alms once in his life; a covetous man may do so; but he is said to be liberal, that is, "given to liberality;" that is, who upon all occasions is willing to relieve the necessities of the poor: so he is said to be a contented man, that is given to contentment. It is not casual, but constant. Aristotle in his rhetoric, distinguisheth between colours in the face that arise from passion, and those which arise from complexion; the pale face may look red when it blusheth; but this is only a passion: he is said properly to be ruddy and sanguine, who is constantly so; it is his com-

plexion. He is not a contented man who is so upon an occasion, and perhaps when he is pleased; but who is so constantly; it is the habit and complexion of his soul.

Having opened the nature of contentment, I come next to lay down some reasons or arguments to contentment, which may preponderate with us.

The first is, God's Precept: It is charged upon us as a duty; "Be content with such things as you have;" the same God who hath bid us believe, hath bid us be content; if we obey not, we run ourselves into a spiritual *præmunire*. God's Word is a sufficient warrant; it hath authority in it, and must be a supersedeas or sacred spell to discontent: *Ipsæ dixit* was enough among Pythagoras's scholars: Be it enacted, is the royal style. God's words must be the star that guides, and his will the weight that moves our obedience; his *fiat* is a law, and hath majesty enough in it to captivate us

into obedience: our hearts must not be more unquiet than the raging sea, which at his word is stilled.

2. The second reason enforcing contentment, is God's promise; for, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiv. 5; where God hath engaged himself under hand and seal for our necessary provisions. If a king should say to one of his subjects, 'I will take care for thee; as long as I have any crown revenues thou shalt be provided for; if thou art in danger, I will secure thee; if in want, I will supply thee;' would not that subject be content? Behold, God hath here made a promise to the believer, and as it were entered into bond for his security, "I will never leave thee:" Shall not this charm down the devil of discontent? "Leave thy fatherless children with me, I will preserve them alive." Methinks I see the godly man on his death-bed much discontented, and hear him complaining, 'What will become of my wife and

children when I am dead and gone? they may come to poverty :’ saith God, ‘Trouble not thyself, be content, I will take care of thy children ; and, let thy widow trust in me.’ God hath made a promise to us, that he will not leave us, and hath entailed the promise upon our wife and children ; and will not this satisfy ? True faith will take God’s single bond, without calling for witnesses.

3. Be contented, by virtue of a decree. Whatever our condition be, God, the great umpire of the world, hath *ab æterno* decreed that condition for us, and by his providence ordered all appurtenances thereunto. Let a Christian often think with himself, ‘Who hath placed me here, whether I am in a higher state, or in a lower ; not chance or fortune, as the purblind heathens imagined ; no, it is the wise God that hath by his providence fixed me in this orb.’ We must act that scene which God will have us : Say not, ‘Such a one hath occasioned this

to me;' look not too much at the under-wheel. We read in Ezekiel of "a wheel within a wheel:" God's Decree is the cause of the turning of the wheels, and his providence is the inner wheel that moves all the rest. God's providence is that helm which turns about the whole ship of the universe. Say then, as holy David, "I was silent, because thou, Lord, didst it." God's Providence, which is nothing else but the carrying on of his decree, should be a *supersedeas* and counterpoise against discontent: God hath set us in our station, and he hath done it in wisdom.

We fancy such a condition of life good for us; whereas, if we were our own carvers, we should often cut the worst piece. Lot, being put to his choice, did choose Sodom, which soon after was burnt with fire. Rachel was very desirous of children, "Give me children or I die;" and it cost her her life in bringing forth a child. Abraham was earnest for Ishmael, "O that

Ishmael might live before thee!" but he had little comfort either of him or his seed; he was born a son of strife; "His hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him." The disciples wept for Christ's leaving the world, they chose his corporeal presence; whereas it was best for them that Christ should be gone, for else "the Comforter would not come." David chose the life of his child, "he wept and fasted for it;" whereas if the child had lived, it would have been a perpetual monument of his shame. We stand oft in our own light; if we should sort or parcel out our own comforts, we should hit upon the wrong. Is it not well for the child that the parent doth choose for it? were it left to itself, it would perhaps choose a knife to cut its own fingers. A man in a paroxysm calls for wine, which if he had, it were little better than poison: It is well for the patient that he is at the physician's appointment.

The consideration of a Decree de-

termining, and a Providence disposing all things that fall out, should work our hearts to holy contentment. The wise God hath ordered our condition: if he sees it better for us to abound, we shall abound; if he sees it better for us to want, we shall want: Be content to be at God's disposal.

God sees in his infinite wisdom the same condition is not convenient for all; that which is good for one, may be bad for another: One season of weather will not serve all men's occasions; one needs sun-shine, another rain: One condition of life will not fit every man, no more than one suit of apparel will fit every body: Prosperity is not fit for all, nor yet adversity. If one man be brought low, perhaps he can bear it better; he hath a greater stock of grace, more faith and patience; he can "gather grapes of thorns," pick some comfort out of the cross; every one cannot do this. Another man is seated in an eminent place of dignity; he is fitter for it; perhaps it is a place

requires more parts and judgment, which every one is not capable of; perhaps he can use his estate better, he has a public heart as well as a public place. The wise God sees that condition to be bad for one, which is good for another; hence it is he placeth men in different orbs and spheres, some higher, some lower: one man desires health, God sees sickness better for him; God will work health out of sickness, by bringing the body of death into a consumption: Another man desires liberty, God sees restraint better for him; he will work his liberty by restraint; when his feet are bound, his heart shall be most enlarged. Did we believe this, it would give check to the sinful disputes and cavils of our hearts; Shall I be discontented at that which is enacted by a Decree, and ordered by a Providence? Is this to be a child, or a rebel?

Use I. It shews how a Christian may come to lead a comfortable life, even an heaven upon earth, be the

times what they will ; *viz.* by *Christian Contentment* ; the comfort of life doth not stand in having much ; it is Christ's maxim, " Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth ;" but it is in being contented. Is not the bee as well contented with the feeding on the dew, or sucking from a flower, as the ox that grazeth on the mountains ? Contentment lies within a man, *in the heart* ; and the way to be comfortable, is not having our barns filled, but our minds quiet. The contented man, saith Seneca, is the happy man : Discontent is a fretting humour, which dries the brains, wastes the spirits, corrodes and eats out the comfort of life : Discontent makes a man that he doth not enjoy what he doth possess. A drop or two of vinegar will sour a whole glass of wine. Let a man have the affluence and confluence of worldly comforts, a drop or two of discontent will embitter and poison all. Comfort depends upon contentment. Jacob went halting when the

sinew upon the hollow of his thigh shrank ; so when the sinew of contentment begins to shrink, we go halting in our comforts. Contentation is as necessary to keep the life comfortable, as oil is necessary to keep the lamp burning : The clouds of discontent do often drop the showers of tears. Would we have comfort in our lives ? we may have it if we will. A Christian may carve out what condition he will to himself. Why dost thou complain of thy troubles ? it is not trouble that troubles, but discontent ; it is not the water without the ship, but the water that gets within the leak, which drowns it : It is not outward affliction that can make the life of a Christian sad ; a contented mind would sail above these waters : but when there is a leak of discontent open, and trouble gets into the heart, then it is disquieted and sinks : Do therefore as the mariners, pump the water out, and stop this spiritual leak in thy soul, and no trouble can hurt thee.

Use 2. Here is a just reproof to such as are discontented with their condition. This disease is almost epidemical. Some not content with their callings which God hath set them in, must be a step higher; from the plough to the throne; who like the spider in the proverbs will “take hold with their hands, and be in kings’ palaces,” Prov. xxx. 28.—Others from the shop to the pulpit; they would be in the temple of honor, before they are in the temple of virtue; who step into Moses’s chair, without Aaron’s bells, and pomegranates; like apes, which do most shew their deformity when they are climbing. Is it not enough that God hath bestowed gifts upon men in private to edify, that he hath enriched them with many mercies; but, “seek they the priesthood also?” What is this but discontent; arising from high-flown pride? These do secretly tax the wisdom of God, that he hath not screwed them up in their condition a peg higher.. *Tentat super-*

bia, ut frangat. Every man is complaining that his estate is no better, though he seldom complains that his heart is no better: *Suæ quemque conditiones pœnitet*; One man commends this kind of life, another commends that; one man thinks a country life best, another a city-life. The soldier thinks it best to be a merchant, and the merchant to be a soldier. Men can be content to be any thing but what God will have them.

How is it that no man is contented? Very few Christians have learned St. Paul's lesson; neither poor nor rich know how to be content; they can learn any thing but this.

1. If men are poor, they learn to be —*envious*; they malign those that are above them; another's prosperity is an eye-sore; when God's candle shines upon their neighbour's tabernacle, this light offends them: In the midst of wants men can (in this sense) abound; *viz.* in envy and malice: An envious eye is an evil eye.—They

learn to be querulous, still complaining, as if God had dealt hardly with them; they are ever telling of their wants, they want this or that comfort; whereas their greatest want is a contented spirit. Those that are well enough content with their sins, yet are not content with their condition.

2. If men are rich, they learn to be covetous, thirsting insatiably after the world, and by any unjust means scraping it together; "their right hand is full of bribes," as the Psalmist expresseth it. Put a good cause in one scale, and a piece of gold in the other, and the gold weighs heaviest. There are, saith Solomon, four things that say, "It is not enough." I may add a fifth, viz. the heart of a covetous man: So that neither poor nor rich know how to be content.

Never certainly since the Creation did this sin of discontent reign, or rather rage more than in our times; never was God more dishonoured: you can hardly speak with any, but

the passion of his tongue betrays the discontent of his heart; every one lisps out his trouble, and here even the stammering tongue speaks too free and fluently. If we have not what we desire, God shall not have a good look from us, but presently we are sick of discontent, and are ready to die out of humour. If God will not give the people of Israel for their lusts, they bid him take their lives; they must have quails to their manna. Ahab, though a king, (and one would think his crown lands had been sufficient for him,) yet is sullen and discontented for want of Naboth's vineyard. Jonah, though a good man and a prophet, yet ready to die in a pet; and because God killed his gourd, "Kill me too," said he. Rachel, "Give me children, or I die:" she had many blessings, if she could have seen them, but wanted this of contentation. God will "supply our wants," but must he satisfy our lusts too? Many are discontented for a very trifle; another hath a better

dress, a richer Jewel, a newer fashion. Nero not content with his empire, was troubled that the musicians had more skill in playing than he:—how fantastic are some, that pine away in discontent for the want of those things, which if they had, would but render them more ridiculous!

Use 3. It exhorts us to labour for contentation; this is that which doth beautify and bespangle a Christian, and as a spiritual embroidery, doth set him off in the eyes of the world.

But methinks I hear some bitterly complaining, and saying to me, Alas! how is it possible to be contented! the Lord “hath made my chain heavy,” he hath cast me into a very sad condition.

Ans. There is no sin but labours either to hide itself under some mask; or if it cannot be concealed, then to vindicate itself by some apology. This sin of discontent I find very witty in its apologies; which I shall first discover, and then make a reply. We

must lay it down for a rule, that discontent is a *sin* ; so that all the pretences and apologies wherewith it labours to justify itself, are but the painting and dressing of a strumpet.

The first Apology that Discontent makes, answered.

The first apology which discontent makes is this; '*I have lost a child.*' Paulina upon the loss of her children was so possessed with a spirit of sadness, that she had like to have entombed herself in her own discontent: Our love to *relation* is oftentimes more than our love to *religion*.

Ans. We must be content not only when God gives mercies, but when he taketh them away. If we must "in every thing give thanks," then in nothing be discontented. Perhaps God has taken away the *cistern*, that he may give you the more of the *spring*; he hath darkened the starlight, that you may have more sun-

light. God intends you shall have more of himself; and, is not he better than ten sons? Look not so much upon a temporal loss, as a spiritual gain; the comforts of the world run dregs; those which come out of the granary of the promise are purer and sweeter. Your child was not given, but lent: "I have," saith Hannah, "lent my son to the Lord:" She lent him! the Lord had but lent him to her. Mercies are not entailed upon us, but lent: What a man lends he may call for it again when he pleases. God hath put out a child to thee awhile to nurse, wilt thou be displeased if he takes his child home again? O be not discontented that a mercy is taken away from you; but rather be thankful that it was lent you so long. Suppose your child be taken from you, either he was good or bad; If he was rebellious, you have not so much parted with a child as a burden; you grieve for that which might have been a greater grief to you. If he was religious, then remember, he

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is taken "from the evil to come," and placed in his centre of felicity. This lower region is full of gross and hurtful vapours; how happy are those who are mounted, into the celestial orbs! The righteous "is taken away:" in the original it is, "he is gathered;" a wicked child dying is cut off, but the pious child is gathered. Even as we see men gather flowers, and candy them, and preserve them by them; so hath God gathered thy child as a sweet flower, that he may candy it with glory and preserve it by him for ever. Why then should a Christian be discontented? Why should he weep excessively: "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me; but weep for yourselves:" So, could we hear our children speaking to us out of heaven, they would say, "Weep not for us who are happy, we lie upon a soft pillow, even in the bosom of Christ;" "the Prince of Peace" is embracing us, and kissing us "with the kisses of his lips;" be not troubled at our preferment: "Weep

not for us," but weep for yourselves, who are in a sinful, sorrowful world; you are in "the valley of tears," but we are on the "mountain of spices:" we are gotten to our harbour, but you are still tossing upon the waves of inconstancy. O Christian, be not discontented that thou hast parted with such a child, but rather rejoice that thou hadst such a child to part with; break forth into thankfulness: What an honour is it to a parent to beget such a child, that while he lives, increaseth the joy of the glorified angels; and when he dies, increaseth the number of the glorified saints! If God hath taken away one of your children, he hath left you more, he might have stripped you of all: He took away all Job's comforts, his estate, his children; and indeed his wife was left, but as a cross; Satan made a bow of this rib (as Chrysostom speaks) and shot a temptation by her at Job, thinking to have shot him to the heart; "Curse God and die:" but Job had upon him

the breast-plate of integrity ; and though his children were taken away, yet not his graces : still he is content, still he blessed God. O think how many mercies you still enjoy ! yet our base hearts are more discontented at one loss, than thankful for an hundred mercies. God hath plucked one bunch of grapes from you ; but how many precious clusters are left behind !

Obj. But it was my only child, the staff of my age, the seed of my comfort, and the only blossom out of which the honor of an ancient family did grow.

Ans. God hath promised you (if you belong to him) “a name better than of sons and daughters :” Is he dead that should have been the monument to have kept up the name of a family ? God hath given you “a new name,” he hath written your name “in the Book of Life ;” behold your spiritual heraldry ; here is a name that cannot be cut off. Hath God taken away thy only child ? he hath given thee his

only Son: this is a happy exchange. What needs he complain of losses, that hath Christ? He is his Father's brightness, his riches, his delight. Is there enough in Christ to delight the heart of God? and is there not enough in him to ravish us with holy delight? He is wisdom to teach us, righteousness to acquit us, sanctification to adorn us, he is that royal and princely gift; he is the bread of angels, the joy and triumph of saints; he is "all in all;" why then art thou discontented; though thy child be lost, yet thou hast him, for whom all things are loss? And lastly, let us blush to think that nature should seem to outstrip grace. Pulvillus an heathen, when he was about to consecrate a temple to Jupiter, and news was brought him of the death of his son, would not desist from his enterprise, but with much composure of mind, gave order for decent burial.

The second Apology answered.

The second apology that discontent makes is, *'I have a great part of my estate strangely melted away, and trading begins to fail.'*

God is pleased sometimes to bring his children very low, and cut them short in their estate; it fares with them as with that widow who had "nothing in her house save a pot of oil;" but he content.

God hath taken away your estate, but not your portion. This is a sacred paradox. Honour and estate are not part of a Christian's jointure, they are rather accessaries than essentials; and are extrinsical and foreign, therefore the loss of these cannot denominate a man miserable; still the portion remains. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Suppose one were worth a million of money, and he should chance to lose a pin off his sleeve, this is no part of his estate, nor

can we say he is undone: the loss of sublunary comforts, is not so much to a Christian's portion, as the loss of a pin is to a million. "These things shall be added to you;" *adjicientur*, they shall be cast in as overplus: when a man buys a piece of cloth, he hath an inch or two given into the measure: now, though he lose his inch of cloth, yet he is not undone: for still the whole piece remains: our outward estate is not so much in regard of the portion, as an inch of cloth is to the whole piece; why then should a Christian be discontented, when the title to his spiritual treasure remains? a thief may take away all my money that I have about me, but not my land; still a Christian hath a title to the land of promise. "Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her." Perhaps if thy estate had not been lost, thy soul had been lost; outward comforts do often quench inward heat. God cannot bestow a jewel upon us, but we fall so in love

with it, that we forget him that gave it; what pity it is that we should commit idolatry with the creature! God is forced sometimes to drain away an estate: the plate and jewels are often cast over-board to save the passenger. Many a man may curse the time that ever he had such an estate; it hath been an enchantment to draw away his heart from God. Some there are that "will be rich, and they fall into a snare." Art thou troubled that God hath prevented a snare? Riches are thorns: art thou angry that God hath pulled away a thorn from thee? Riches are compared to thick clay: perhaps thy affections, which are at the feet of the soul, might have stuck so fast in this golden clay, that they could not have ascended up to heaven: be content, if God dam up our outward comforts, it is that the stream of our love may run faster another way. If your estate be small, yet God can bless a little. It is not how much money we have, but how much bles-

sing. He that often curseth the bags of gold, can bless the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse. What if thou hast not the full flesh pots? yet thou hast a promise, "I will bless her provision," and then a little goes a great way; be content, thou hast the dew of a blessing distilled: "a dinner of green herbs, where love is," is sweet, I may add, where the love of God is; another may have more estate than you, but more care; more riches, less rest; more revenues, but withal more occasions of expense: he hath a greater inheritance, yet perhaps "God giveth him not power to eat thereof," he hath the dominion of his estate, not the use; he holds more, but enjoys less; in a word thou hast less gold than he, perhaps less guilt. You did never so thrive in your spiritual trade; your heart was never so low, as since your condition was so low; you were never so poor in spirit, never so rich in faith. You did never run the ways of God's commandments so fast as since some

of your golden weights were taken off. You never had such trading for heaven all your life, this is *uberrimus quæstus*. You did never make such adventures upon the promise, as since you left off your sea adventures. This is the best kind of merchandize; O Christian, thou never hadst such incomes of the spirit, such spring-tides of joy; and what though weak in estate, if strong in assurance? Be content; what you have lost one way, you have gained another. Be your losses what they will in this kind, remember in every loss there is only a suffering: but in every discontent there is a sin, and one sin is worse than a thousand sufferings. What? because some of my revenues are gone, shall I part with some of my righteousness? shall my faith and patience go too? because I do not possess an estate, shall I not therefore possess my own spirit? O learn to be content.

The third Apology answered.

The third apology is, *It is sad with me in my relations ; where I should find most comfort, there I have most grief.*

This Apology or Objection branched itself into two particulars ; whereto I shall give a distinct reply :

1. *My child goes on in rebellion ; I fear I have brought forth a child for the devil.*

It is indeed sad to think that hell should be the future abode of any of our children : and certainly the pangs of grief which the mother hath in this kind, are worse than her pangs of travail ; but though you ought to be humbled, yet not discontented : for consider, you may pick something out of your child's undutifulness ; the child's sin is sometimes the parent's sermon : *quod dolet, docet* : the undutifulness of children to us may be a *memento* to put us in mind of our un-

dutifulness once to God. Time was when *we* were rebellious children ; how long did our hearts stand out as garrisons against God ! how long did he parley with us, and beseech us, ere we would yield ! he talked in tenderness of his heart towards us, but we walked in the frowardness of our hearts towards him ; and since grace hath been planted in our souls, how much of the wild olive is still in us ! how many motions of the Spirit do we daily resist ; how many unkindnesses and affronts have we put upon Christ ! Let this open a spring of repentance ; look upon your child's rebellion, and mourn for your own. Though to see him undutiful is your grief, yet not always your sin. Hath a parent given the child not only the milk of the breast, but "the sincere milk of the word ?" Hast thou seasoned his tender years with religious education ? thou canst do no more. Parents can only work knowledge ; God must work grace : they can only lay the wood together ;

it is God must make it burn : a parent can only be a guide to shew his child the way to heaven ; the Spirit of God must be a loadstone to draw his heart into that way. " Am I in God's stead," saith Jacob, " who hath withheld the fruit of the womb ? " can I give children ? So, is a parent in God's stead to give grace ? Who can help it, if a child have the light of conscience, scripture, education, these three torches in his hand, yet runs wilfully into the deep ponds of sin ? Weep for thy child, pray for him ; but do not sin for him, by discontent. Say not, you have brought forth a child for the devil ; God can reduce him ; He hath promised to " turn the hearts of the children to their parents," and to " open springs of grace in the desert : " When any child is going full sail to the devil, God can blow with a contrary wind of his Spirit, and alter his course. When Paul was breathing out persecution against the saints, and was sailing hellward, God turns him another way ;

before he was going to Damascus, God sends him to Ananias; before a persecutor, now a preacher. Though our children are for the present fallen into the devil's pound, God can turn them from the power of Satan, and bring them in at the twelfth hour. Monica was weeping for her son Augustine, at last God gave him in upon prayer, and he became a famous instrument in the church of God.

2. The second branch of the objection is; *But, my husband takes ill courses; where I looked for honey, behold a sting.*

Ans. It is sad to have the living and the dead tied together; yet, let not your heart fret with discontent; mourn for his sin, but do not murmur; for God hath placed you in your relation, and you cannot be discontented but you quarrel with God. What? for every cross that befalls us, shall we call the infinite wisdom of God in question? O the blasphemy of our hearts! God can make you a gainer

by your husband's sin; perhaps you had never been so good, if he had not been so bad. The fire burns hottest in the coldest climate: God often by a divine *Antiperistasis* turns the sins of others to our good and makes our maladies our medicines. The more profane the husband is, oft the more holy the wife grows; the more earthly he is, the more heavenly she grows; God makes sometimes the husband's sin a spur to the wife's grace. His exorbitances are as a pair of bellows to blow up the flame of her zeal and devotion the more. Is it not thus? doth not thy husband's wickedness send thee to prayer? Thou perhaps hadst never prayed so much, if he had not sinned so much: his deadness quickens thee the more, the stone of his heart is a hammer to break thy heart. The apostle saith, "The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband;" but in this sense, the believing wife is sanctified by the unbelieving husband, she grows better; his sin is a whetstone

to her grace, and a medicine for her security.

The fourth Apology answered.

The next apology that discontent makes, is ; *But my friends have dealt very unkindly with me, and proved false.*

Ans. It is sad when a friend proves like a "brook in summer ;" the traveller being parched with heat, comes to the brook, hoping to refresh himself, but the brook is dried up : yet be content. You are not alone, others of the saints have been betrayed by friends ; and when they have leaned upon them, they have been as a foot out of joint. This was true in the type David ; "It was not an enemy reproached me, but it was thou, a man, my equal, my guide and my acquaintance ; we took sweet council together ;" and in the antitype Christ, he was betrayed by a friend ; and why should we think it strange to have the same measure dealt unto us,

as Jesus Christ had? "the servant is not above his master." A Christian may often read his sin in his punishment; hath not he dealt treacherously with God: how oft hath he grieved the Comforter, broken his vows! and through unbelief sided with Satan against God! How oft hath he abused love! taking the jewels of God's mercies, and making a golden calf of them, serving his own lusts! how oft hath he made the free grace of God, which should have been a bolt to keep out sin, rather a key to open the door to it! these wounds hath the Lord received "in the house of his friend." Look upon the unkindness of thy friend, and mourn for thy own unkindness against God: shall a Christian condemn that in another, which he hath been too guilty of himself? Hath thy friend proved treacherous? perhaps you did repose too much confidence in him. If you lay more weight upon an house than the pillars will bear, it must needs break. God saith, "Trust

ye not in a friend ;” perhaps you did put more trust in him, than you did dare to put in God. Friends are as Venice-glasses, we may use them, but if we lean too hard upon them, they will break : behold matter of humility but not of sullenness and discontent. You have a friend in heaven will never fail you. “There is a friend,” saith Solomon, “that sticketh closer than a brother.” Such a friend is God, he is very studious and inquisitive in our behalf ; he hath a debating with himself, a consulting and projecting how he may do us good ; he is the best friend, which may give contentment in the midst of all discourtesies of friends.

Consider, 1. He is a *loving* friend.

“God is love ;” hence he is said sometimes to engrave us “on the palms of his hands,” that we may be never out of his eye ; and to “carry us in his bosom,” near to his heart. There is no stop or stint in his love ; but as the river Nilus, it overflows all the banks :

his love is as far beyond our thoughts, as it is above our deserts. Oh, the infinite love of God, in giving the Son of his love to be made flesh, which was more than if all the angels had been made worms! God in giving Christ to us, gave his very heart to us; here is love pencilled out in all its glory, and engraven as with the point of a diamond. All other love is hatred in comparison of the love of our friend.

2. He is a *careful* friend. "He careth for you."

He minds and transacts our business as his own, he accounts his people's interests and concerns as his interest. He provides for us grace to enrich us, glory to ennoble us: It was David's complaint, "No man cared for my soul:" a Christian hath a friend that cares for him.

3. He is a *prudent* friend.

A friend may sometimes err through ignorance or mistake, and give his friend poison instead of sugar; but "God is wise in heart." He is skilful

as well as faithful ; he knows what our disease is, and what physic is most proper to apply ; he knows what will do us good, and what wind will be best to carry us to heaven.

4. He is a *faithful* friend.

He is faithful in his promises, " In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised. God's people are " children that will not lie ; " but God is a God that *cannot* lie ; he will not deceive the faith of his people ; nay, he cannot : he is called " The Truth ; " he can as well cease to be God, as cease to be true. The Lord may sometimes *change* his promise, as when he converts a temporal promise into a spiritual ; but he can never *break* his promise.

5. He is a *compassionate* friend.

Hence in Scripture we read of " the yearnings of his bowels : " God's friendship is nothing else but compassion ; for there is naturally no affection in us to desire his friendship, nor any goodness in us to deserve it ; the load-stone

is in himself. When we were full of blood, he was full of bowels : when we were enemies, he sent an embassy of peace : when our hearts were turned back from God, his heart was turned towards us. O the tenderness and sympathy of our friend in heaven ! We ourselves have some relentings of heart to those which are in misery ; but it is God who begets all the mercies and bowels that are in us, therefore he is called the “ Father of mercies.”

6. He is a *constant* friend. “ His compassions fail not.”

Friends do often in adversity drop off as leaves in autumn. ‘ *Amici circa sartaginem,*’ as Plutarch saith ; these are rather flatterers than friends : Joab was for a time faithful to king David’s house, he went not after Absalom’s treason, but within a while proved false to the crown, and went after the treason of Adonijah : God is a friend for ever : “ Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.” What though I am despised ! yet God loves me :

What though my friends cast me off ! yet God loves me : he loves to the end, and there is no end of that love. This methinks, in case of discourtesies and unkindnesses, is enough to charm down discontent.

The fifth Apology answered.

The next apology is, *I am under great reproaches*. Let not this discontent ; for, it is a sign there is some good in thee ; *Quid mali feci ?* saith Socrates, what evil have I done, that this bad man commends me ? The applause of the wicked usually denotes some evil, and their censure imports some good. David wept and fasted, and that was “turned to his reproach ;” as we must pass to heaven through the pikes of suffering, so through the clouds of reproach. If your reproach be for God, as David’s was, “For thy sake I have borne reproach ;” then it is rather matter of triumph, than dejection : Christ doth not say, when

you are reproached, 'be discontented;' but 'rejoice.' Wear your reproach as a diadem of honour, for now a "Spirit of glory rests upon you." Put your reproaches into the inventory of your riches; so did Moses. It should be a Christian's ambition to wear his Saviour's livery, though it be sprinkled with blood, and sullied with disgrace. God will do us good by reproach; as David said of Shimei's cursing, "It may be the Lord will requite good for his cursing this day;" this put us upon searching out sin. A child of God labours to read his sin in every stone of reproach that is cast at him; besides, now we have an opportunity to exercise patience and humility. Jesus Christ was content to be reproached for us; "He despised the shame of the cross." It may amaze us to think, that he who was God could endure to be spit upon, to be crowned with thorns in a kind of jeer; and when he was ready to bow his head upon the cross, to have the Jews in scorn wag their heads, and

say, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." The shame of the cross was as much as the blood of the cross : His name was crucified before his body. The sharp arrows of reproach, that the world did shoot at Christ, went deeper into his heart than the spear ; his suffering was so ignominious, that as if the sun did blush to behold, it withdrew its bright beams, and masqued itself with a cloud ; (and well it might, when the Sun of righteousness was in an eclipse ;) all this contumely and reproach did the God of glory endure, or rather despise for us. Oh then, let us be content to have our names eclipsed for Christ ; let not reproach lie at our heart, but let us bind it as a crown about our head. Alas, what is reproach ? this is but small shot, how will men stand in the mouth of the cannon ? those who are discontented at a reproach, will be offended at a faggot. Is not many a man contented to suffer reproach for maintaining his lust ? and shall not we for

maintaining the truth ? Some “glory in that which is their shame :” and shall we be ashamed of that which is our glory ? Be not troubled at these petty things : he whose heart is once divinely touched with the load-stone of God’s Spirit, doth account it his honour to be dishonoured for Christ ; and doth as much despise the world’s censure, as he doth their praise. We live in an age, wherein men dare reproach God himself. The Divinity of the Son of God is blasphemously reproached by the Socinian ; The blessed bible is reproached by the Anti-scripturist, as if it were but a legend of lies, and every man’s faith a fable ; the justice of God is called to the bar of reason by the Arminian ; the wisdom of God in his providential actings, is taxed by the Atheist ; the ordinances of God are decried by the Familist, as being too heavy a burden for a free-born conscience ; and too low and carnal for a sublime seraphic spirit ; the ways of God, which have the majesty of holi-

ness shining in them, are calumniated by the profane; the mouths of men are open against God, as if he were an hard master, and the path of religion too strict and severe. If men cannot give God a good word, shall we be discontented or troubled, that they speak hardly of us? Such as labour to bury the glory of religion, shall we wonder that their throats are open sepulchres, to bury our good name? Oh, let us be contented while we are in God's scouring house, to have our name sullied a little; the blacker we seem to be here, the brighter shall we shine when God hath set us upon the celestial shelf.

The sixth Apology answered.

The sixth Apology that Discontent makes, is disrespect in the world. *I have not that esteem from men, as is suitable to my quality and graces.*

And doth this trouble? Consider, The world is an unequal judge; as it

is full of change, so of partiality. The world gives her respects as she doth her places of preferment, more by favour, often, than desert. Hast thou the ground of real worth in thee? that is best worth that is in him that hath it; honour is in him that gives it; better deserve respect, and not have it, than have it, and not deserve it. Hast thou grace?—God respects thee, and his judgment is best worth prizing. A believer is a person of honour, being “born of God.” “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” Let the world think what they will of you; perhaps in their eyes you are a cast-away; in God’s eyes a dove, a spouse, a jewel. Others account you the dregs and off-scouring of the world, but God will give whole kingdoms for your ransom. Let this content; no matter with what oblique eyes I am looked upon in the world, if I am *rectus in curiâ*, God thinks well of me. It is better that God approve,

than man applaud. The world may put us in their rubric, and God put us in his black book. What is a man the better, that his fellow-prisoners commend him, if his judge condemn him? Oh, labour to keep in with God, prize his love: let my fellow-subjects frown, I am contented, being a favourite of the King of heaven. If we are the children of God, we must look for disrespect; a believer is *in* the world, but not *of* the world; we are here in a pilgrim condition, out of our own country, therefore must not look for the respects and acclamations of the world; it is sufficient that we shall have honour in our own country; it is dangerous to be the world's favourite. Discontent, arising from disrespect, savours too much of pride; an humble Christian hath a lower opinion of himself than others can have of him. He that is taken up about the thoughts of his sins, and how he hath provoked God, he cries out as Agur, "I am more brutish than any man;" and there-

fore is contented, though he be "set with the dogs of the flock." Though he be low in the thoughts of others, yet he is thankful, that he is not laid in "the lowest hell." A proud man sets a high value upon himself; and is angry with others, because they will not come up to his price. Take heed of pride; O had others a window to look into thy breast, (as Crates once expressed it) or did thy heart stand where thy face doth, thou wouldest wonder to have so much respect.

The seventh Apology answered.

The next Apology is, *I meet with very great sufferings for the truth.*

Consider, your sufferings are not so great as your sins: put these two in the balance, and see which weighs heaviest; where sin lies heavy, sufferings lie light. A carnal spirit makes more of his sufferings, and less of his sins; he looks upon one at the great end of the perspective, but upon the other at the

little end of the perspective. The carnal heart cries out, Take away the frogs; but a gracious heart cries, Take away the iniquity. The one saith, Never any one suffered as I have done; but the other saith, Never any one sinned as I have done. Art thou under sufferings? thou hast an opportunity to shew the valour and constancy of thy mind; some of God's saints would have accounted it a great favour, to have been honoured with martyrdom. One said, "I am in prison, till I am in prison;" thou countest that a trouble, which others would have worn as an ensign of their glory. Even those who have gone only upon moral principles, have shewn much constancy and contentment in their sufferings. Curtius being bravely mounted, and in armour, threw himself into a great gulf, that the city of Rome might, according to the oracle, be delivered from the pestilence; and we having a Divine oracle, "that they who kill the body cannot hurt the soul," shall we not with

much constancy and patience devote ourselves to injuries for religion, and rather suffer for the truth, than the truth suffer for us? The *Decii* among the Romans, vowed themselves to death, that their legions and soldiers might be crowned with the honour of the victory. O what we should be content to suffer, to make the truth victorious! Regulus having sworn he would return to Carthage, though he knew there was a furnace heating for him there, yet, not daring to infringe his oath, he did adventure to go: we, then, who are Christians, having made a vow to Christ in baptism, and so oft renewed it in the blessed sacrament, should, with much contentment, rather choose to suffer than violate our sacred oath. Thus the blessed martyrs, with what courage and cheerfulness did they yield up their souls to God? and when the fire was set to their bodies, yet their spirits were not at all fired with passion or discontent. Though others hurt the body, let them not the mind

through discontent; shew by your heroic courage that you are above those troubles which you cannot be without.

The eighth Apology answered.

The next Apology is, *The prosperity of the wicked.*

Ans. I confess it is so, often, that the evil enjoy all the good, and the good endure all the evil. David, though a good man, stumbled at this, and had like to have fallen; well, be contented; for remember, these are not the only things, nor the best things; they are mercies without the pain; these are but acorns with which God feeds swine; you, who are believers, have more choice fruit, the olive, the pomegranate, the fruit, which grows on the true Vine, Jesus Christ; others have the fat of the earth, you have the dew of heaven; they have a south-land, you have those springs of living-water which are clarified with Christ's blood, and indulcorated with his love.

2. To see the wicked flourish, is matter rather of pity than envy; it is all the heaven they must have. "Wo to you rich men, for ye have received your consolation." Hence it was that David made it his solemn prayer, "Deliver me from the wicked, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure. The words, methinks, are David's Litany; from men of the world which have their portion in this life, 'good Lord deliver me.' When the wicked have eaten of their dainty dishes, there comes in a sad reckoning which will spoil all. Oh, remember, for every sand of mercy that runs out to the wicked, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial. Therefore as that soldier said to his fellow, 'Do you envy me my grapes? they cost me dear, I must die for them.' So I say, Do you envy the wicked? alas, their prosperity is like Haman's banquet before execution. If a man were to be hanged, would one envy

to see him walk to the gallows through pleasant fields, and fine galleries, or to see him go up the ladder in cloth of gold? The wicked may flourish in their bravery awhile; but, "when they flourish as the grass, it is, that they shall be destroyed for ever." This proud grass shall be mown down. Whatever a sinner enjoys, he hath a curse with it; and shall we envy? The long furrows in the backs of the godly, have a *seed of blessing* in them, when the table of the wicked becomes a snare, and their honour their downfall.

The ninth Apology answered.

2. The next apology that discontent makes for itself, is the evil of the times. *The times are full of Heresy and Impiety, and this is that which troubles me.*

This Apology consists of two branches; and,

1. *The times are full of heresy.*

This is indeed sad, when the devil cannot by violence destroy the church, he endeavours to poison it; when he cannot with Samson's fox-tails set the corn on fire, then he sows tares; as he labours to destroy the peace of the church by division, so the truth of it by error; we may cry out with Seneca, *Verè vivimus in temporum fœcibus*, we live in times wherein there is a sluice open to all novel opinions, and every man's opinion is his Bible. Well, this may make us mourn, but let us not murmur through discontent.

Consider, error makes a discovery of men.

1. *Bad men*: Error discovers such as are tainted and corrupt. When the leprosy brake forth in the forehead, then was the leper discovered. Error is a spiritual bastard; the devil is the father, and pride the mother; you never knew an erroneous man, but he was a proud man; now, it is good that such men should be laid open; to the intent, first, that God's righteous judg-

ments upon them may be adored; secondly, that others who are free, be not infected. If a man have the plague, it is well it breaks forth; for my part I would avoid an heretic as I would avoid the devil, for he is sent on his errand. I appeal to you, if there were a tavern in this city, where under a pretence of selling wine, many hogs-heads of poison were to be sold, were it not well that others should know of it, that they might not buy? It is good that those who have poisoned opinions should be known, that the people of God may not come near either the scent or taste of that poison.

2. *Good men* : Error is a touch-stone to discover good men; it tries the gold : "There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest." Thus our love to Christ, and zeal for truth, doth appear. God shews who are the living fish, *viz.* such as swim against the stream; who are the sound sheep, *viz.* such as feed in the green pastures of the ordinances ;

who are the doves, *viz.* such as live in the best air, where the Spirit breathes. God sets a garland of honour upon these; "These are they which came out of great tribulation." So, these are they that have opposed the errors of the times; these are they that have preserved the virginity of their conscience; who have kept their judgment sound, and their heart soft. God will have a trophy of honour set upon some of his saints; they shall be renowned for their sincerity, being like the cypress, which keeps its greenness and freshness in the winter season.

Be not sinfully discontented; for God can make the errors of the church advantageous to truth. Thus the truths of God have come to be more beaten out and confirmed; as it is in law, one man laying a false title to a piece of land, the true title hath by this means been the more searched into and ratified; some had never so studied to defend the truth by Scripture, if others had not endeavoured to overthrow it by so-

phistry ; all the mists and fogs of error that have risen out of the bottomless pit, have made the glorious sun of truth to shine so much the brighter. Had not Arius and Sabellius broached those damnable errors, the truth of those questions about the blessed Trinity had never been so much discussed and defended by Athanasius, Augustine, and others ; had not the devil brought in so much of his princely darkness, the champions for truth had never run so fast to Scripture to light their lamps. So that God who hath "a wheel within a wheel," over-rules these things wisely, and turns them to the best. Truth is an heavenly plant that settles by shaking.

God raiseth the price of his truth the more ; the very shreds and filings of truth are venerable. When there is much counterfeit metal abroad, we prize the true gold the more : the pure wine of truth is never more precious, than when unsound doctrines are broached and vented.

Error makes us more thankful to God for the jewel of truth. When you see another infected with the plague, how thankful are you that God hath freed you from the infection! when we see others have the leprosy in the head, how thankful are we to God, that he hath not given us over to believe a lie, and so be damned! It is a good use that may be made even of the error of the times, when it makes us more humble and thankful, adoring the free grace of God, who hath kept us from drinking of that deadly poison.

II. The second branch of the Apology that discontent makes, is the impiety of the times. *I live and converse among the profane; "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!"*

It is indeed sad to be mixed with the wicked: David "beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;" and Lot (who was a bright star in a dark night) was vexed, or as the word in the ori-

ginal may bear, "wearied out with the unclean conversation of the wicked;" he made the sins of *Sodom* spears to pierce his own soul; we ought (if there be any spark of divine love in us) to be very sensible of the sins of others, and to have our hearts bleed for them; yet let us not break forth in murmuring or discontent, knowing that God in his providence hath permitted it, and surely not without some reasons; for the Lord makes the wicked an hedge to defend the godly; the wise God often makes those who are wicked and peaceable, a means to safeguard his people from those who are wicked and cruel. . The king of Babylon kept Jeremy, and gave special order for his looking to, that he did want nothing. God sometimes makes brazen sinners to be brazen walls to defend his people. God doth interline and mingle the wicked with the godly, that the godly may be a means to save the wicked: such is the "beauty of holiness," that it hath a magnetical force in it, to allure and draw even the

wicked. Sometimes God makes a believing husband a means to convert an unbelieving wife, and *contra*: "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The godly, living among the wicked, by their prudent advice and pious example, have won them to the embracing of religion: if there were not some godly among the wicked, how, in a probable way, without a miracle, can we imagine that the wicked should be converted? Those who are now shining saints in heaven, "sometimes served diverse lusts." Paul once a persecutor; Augustine once a Manichee; Luther once a monk; but by the severe and holy carriage of the godly, were converted to the faith.

The tenth Apology answered.

The next Apology that Discontent makes, is lowness of parts and gifts.

I cannot, saith the Christian, dis-

course with that fluency, nor pray with that elegance as others.

Answ. Grace is beyond Gifts ; Thou comparest thy grace with another's gifts, there is a vast difference ! Grace without gifts is infinitely better than gifts without grace ; in religion, the vitals are best ; Gifts are more intrinsic and common work of the Spirit, which is incident to reprobates ; grace is a more distinguishing work, and is a jewel hung only upon the elect. Hast thou the "seed of God," the "holy anointing ?" be content.

I. Thou sayest thou canst not discourse with that fluency as others.

Answ. Experiments in religion are beyond notions, and impressions beyond expressions. Judas, no doubt, could make a learned discourse of Christ, but well fared the woman in the gospel, that felt virtue coming out of him. A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue. There is as much difference between gifts and grace, as between a tulip painted on

the wall, and one growing in the garden.

II. Thou sayest, thou canst not pray with that elegance as others.

Ans. Prayer is a matter more of the heart than the head. In prayer it is not so much fluency prevails, as fervency; nor is God so much taken with the elegance of speech, as the efficacy of the Spirit. Humility is better than volubility; here the mourner is the orator; sighs and groans are the best rhetoric.

Be not discontented; for, God doth usually proportion a man's parts to the place where he calls him: some are set in a higher sphere and function, their place requires more parts and abilities; but the most inferior member is useful in its place, and shall have a power delegated for the discharge of its peculiar office.

The eleventh Apology answered.

The next Apology is, the troubles of

the Church. *Alas, my disquiet and discontent is not so much for myself as the public. The church of God suffers.*

Answ. I confess it is sad, and we ought for this "to hang our harp upon the willow;" he is a wooden leg in Christ's body, that is not sensible of the state of the body. As a Christian must not be *proud* flesh, so neither *dead* flesh. When the church of God suffers, he must sympathise; Jeremiah wept for the virgin daughter of Sion. We must feel our brethren's hard cords through our soft beds: in music, if one string be touched all the rest sound; when God strikes upon our brethren, "our bowels must sound as an harp;" be sensible, but do not give way to discontent. For consider,—God sits at the stern of his church; sometimes it is as a ship tossed upon the waves, "O thou afflicted and tossed;" but cannot God bring this ship to heaven, though it meet with a storm upon the sea? The ship in the gospel was

tossed, because sin was in it, but it was not overwhelmed, because Christ was in it. Christ is in the ship of his church, fear not sinking; the church's anchor is cast in heaven. Do not we think God loves his church, and takes as much care of it as we can? The names of the twelve tribes were on Aaron's breast; signifying how near to God's heart his people are: they are his portion, and shall that be lost? His glory, and shall that be finally eclipsed? No, certainly. God can deliver his church, not only from but by opposition. The church's pangs shall help forward her deliverance. God hath always propagated religion by sufferings. The foundation of the Church hath been laid in blood, and these sanguine showers have ever made it more fruitful. Cain put the knife to Abel's throat, and ever since the Church's veins have bled; but she is like the vine, which by bleeding grows; and like the palm-tree, which may have this motto, *Percussa resurgit*, the

more weight is laid upon it, the higher it riseth. The holiness and patience of the Saints under their persecutions, hath much added both to the growth of religion and the crown. Basil and Tertullian observe of the primitive martyrs, that divers of the heathens seeing their zeal and constancy, turned Christians. Religion is that Phoenix which hath always revived and flourished in the ashes of holy men: Isaiah sawn asunder; Peter crucified at Jerusalem with his head downwards; Cyprian bishop of Carthage, Polycarp of Smyrna, both martyred for religion: yet evermore the truth hath been sealed by blood, and gloriously dispersed; whereupon Julian did forbear to persecute, *non ex clementia, sed invidia*; not out of pity, but envy; because the church grew so fast, and multiplied, as Nazianzen well observes.

The twelfth Apology answered.

The twelfth Apology that discontent

makes for itself, is this: *It is not my trouble that troubles me, but it is my Sins that do disquiet and discontent.*

Ans. Be sure it be so; do not prevaricate with God and thy own soul: in true mourning for sin, when the present suffering is removed, yet the sorrow is not removed; but suppose the apology be real, and sin is the ground of your discontent, yet I answer, A man's disquiet about sin may be beyond its bounds in these three cases.—When it is *disheartening*; that is, when it sets up sin above mercy. If Israel had only pored upon their sting, and not looked up to the brazen serpent, they had never been healed. That sorrow for sin which drives us away from God, is not without sin; for there is more despair in it than remorse: the soul hath so many tears in its eyes that it cannot see Christ. Sorrow as sorrow doth not save (that were to make a Christ of our tears), but is useful as it is preparatory in the soul, making sin vile, and Christ precious.

Oh, look to the Lord Jesus, thou sin-bitten soul; a sight of his blood will revive; the medicine of his merits is broader than our sore!

It is Satan's policy, either to keep us from seeing our sins; or, if we will needs see them, that we may be "swallowed up of sorrow:" either he would stupify us, or affright us; either keep the glass of the law from our eyes, or else pencil out our sins in such crimson colours, that we may sink in the quick sands of despair.—When sorrow is *in-disposing*, it untunes the heart for prayer, meditation, holy conference; it cloisters up the soul: this is not sorrow, but rather sullenness, and doth render a man not so much penitential as cynical.—When it is *out of season*; God bids us rejoice, and we "hang our harps upon the willows;" he bids us trust, and we cast ourselves down, and are brought even to the margin of despair. If Satan cannot keep us from mourning, he will be sure to put us upon it when it is least in season.

When God calls us in a special manner to be thankful for mercy, and put on our white robes, then Satan will be putting us into mourning, and instead of a garment of praise, clothe us with a spirit of heaviness; so God loseth the acknowledgment of a mercy, and we the comfort.

If thy sorrow hath turned and fitted thee for Christ, if it hath raised in thee high prizings of him, strong hungerings after him, sweet delight in him; this is as much as God requires, and a Christian doth but sin to vex and torture himself farther upon the rack of his own discontent.

And thus I hope I have answered the most material objections and apologies which this sin of discontent doth make for itself. I see no reason why a Christian should be discontented unless for his discontent. Let me in the next place propound something which may be both as a loadstone and a whetstone to contentment.

And so I proceed to the Arguments or motives that may quicken to contentment.

The first Argument to Contentment.

Consider the excellency of it.—Contentment is a flower that doth not grow in every garden; it teacheth a man how in the midst of want to abound. You would think it were excellent if I could prescribe a receipt or antidote against poverty; but behold, here is that which is more excellent, for a man to want, and yet have enough; this alone contentment of spirit brings. Contentment is a remedy against all our troubles, a *levamen* to all our burdens; It is the *cure of care*.

Contentment, though it be not properly a grace (it is rather a disposition of mind), yet in it there is *optimum temperamentum*, a happy temperature and mixture of all the graces: it is a most precious compound, which is made up of Faith, Patience, Meekness,

Humility, &c. which are the ingredients put into it. Now there are these seven rare excellencies in contentment.

I. A contented Christian *carries heaven about him* : for what is heaven, but that sweet repose and full contentment that the soul shall have in God? In contentment there is the first-fruits of heaven.

There are two things in a contented spirit which makes it like heaven.

1. *God is there* : Something of God is to be seen in that heart. A discontented Christian is like a rough tempestuous sea ; when the water is rough you can see nothing there ; but when it is smooth and serene, then you may behold your face in the water : when the heart rageth through discontent, it is like a rough sea ; you can see nothing there unless passion and murmuring ; there is nothing of God ; nothing of heaven in that heart : but by virtue of contentment, it is like the sea when it is smooth and calm,

there is a face shining there ; you may see something of Christ in that heart, a representation of all the graces.

2. *Rest is there* : Oh, what a sabbath is kept in a contented heart ! what a heaven ! A contented Christian is like Noah in the ark ; though it were tossed with waves, Noah could sit and sing in the ark. The soul that is gotten into the ark of contentment sits quiet, and sails above all the waves of trouble ; he can sing in this spiritual ark. The wheels of the chariot move, but the axle-tree stirs not : the circumference of the heavens is carried about the earth, but the earth moves not out of its centre. When we meet with motion and change in the creatures round about us, a contented spirit is not stirred or moved out of its centre. The sails of a mill move with the wind, but the mill itself stands still : an emblem of contentment. When our outward estate moves with the wind of Providence, yet the heart is settled through holy contentment ; and

when others are like quicksilver, shaking and trembling through disquiet, the contented spirit can say as David, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed;" what is this but a piece of heaven!

II. Whatever is defective in the creature is made up in *Contentment*. A Christian may want the comforts that others have, the land and possessions; but God hath distilled into his heart that contentment which is far better: in this sense is that of Matt. xix. 29. "He shall have in this life an hundred fold." Perhaps he that ventures all for Christ never hath his house or land again; but God gives him a *contented spirit*, and this breeds such joy in the soul as is infinitely sweeter than all his houses and lands which he left for Christ. It was sad with David, in respect to outward comforts, he being driven, as some think, from his kingdom; yet in regard of the sweet contentment which he found in God, he had more comfort

than men use to have in time of harvest and vintage. One man hath house and lands to live upon; another hath nothing, only a small trade, yet even that brings in a livelihood. A Christian may have little in the world, but he drives the trade of contentment, and so he knows as well how to want as to abound. Oh, the rare art, or rather miracle of contentment! Wicked men are often disquieted in the enjoyment of all things; the contented Christian is well in the want of all things.

Quest. But how comes a Christian to be contented in the deficiency of outward comforts?

Answer. A Christian finds contentment distilled out of the breasts of the promises: he is poor in purse, but rich in promise. There is one promise brings much sweet contentment into the soul; "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." If the thing we desire be good for us, we shall have it; if it be not good, then the not having it is good for us. The

resting satisfied with this promise gives contentment.

III. Contentment makes a man in tune to serve-God ; it oils the wheels of the soul, and makes it more agile and nimble ; it composes the heart ; and makes it fit for prayer, meditation, &c. How can he that is in a passion of grief or discontent serve God without distraction ? Contentment doth prepare and tune the heart. First you prepare the viol, and wind up the strings, ere you play a fit of music. When a Christian's heart is wound up to this heavenly frame of contentment, then it is fit for duty. A discontented Christian is like Saul, when the evil spirit came upon him. Oh, what jarrings and discords doth he make in prayer ! When an army is put into disorder, now it is not fit for battle : when the thoughts are scattered and distracted about the cares of this life, a man is not fit for devotion. Discontent takes the heart wholly off from God, and fixeth it upon the present trouble, so

that a man's mind is not upon his prayer, but upon his cross.

Discontent doth disjoint the soul; and it is impossible now that a Christian should go so steadily and cheerfully in God's service. Oh, how lame is his devotion! The discontented person gives God but half a duty; his religion is nothing but bodily exercise, it wants a soul to animate it. David would not offer that to God, which cost him nothing: where there is too much worldly care, there is too little spiritual cost in a duty. The discontented person doth his duties by halves; he is just like Ephraim, "a cake not turned;" he is a cake baked on one side: he gives God the outside, but not the spiritual part; his heart is not in duty; he is baked on one side, but the other side dough; and what profit is there of such raw indigested services? He that gives God only the skin of worship, what can he expect more than the shell of comfort? Contentment brings the heart into frame;

and then only do we give God the flower and spirits of a duty, when the soul is composed: now a Christian doth *rem agere*, his heart is intense and serious. There are some duties which we cannot perform as we ought without contentment: as,—*To rejoice in God*. How can he rejoice that is discontented? He is fitter for repining than rejoicing.—*To be thankful for mercy*. Can a discontented person be thankful? He can be fretful, not thankful.—*To justify God in his proceedings*. How can he do this who is discontented with his condition? He will sooner censure God's wisdom, than clear his justice. Oh, then, how excellent is contentment, which doth prepare, and as it were string the heart for duty! Contentment doth indeed not only make our duties lively and agile, but acceptable. It is this that puts beauty and worth into them, for contentment settles the soul. Now, as it is with milk, when it is always stirring, you can make nothing of it,

but let it settle awhile, and then it turns to cream : so when the heart is overmuch stirred with disquiet and discontent, you can make nothing of those duties ; how thin, how fletten and jejune are they ! but when the heart is once settled by holy contentment, now there is some worth in our duties, now they turn to cream.

IV. Contentment is the spiritual arch or pillar of the soul ; it fits a man to bear burdens : he whose heart is ready to sink under the least sin, by virtue of this hath a spirit invincible under sufferings. A contented Christian is like the camomile, the more it is trodden upon the more it grows : as physic works diseases out of the body, so doth contentment work trouble out of the heart : thus it argues ; If I am under reproach, God can vindicate me : if I am in want, God can relieve me. “ Ye shall not see wind nor rain ; yet the valley shall be filled with water.” Thus holy contentment keeps the heart from fainting ; in the autumn, when

the fruit and leaves are blown off, still there is sap in the root: When there is an autumn upon our external felicity, and the leaves of our estate drop off; still there is the sap of contentment in the heart, and a Christian hath life inwardly when his outward comforts do not blossom. The contented heart is never out of heart. Contentment is a golden shield that doth beat back discouragements. Humility is like to the net, which keeps the soul down, when it is rising through passion; and contentment is the cork which keeps the heart up when it is sinking through discouragement. Contentment is the great under-propper; it is like the beam which bears whatever weight is laid upon it: nay, it is like a rock that breaks the waves.

It is strange to observe the same affliction lying upon two men; how differently they carry themselves under it! The contented Christian is like Samson, that carried away the gates of the city upon his back; he

can go away with his cross cheerfully, and makes nothing of it : the other is like Issachar couching down under his burden : the reason is, the one is content and that breeds courage ; the other discontented, and that breeds fainting. Discontent swells the grief, and grief breaks the heart. When this sacred sinew of contentment begins to shrink, we go limping under our afflictions. We know not what burdens God may exercise us with ; let us therefore preserve contentment ; as our contentment, such will be our courage. David with his five stones and his sling, defied Goliath, and overcame him. Get but contentment into the sling of your heart, and with this sacred stone you may both defy the world and conquer it ; you may break those afflictions which else will break you.

V. A fifth excellency is, contentment prevents many sins and temptations.

It prevents many sins. Where there wants contentment, there wants no sin ; discontentedness with our con-

dition is a sin that doth not go alone, but is like the first link of the chain, which draws all the other links along with it. In particular, there are two sins which contentment prevents—*impatience* and *murmuring*.

Discontent and impatience are two twins; "This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?" As if God were so tied, that he must give us the mercy just when we desire. Impatience is no small sin, as will appear if you consider whence it ariseth: As, 1.—It is for want of faith. Faith gives a right notion of God; it is an intelligent grace; it believes that God's wisdom tempers, and his love sweetens all ingredients; this works patience: "Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me?" Impatience is the daughter of Infidelity. If a patient hath an ill opinion of the physician, and conceits that he comes to poison him, he will take none of his receipts. When we have a prejudice against God, and conceit that he comes

to kill us, and undo us, then we storm, and cry out through impatience. We are like a foolish man (it is Chrysostom's simile) that cries out, 'Away with the plaster,' though it be in order to a cure; is it not better that the plaster cause a little smart, than the wound fester and rankle? 2.—Impatience is for want of love to God. We will bear his reproofs whom we love, not only patiently, but thankfully. "Love thinks no evil." It puts the fairest and most candid gloss upon the actions of a friend; "Love covers evil." If it were possible for God in the least manner to err, (which were blasphemy to think,) love would cover that error; love takes every thing in the best sense; it makes us bear any stroke, "It endureth all things;" had we love to God, we should have patience. 3.—Impatience is for want of humility. The impatient man was never humbled under the burden of sin; he that studies his sins, the innumerable number of them, how they are twisted together,

and sadly accented, is patient, and saith, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." The greater noise drowns the lesser: when the sea roars, the rivers are still; he that lets his thoughts expatiate about sin, is both silent and amazed, he wonders it is no worse with him. How great then is this sin of impatience! and how excellent is contentment, which is a supersedeas or counterpoison against this sin! The contented Christian believing that God doth all in love, is patient, and hath not one word to say, unless to justify God. That is the first sin which contentment prevents.

It also prevents *murmuring*; a sin which is a degree higher than the other: murmuring is a quarrelling with God, and inveighing against him; "They speak against God;" the murmurer saith interpretatively, that God hath not dealt well with him, and he hath deserved better from him. The murmurer chargeth God with folly:

this is the language, or rather blasphemy of a murmuring spirit; God might have been a wiser and a better God. The murmurer is a mutineer. The Israelites are called in the same text murmurers and rebels; and is not "rebellion as the sin of witchcraft?" Thou that art a murmurer, art in the account of God as a witch, a sorcerer, as one that deals with the devil. This is a sin of the first magnitude: murmuring oft ends in cursing: Micah's mother fell to cursing when the talents of silver were taken away. So doth the murmurer when a part of his estate is taken away: our murmuring is the devil's music; this is that sin which God cannot bear; "How long shall I bear with this people that murmur against me?" It is a sin which whets the sword against a people; it is a land-destroying sin; "Murmur ye not as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." It is a ripening sin; this without God's mercy, will hasten England's funerals.

Oh, then how excellent is contentment, which prevents this sin ! To be contented, and yet murmur, is a solecism : a contented Christian doth acquiesce in his present condition, and doth not murmur, but admire. Herein appears the excellency of contentment, it is a spiritual antidote against sin.

Contentment prevents many temptations ; discontent is a devil that is always tempting : 1. It puts a man upon indirect means : he that is poor and discontented will attempt any thing ; he will go to the devil for riches ; he that is proud and discontented will hang himself, as Ahithophel did when his counsel was rejected. Satan takes great advantage of our discontent ; he loves to fish in these troubled waters. Discontent doth both eclipse reason and weaken faith ; and it is Satan's policy, he doth usually break over the hedge where it is weakest. Discontent makes a breach in the soul, and usually at this breach the devil enters by a temptation and storms the soul. How easily

can the devil by his logic dispute a discontented Christian into sin. He forms such a syllogism as this : he that is in want must study self-preservation ; but you are now in want, therefore you ought to study self-preservation. Hereupon to make good his conclusion, he tempts to the forbidden fruit, not distinguishing between what is needful and what is lawful. What ? saith he, dost thou want a livelihood ? never be such a fool as starve : take the rising side at a venture, be it good or bad ; “eat the bread of deceit, and drink the wine of violence.” Thus you see how the discontented man is a prey to that sad temptation, “to steal and take God’s name in vain.” Contentment is a shield against temptation ; for he that is contented, knows as well how to want as to abound.

He will not sin to get a living ; though the bill of fare grows short, he is content. He lives as the birds of the air, upon God’s providence, and doubts

not but he shall have enough to pay his passage to heaven.

4. Discontent tempts a man to atheism and apostacy; sure there is no God to take care of things here below; would he suffer them to be in want who have walked mournfully before him? saith discontent, Throw off Christ's livery, desist from thy religion. Thus Job's wife, being discontented with her condition, saith to her husband, "Dost thou still retain thy integrity;" as if she had said, Dost thou not see, Job, what is become of all thy religion; "thou fearest God and eschewest evil," and what art thou the better? See how God turns his hand against thee; he hath smitten thee in thy body, estate, relations, and dost thou still retain thy integrity? what? still devout? still weep and pray before him? Thou fool, cast off religion, turn atheist. Here was a sore temptation that the devil did hand over to Job by his discontented wife; only His grace as a golden shield did ward off the blow from his heart: "Thou

speakest as one of the foolish women." What profit is it saith the discontented person, to serve the Almighty? Those that never trouble themselves about religion are the prosperous men; and I in the mean while suffer want; as good give over driving the trade of religion, if this be all my reward. This is a sore temptation, and oft prevails; atheism is the fruit that grows out of the blossom of discontent.

Oh, then, behold the excellency of contentment! It doth repel this temptation. If God be mine, saith the contented spirit, it is enough; though I have no lands or tenements, his smile makes heaven: "His loves are better than wine;" "Better is the gleanings of Ephraim, than the vintage of Abiezer;" I have little in hand, but much in hope; my livelihood is short, but this is his promise, "even eternal life." I am pursued by malice; but better is persecuted godliness than prosperous wickedness. Thus divine contentment

is a spiritual antidote both against sin and temptation.

VI. Contentment sweetens every condition. Christ turned the water into wine; so contentment turns the water of Marah into spiritual wine: Have I but little? yet it is more than I can deserve or challenge; this modicum is in mercy; it is the fruit of Christ's blood; it is the legacy of free grace; a small present sent from a king is highly valued. This little I have is with a good conscience. It is not stolen water; guilt hath not muddied or poisoned it; it runs pure. This little is a pledge of more; this bit of bread, is an earnest of that bread which I shall eat in the kingdom of God. This little water in the cruse, is an earnest of that heavenly nectar, which shall be distilled from the true vine. Do I meet with some crosses? my comfort is if they be heavy I have not far to go; I shall but carry my cross to Golgotha, and there I shall leave it: my cross is light in regard of the weight of glory.

Hath God taken away my comforts from me? It is well, the Comforter still abides. Thus contentment as an honey-comb, drops sweetness into every condition. Discontent is a leaven that sours every comfort, it puts aloes and wormwood upon the breast of the creature, it lessens every mercy, it trebles every cross; but the contented spirit sucks sweetness from every flower of providence; it can make a treacle of poison. Contentment is full of consolation.

VII. Contentment hath this excellency, it is the best commentator upon providence, it makes a fair interpretation of all God's dealings: let the providence of God be never so dark or bloody; contentment doth construe them ever in the best sense. I may say of it as the apostle, of charity, "It thinketh no evil." Sickness, saith contentment, is God's furnace to refine his gold, and make it sparkle the more; the prison is an oratory, or house of prayer. What if God melts away the

creature from me ? he saw perhaps my heart grew too much in love with it ; had I been long in that fat pasture, I should have surfeited ; and the better my estate had been, the worse my soul had been. God is wise ; he hath done this, either to prevent some sin, or to exercise some grace. What a blessed frame of heart is this ? A contented Christian is an advocate for God against unbelief and impatience ; whereas discontent takes every thing from God in the worst sense ; it doth implead and censure God ; this evil I feel is but a symptom of greater evil ; God is about to undo me ; “ The Lord hath brought us hither into the wilderness to slay us.” The contented soul takes all well ; and when his condition is never so bad, he can say, “ Yet God is good.”

The second Argument to Contentment.

The second Argument or motive to contentment is, a Christian hath that which may make him content. Hath

not God given thee Christ? in him there are "unsearchable riches." He is such a golden mine of wisdom and grace, that all the saints and angels can never dig to the bottom; as Seneca said to his friend Polybius, 'Never complain of thy hard fortune as long as Cæsar is thy friend;' so I say to a believer, Never complain as long as Christ is thy friend; he is an enriching pearl, a sparkling diamond; the infinite lustre of his merits makes us shine in God's eyes; in him there is both fulness and sweetness; he is *ineffabile bonum*. Screw up your thoughts to the highest, stretch them to the utmost, let them expatiate to their full latitude and extent, yet they will fall infinitely short of those ineffable and inexhaustible treasures which are locked up in Jesus Christ; and is not here enough to give the soul content? A Christian that wants necessities, yet having Christ, he hath "the one thing needful."

Thy soul is exercised and enamelled

with the graces of the Spirit, and is not here enough to give contentment? Grace is of a divine birth; it is the new plantation; it is flower of the heavenly paradise; it is the embroidery of the Spirit; it is "the seed of God;" it is the sacred unction: it is Christ's portraiture in the soul; it is the very foundation on which the superstructure of glory is laid. Oh! of what infinite value is grace! what a jewel is faith! Well may it be called precious faith! What is love, but a divine sparkle in the soul? a soul beautified with grace, is like a room richly hung with tapestry, or the firmament bespangled with glittering stars. These are the true riches, which cannot stand with reprobation, and is not here enough to give the soul contentment? What are all other things but like the wings of a butterfly? curiously painted, but they defile our fingers. 'Earthly riches, saith Augustine, are full of poverty,' so indeed they are. For, 1. They cannot enrich the soul; oftentimes

under silken apparel, there is a threadbare soul. 2. These are corruptible : " Riches are not for ever," as the wise man saith. Heaven is a place where gold and silver will not go ; a believer is " rich towards God," why then art thou discontented ? hath not God given thee that which is better than the world ? What, if he doth not give thee the box, if he gives thee the jewel ? What, if he denies thee farthings, if he pays thee in a better coin ? he gives thee gold, viz. spiritual mercies. What, if the water in the bottle be spent ; thou hast enough in the fountain : what needs he complain of the world's emptiness, that hath God's fulness ? " The Lord is my portion," saith David, then let the lines fall where they will, in a sick bed, or prison ; I will say, " The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea I have a goodly heritage." 3. Art thou not heir to all the promises ? hast thou not a reversion of heaven ? when thou lettest go thy hold of natural life, art thou not sure of eternal life ? hath

not God given thee the earnest and first fruits of glory? is not here enough to work the heart to contentment?

The third Argument to Contentment.

The third argument is, *Be content*, for else we confute our own prayers; we pray, "Thy will be done:" it is the will of God that we should be in such a condition; he hath decreed it, and he sees it best for us: why then do we murmur, and are discontented at that which we pray for? either we are not in good earnest in our prayer, which argues hypocrisy; or else we contradict ourselves, which argues folly.

The fourth Argument to Contentment.

The fourth argument to contentment is, because now God hath his end, and Satan misseth of his end.

1. *God hath his end.* God's end in all his cross providences, is to bring

the heart to submit and be content; and indeed this pleaseth God much; he loves to see his children satisfied with what portion he doth carve and allot them. It contents him to see us contented: therefore let us acquiesce in God's Providence; now God hath his end.

2. *Satan misseth of his end.* The end why the devil (though by God's permission) did smite Job, in his body and estate, was to perplex his mind; he did vex his body on purpose, that he might disquiet his spirit. - He hoped to bring Job into a fit of discontent; and then, that he would in a passion break forth against God; but Job being so well contented with his condition, as that he falls to blessing of God, he did now disappoint Satan of his hope. "The Devil shall cast some of you into prison." Why doth the devil throw us into prison? It is not so much the hurting of our body, as the molesting our mind that he aims at; he would imprison our contentment,

and disturb the regular motion of our souls; this is the design. It is not so much putting us into prison, as the putting us into a passion, that he attempts; but by holy contentment, Satan loseth his prey, he misseth of his end. The devil hath oft deceived us; the best way to deceive him, is by contentment in the midst of temptation; our contentment will discontent Satan. Oh, let us not gratify our enemy! Discontent is the devil's delight; now it is as he would have it; he loves to warm himself at the fire of our passions. Repentance is the joy of the angels, and discontent is the joy of devils. As the devil danceth at discord so he sings at discontent. The fire of our passions makes the devil a bonfire; it is a kind of heaven to him to see us torturing ourselves with our own troubles; but by holy contentment we frustrate him of his purpose, and do as it were put him out of countenance.

The fifth Argument to Contentment.

The next argument is, by contentment a Christian gets a victory over himself: for a man to be able to rule his own spirit, this of all others is the most noble conquest. Passion denotes weakness; to be discontented, is suitable to flesh and blood; but to be in every state content; reproached, yet content; imprisoned, yet content; this is above nature; this is some of that holy valour and chivalry, which only a divine spirit is able to infuse. In the midst of the affronts of the world to be patient, and in the changes of the world to have the spirit calmed; this is a conquest worthy indeed of the garland of honour. Holy Job divested and turned out of all, leaving his scarlet, and embracing the dunghill, (a sad catastrophe!) yet he had learned contentment. It is said, "He fell upon the ground and worshipped." One would have thought he should have

fallen upon the ground and blasphemed ; no, he fell and worshipped. He adored God's justice and holiness. Behold the strength of grace ! here was an humble submission, yet a noble conquest ; he got the victory over himself. It is no great matter for a man to yield to his own passions ; this is facile and feminine ; but to content himself in denying of himself, this is sacred.

The sixth Argument to Contentment.

The sixth great argument to work the heart to contentment, is the consideration that all God's providences, how cross or bloody soever, shall do a believer good ; "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Not only all good things, but all evil things work for good ; and shall we be discontented at that which works for our good ?

What if sickness, poverty, reproach, law-suits, &c. do unite and muster their forces against us ? All shall work

for good; our maladies shall be our medicines: and shall we repine at that which shall undoubtedly do us good? "Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness." Affliction may be baptized Marah; it is bitter but physical. Because this is so full of comfort, and may be a most excellent Catholicon against discontent, I shall a little expatiate.

Quest. It will be inquired how the evils of afflictions work for good?

I answer, Several ways.

I. They are *disciplinary*; they teach us. The Psalmist having very elegantly described the Church's trouble, in Psalm lxxiv. prefixeth this title to the Psalm, *למנוחה* which signifies a psalm giving instruction; that which seals up instruction, works for good. God puts us sometimes under the black rod; but it is a rod of discipline; "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." God makes our adversity our university: affliction is a preacher, "Blow the trumpet in Tekoah," Jer. vi. 1.

The trumpet was to preach to the people, as appears, ver. 6. "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem." Sometimes God speaks to the minister, to lift up his voice like a trumpet; and here he speaks to the trumpet, to lift up its voice like a minister.

1. Afflictions teach us *humility*; commonly prosperous and proud, corrections are God's corrosives, to eat out the proud flesh. Jesus Christ is "a lily of the vallies;" he dwells in a humble heart; God brings us into the valley of tears, that he may bring us into the valley of humility; "remembering my affliction, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." When men are grown high, God hath no better way with them, than to brew them a cup of wormwood. Afflictions are compared to thorns. God's thorns are to prick the bladder of pride. Suppose a man run at another with a sword to kill him, accidentally it only lets out his imposthume: this

does him good. God's sword is to let out the imposthume of pride: and shall that which makes us humble, make us discontented?

2. Afflictions teach us *repentance*: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." Repentance is the precious fruit that grows upon the cross. When the fire is put under the still the water drops from the roses; fiery afflictions make the waters of repentance drop and distil from the eyes; and is here any cause of discontent?

3. Afflictions teach us to *pray better*: "They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." Before they would say a prayer; now they poured out a prayer; Jonah was asleep in the ship, but awake and at prayer in the whale's belly. When God puts under the fire-brands of affliction, now our hearts boil over the more; God loves to have his children possessed with a spirit of prayer.

Never did David, the sweet singer of Israel, tune his harp more melodiously ; never did he pray better, than when he was upon the waters. Thus afflictions do in discipline, and shall we be discontented at that which is for our good ?

II. Afflictions are *probatory*. Gold is not the worse for being tried, or corn for being fanned. Affliction is the touch-stone of sincerity, it tries what metal we are made of ; affliction is God's fan and his sieve. It is good that men be known ; some serve God for a livery ; they are like the fisherman that makes use of his net, only to catch the fish ; so they go fishing with the net of religion, only to catch preferment ; affliction discovers these. The Donatists went to the Goths, when the Arians prevailed ; hypocrites will not sail in a storm ; true grace holds out in the winter season. That is a precious faith, which, like the star, shines brightest in the darkest night. It is good that our graces should be

brought to a trial; thus we have the comfort, and the gospel the honour; and why then discontented?

III. Afflictions are *expurgatory*: these evils work for good, because they work not sin; and shall I be discontented at this? what if I have more trouble, if I have less sin? the brightest day hath its clouds, the purest gold its dross, the most refined soul hath some lees of corruption. The Saints lose nothing in the furnace, but what they can well spare, their dross: is not this for our good? why then should we murmur? "I am come to send fire on the earth:" Tertullian understands it of the fire of affliction. God makes this like the fire of the three children, which burned only their bonds, and set them at liberty in the furnace: so the fire of affliction serves to burn the bonds of iniquity. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin." When affliction or death comes to a wicked man, it takes away his

soul ; when it comes to a godly man, it only takes away his sin : is there then any cause why we should be discontented ? God steeps us in the briny water of affliction, that he may take out our spots. God's people are his husbandry ; the ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and the harrowing of the earth breaks the hard clods ; God's ploughing of us by affliction, is to kill the weeds of sin, his harrowing of us is to break the hard clods of impenitency, that the heart may be the fitter to receive the seed of grace : and if this be all, why should we be discontented ?

IV. Afflictions do both *exercise* and *increase* grace.

First, they *exercise* grace : affliction doth breathe our graces ; every thing is most in its excellency, when it is most in its exercise. Our grace, though it cannot be dead, yet it may be asleep, and hath need of awakening. What a dull thing is the fire when it is hid in the embers, or the sun when it is

masked with a cloud ! A sick man is living, but not lively ; afflictions quicken and excite grace. God doth not love to see grace in the eclipse. Now faith puts forth its purest and most noble acts in times of affliction : God makes the fall of the leaf the spring of our graces. What if we are more passive, if grace be more active ?

Secondly. Afflictions do *increase* grace : as the wind serves to increase and blow up the flame ; so do the windy blasts of affliction augment and blow up our graces : grace spends in the furnace ; but it is like the widow's oil in the cruse, which did increase by pouring out. The torch when it is beaten, burns brightest, so doth grace when it is exercised by sufferings. Sharp frosts nourish the good corn, so do sharp afflictions grace ; some plants grow better in the shade than in the sun : as the bay and the cypress. The shade of adversity is better for some, than the sun-shine of prosperity. Naturalists observe, that the colewort

thrives better when it is watered with salt water, than with fresh ; so do some thrive better in the salt water of affliction ; and shall we be discontented at that which makes us grow and fructify more ?

V. These afflictions do bring more of God's immediate presence into the soul. When we are most assaulted, we shall be most assisted, "I will be with him in trouble." It cannot be ill with that man, with whom God is by his powerful presence supporting, and by his gracious presence sweetening the present trial. God will be with us in trouble, not only to behold us, but to uphold us ; as he was with Daniel in the lion's den, and the three children in the furnace. What if we have more trouble than others, if we have more of God with us than others have ! We never have sweeter smiles from God's face, than when the world begins to look strange : "Thy statutes have been my songs : " where ? not when I was upon the throne, but "in

the house of my pilgrimage." We read, "The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire;" but, in a metaphorical and spiritual sense, when the wind of affliction blows upon a believer, God is in the wind; when the fire of affliction kindles upon him, God is in the fire, to sanctify, to support, to sweeten. If God be with us, the furnace shall be turned into a festival, the prison into a paradise, the earthquake into a joyful dance. Oh, why should I be discontented, when I have more of God's company!

6. These evils of affliction are for good, as they bring with them certificates of God's love, and are evidences of his special favour. Affliction is the saint's livery, it is a badge and cognizance of honour; that the God of glory should look upon a worm, and take so much notice of him, as to afflict him rather than lose him, is a high act of favour. God's rod is *sceptrum regale*; a sceptre of dignity.

Job calls God's afflicting of us, his magnifying of us. Some men's prosperity hath been their shame, when others' affliction hath been their crown.

7. These afflictions work for our good, because they work for us "a far more exceeding weight of glory." That which works for my glory in heaven, works for my good; we do not read in scripture that any man's honour and riches do work for him a weight of glory, but afflictions do; and shall a man be discontented at that which works for his glory! The heavier the weight of affliction, the heavier the weight of glory; not that our sufferings do merit glory (as the papists do wickedly gloss) but though they are not *causa*, they are *via*: they are not the cause of our crown, yet they are the way to it, and God makes us, as he did our captain, "perfect through sufferings;" and shall not all this make us contented with our condition? Oh, I beseech you, look not upon the evil of affliction, but the good. Afflictions

in scripture are called visitations, the word in the Hebrew, to visit, is taken in a good sense as well as a bad : God's afflictions are but friendly visits; behold here God's rod is like Aaron's rod blossoming, and Jonathan's rod; it hath honey at the end of it. Poverty shall starve our sins; the sickness of the body shall cure a sin-sick soul : O, then, instead of murmuring and being discontented, bless the Lord; hadst thou not met with such a rub in the way, thou mightest have gone to hell and never stopped.

The seventh Argument to Contentment.

The next Argument to contentment is, consider the evil of discontent. Malcontent hath a mixture of grief and anger in it, and both these must needs raise a storm in the soul. Have you not seen the posture of a sick man? sometimes he will sit upon his bed, by and by he will lie down, and when he is down, he is not quiet; first

he turns to one side, and then to the other, he is restless: this is just the emblem of a discontented spirit; the man is not sick, yet he is never well, sometimes he likes such a condition of life, and when he hath it, yet he is not pleased, he is soon weary; and then another condition of life; this is "an evil under the sun."

Now the evil of discontent appears, I. in the sordidness of it, it is unworthy of a Christian.

First, it is unworthy of his profession. It was the saying of an heathen, Bear thy condition quietly, know thou art a man. So I say, Bear thy condition contentedly, know thou art a Christian. Thou professest to live by faith; what, and not content! Faith is a grace that doth substantiate things not seen, faith looks beyond the creature, it feeds upon promises, faith lives not by bread alone. When the water is spent in the bottle, faith knows whither to have recourse; now to see a Christian dejected in the want

of visible supplies, and recruits, where is faith? Oh, saith one, my estate in the world is down; aye, and, which is worse, thy faith is down. Wilt thou not be contented, unless God let down the vessel to thee, as he did to Peter, "wherein were all manner of beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air?" must you have first and second course? this is like Thomas, "unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe." So, unless thou hast a sensible feeling of outward comforts, thou wilt not be content. True faith will trust God where it cannot trace him, and will adventure upon God's bond, though it hath nothing in view. You who are discontented because you have not all you would, let me tell you, either your faith is a nonentity, or at best but an embryo; it is a weak faith that must have stilts and crutches to support it; nay, discontent is not only below faith, but below reason; why are you discontented? is it because you are dispos-

sessed of such comforts? well, and have you not reason to guide you? doth not reason tell you, that you are but tenants at will? and may not God turn you out when he please? You hold not your estate *jure*, but *gratis*; not by a juridical right, but upon favour and courtesy.

Secondly, It is unworthy of the relation we stand in to God; a Christian is invested with the title and privilege of sonship; he is an heir of the promise: O, consider, the lot of free grace is fallen upon thee, thou art nearly allied to Christ, and of the blood-royal: thou art advanced, in some sense, above the angels, "why then art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?" Why art thou discontented? Oh, how unworthy is this! as if the heir to some great monarch should go pining up and down, because he may not pick such a flower.

II. Consider the *sinfulness* of it; which appears in three things,

The causes,—the concomitants,—the consequences of it.

1. It is sinful in the *causes* ; which are these. — *Pride*. He that thinks highly of his desert, usually esteems meanly of his condition ; a discontented man is a proud man, he thinks himself better than others ; therefore finds fault with the wisdom of God that he is not above others. Thus the thing formed saith to him that formed it, “ Why hast thou made me thus ? ” Why am I not higher ? Discontents are nothing else but the estimations and boilings over of pride.—The second cause of discontent is *Envy*, which Augustine calls the sin of the devil. Satan envied Adam the glory of paradise, and the robe of innocency : he that envies what his neighbour hath, is never contented with that portion which God’s providence doth parcel out to him ; as envy stirs up strife, (this made the plebeian faction so strong amongst the Romans) so it creates discontent ; the envious man looks so much upon the blessings which another enjoys, that he cannot see his own mercies, and so doth continually vex

and torture himself. Cain envied that his brother's sacrifice was accepted, and his rejected, hereupon he was discontented, and presently murderous thoughts began to arise in his heart.—The third cause is *Covetousness*. This is a radical sin. Whence are vexing law-suits, but from discontent? and whence is discontent, but from covetousness? Covetousness and contentedness cannot dwell in the same heart. Avarice is an *heluo*, that is never satisfied. The covetous man is like Behemoth; "Behold he drinketh up a river, he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth." "There are four things, that say not, It is enough:" I may add a fifth, the heart of a covetous man, he is still craving. Covetousness is like a wolf in the breast, which is ever feeding; and because a man is not satisfied, he is never content.—The fourth cause of discontent is *Jealousy*, which is sometimes occasioned through melancholy, and sometimes misapprehension. The spirit of jealousy causeth this evil spi-

rit. "Jealousy is the rage of a man," and oft, this is nothing but suspicion and fancy; yet such as creates real discontent.

The fifth cause of discontent is *Distrust*, which is a great degree of atheism. The discontented person is ever distrustful. The hill of provision grows low; I am in these straits and exigencies, can God help me? "Can he prepare a table in the wilderness?" sure he cannot. My estate is exhausted, can God recruit me? My friends are gone, can God raise me up more? sure the arm of his power is shrunk. I am like the dry fleece; can any water come upon this fleece? "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be!" Thus the anchor of hope, and the shield of faith being cast away, the soul goes pining up and down. Discontent is nothing else but the echo of unbelief; and, remember, distrust, is worse than distress.

2. Discontent is evil in the *concomitants* of it, which are two. 1. Discon-

tent is joined with a *sullen melancholy* ; a Christian, of a right temper, should be ever cheerful in God ; "Serve the Lord with gladness." A sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart when "*the oil of gladness*" shines in the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion ; how can the discontented person be cheerful ? Discontent is a dogged sullen humour ; because we have not what we desire, God shall not have a good word or look from us ; as the bird in the cage, because she is pent up, and cannot fly into the open air, therefore beats herself against the cage, and is ready to kill herself : Thus that peevish prophet : "I do well to be angry to the death." 2. Discontent is accompanied with *unthankfulness* ; because we have not all we desire, we never mind the mercies which we have : we deal with God, as the woman of Sarepta did with the prophet ; the prophet Elijah had been a means to keep her alive in the famine ; for it was for his sake, that her "meal in the bar-

rel," and her "*oil in the cruse*" failed not; but as soon as her son dies, she falls into a passion, and begins to quarrel with the prophet: "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God! art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" So ungratefully we deal with God: we can be content to receive mercies from God, but if he doth cross us in the least thing, then, through discontent, we grow touchy and impatient, and are ready to fly upon God! thus God loses the thanks due for all his mercies. We read in Scripture of the thank-offering. The discontented person cuts God short of this; the Lord loseth his thank-offering. A discontented Christian repines in the midst of mercies, as Adam who sinned in the midst of paradise. Discontent is a spider that sucks the poison of unthankfulness out of the sweetest flower of God's blessings; and by a devilish chymistry extracts dross out of the most refined gold. The discontented person thinks every

thing he doth for God too much, and every thing God doth for him too little. Oh, what a sin is unthankfulness ! it is an accumulative sin. What Cicero saith of parricide, I may say of ingratitude : There are many sins bound up in this one sin ; it is a voluminous wickedness ; and how full of this sin is discontent ! A discontented Christian, because he hath not all the world, therefore dishonours God with the mercies which he hath. God made Eve out of Adam's rib, to be an helper ; but, as Chrysostome says, 'the Devil made an arrow of this rib, and shot Adam to the heart.' So doth discontent take the rod of God's mercy, and ungratefully shoot at him : estate, liberty, shall be employed against God. Thus it is oftentimes. Behold then how discontent and ingratitude are interwoven and twisted one within another ; thus discontent is sinful in its concomitants.

3. Discontent is sinful in its *consequences* ; which are these : 1. It makes a man very unlike the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God is a meek spirit. The Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of a dove. A dove is the emblem of meekness. A discontented spirit is not a meek spirit. 2. It makes a man like the devil. The devil being swelled with the poison of envy and malice, is never content. Just so is the malecontent. The devil is an unquiet spirit, he is still "walking about;" it is his rest to be walking; and herein is the discontented person like him; for he goes up and down vexing himself. "Seeking rest and finding none," he is the devil's picture. 3. Discontent disjoins the soul, it untunes the heart for duty; "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." But, is any man discontented; how shall he pray? "Lift up pure hands without wrath." Discontent is full of wrath and passion; the malecontent cannot lift up pure hands; he lifts up leprous hands; he poisons his prayers; will God accept of a poisoned sacrifice; Chrysostome compares prayer to a fine garland;

‘Those, saith he, that make a garland, their hands had need be clean; prayer is a precious garland; the heart that makes it had need be clean: discontent throws poison in the spring, (which was death among the Romans.) Discontent puts the heart into disorder and mutiny, and such an one cannot serve the Lord without distraction.’

4. Discontent sometimes unfits for the very use of reason: Jonah in a passion of discontent, spake no better than blasphemy and nonsense: “I do well,” said he, “to be angry to the death.” What! to be angry with God; and to die for anger? sure he did not know well what he said. When discontent transports, then like Moses, we speak unadvisedly with our lips. This humour doth even suspend the very acts of reason. 5. Discontent doth not only disquiet a man’s self, but those who are near him. This evil spirit troubles families, and whole parishes. If there be but one string out of tune, it spoils all the music. One discon-

tented spirit makes jarrings and discords among others. It is this ill humour that breeds quarrels and law-suits. Whence is all our contention but for want of contentment? "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?" in particular from this lust of discontent! Why did Absalom raise a war against his father, and would have taken off not only his crown, but his head? was it not his discontent? Absalom would be king. Why did Ahab stone Naboth? Was it not discontent about the vine-yard? Oh, this devil of discontent! Thus you have seen the sinfulness of it.

III. Consider the folly of it. I may say, as the Psalmist, Surely they are disquieted in vain: which appears thus:

1. Is it not a vain foolish thing to be troubled at the loss of that which is in its own nature perishing and changeable? God hath put a vicissitude into the creature; all the world rings changes; and for me to meet

with inconstancy here, to lose a friend, estate, to be in a constant fluctuation, is no more than to see a flower wither, or a leaf drop off in autumn. There is an autumn upon every comfort, a fall of the leaf; now it is extreme folly to be discontented at the loss of those things which are in their own nature loseable. What Solomon saith of riches, is true of all things under the sun, "They take wings." Noah's dove brought an olive-branch in its mouth but presently flew out of the ark, and never returned more. Such a comfort brings to us honey in its mouth; but it hath wings; and to what purpose should we be troubled, unless we had wings to fly after and overtake it?

2. Discontent is an heart-breaking; "by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken;" it takes away the comfort of life. There is none of us but have many mercies if we can see them; now because we have not all we desire, therefore we will lose the comfort of that which we have already. Jonah

having his gourd smitten (a withering vanity,) was so discontented, that he never thought of his miraculous deliverance out of the whale's belly; he takes no comfort of his life, but wisheth that he might die. What folly is this! We must have all, or none; herein we are like children, that throw away the piece which is cut them, because they may have no bigger. Discontent eats out the comfort of life. Besides, it were well if it were seriously weighed how prejudicial this is even to our health: for discontent, as it doth disfigure the mind, so it doth pine the body: it frets as a moth, and by wasting the spirits, weakens the vitals; the pleurisy of discontent brings the body into a consumption; and is not this folly?

3. Discontent does not ease us of our burden, but makes the cross heavier. A contented spirit goes cheerfully under its affliction. Discontent makes our grief as insupportable, as it is unreasonable. If the leg be well, it can endure a fetter and not complain;

but if the leg be sore, then the fetter troubles. Discontent of mind is the sore that makes the fetters of affliction more grievous. Discontent troubles us more than the trouble itself, it steeps the affliction in wormwood. When Christ was upon the cross, the Jews brought him *gall and vinegar* to drink, that it might add to his sorrow. Discontent brings to a man in affliction gall and vinegar to drink, this is worse than the affliction itself. Is it not folly for a man to embitter his own cross?

4. Discontent spins out our troubles the longer. A Christian is discontented because he is in want; and therefore he is in want, because he is discontented; he murmurs because he is afflicted; and therefore he is afflicted, because he murmurs. Discontent doth delay and adjourn our mercies. God deals herein with us, as we use to do with our children; when they are quiet and cheerful, they shall have any thing: but if we see them cry and fret, then

we withhold from them : we get nothing from God by our discontent but blows. The more the child struggles the more it is beaten : when we struggle with God by our sinful passions, he doubles and trebles his strokes ; God will tame our rebellious hearts. What got Israel by their peevishness ? they were within eleven days' journey of Canaan, and now they were discontented, and began to murmur ; God leads them a march of forty years long in the wilderness. Is it not folly for us to adjourn our own mercies ? . Thus you have seen the evil of discontent. I have been long upon this Argument ; but *nunquam nimis dicitur, quod nunquam satis dicitur.*

The eighth Argument to Contentment.

The next Argument or motive to Contentment is this : *why is not a man content with the competency which he hath ? perhaps if he had more, he would be less content ; covetousness*

is a dry drunkenness. The world is such, that the more we have, the more we crave; it cannot fill the heart of man. When the fire burns, how do you quench it? not by putting oil to the flame, or laying on more wood, but by withdrawing the fuel. When the appetite is enflamed after riches, how may a man be satisfied? not by having just what he desires, but by withdrawing the fuel, moderating and lessening his desires. He that is contented hath enough. A man in a fever or dropsy, thirsts; how do you satisfy him? not by giving him liquid things which will enflame his thirst the more, but by removing the cause, and so curing his distemper. The way for a man to be contented, is not by raising his estate higher, but by bringing his heart lower.

The ninth Argument to Contentment.

The next argument to Contentment is, *The shortness of life.* It is but a

vapour, saith St. James. Life is a wheel ever running. The poets painted time with wings, to shew the volubility and swiftness of it. Job compares it to a swift post, (our life rides post,) and a day, not a year. It is indeed like a day. Infancy is as it were the day-break, youth is the sun-rising, full growth is the sun in the meridian, old age is sun-setting. Sickness is the evening, then comes the night of death. How quick is this day of life spent! oftentimes this sun goes down at noon-day; life ends before the evening of old age comes; nay, sometimes the sun of life sets presently after sun-rising. Quickly after the dawning of infancy, the night of death approaches. Oh, how short is the life of man! The consideration of the brevity of life may work the heart to contentment. Remember thou art to be here but a day; thou hast but a short way to go, and what needs a long provision for a short way? If a traveller have but enough to bring him

to his journey's end, he desires no more. We have but a day to live, and perhaps we may be in the twelfth hour of the day; if God give us but enough to bear our charges till night, it is sufficient: let us be content. If a man takes the lease of a house or farm, which has but two or three years to run, and he should fall a building and planting, would he not be judged very indiscreet? So when we have but a short time here, and death calls us presently off the stage; to thirst immoderately after the world, and pull down our souls to build up an estate, is it not extreme folly? Therefore as Esau said once in a profane sense, concerning his birth-right: "Lo, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?" So let a Christian say in a religious sense; Lo, I am even at the point of death, my grave is going to be made, and what good will the world do me? If I have but enough till sun-setting, I am content,

The tenth Argument to Contentment.

The tenth argument or motive to Contentment is ; *Consider seriously the nature of a prosperous condition.* There are in a prosperous estate three things.

1. More trouble. Many who have abundance of all things to enjoy, yet have not so much content and sweetness in their lives, as some that go to their hard labour. Sad, solicitous thoughts do often attend a prosperous condition ; care is the evil spirit which haunts the rich man, and will not suffer him to be quiet. When his chest is full of gold, his heart is full of care, either how to manage, or how to increase, or how to secure what he hath gotten. Oh, the troubles and perplexities that do wait upon prosperity ! The world's high-seats are very uneasy ; sun-shine is pleasant, but sometimes it scorcheth with its heat ; the bee gives honey, but sometimes it stings : Pros-

perity hath its sweetness, and also its sting. Competency with contentment is far more eligible. Never did Jacob sleep better than when he had the heavens for his canopy, and a hard stone for his pillow. A large estate is but like a long trailing garment, which is more troublesome than useful.

2. In a prosperous condition there is more danger; and that two ways.

First, in respect of a man's self. The rich man's table is oft his snare; he is ready to ingulph himself too deep in these sweet waters. In this sense it is hard to know how to abound. It must be a strong brain that bears heady wine; he had need have much wisdom and grace that knows how to bear a high condition; either he is ready to kill himself with care, or surfeit himself upon luscious delights. Oh, the hazard of honour, the damage of dignity! Pride, security, rebellion, are the three worms that breed of plenty. The pastures of prosperity are rank and surfeiting. How soon

are we broken upon the soft pillow of ease! Prosperity is often a trumpet that sounds a retreat, it calls men off from the pursuit of religion. The sun of prosperity oft dulls and puts out the fire of zeal. How many souls hath the pleurisy of abundance killed! "They that will be rich, fall into snares." The world is bird-lime at our feet, it is full of golden sands, but they are quick-sands. Prosperity, like smooth Jacob, will supplant and betray; a great estate without much vigilancy will be a thief to rob us of heaven; such as are upon the pinnacle of honour, are in most danger of falling.

A lower estate is less hazardous. The pinnace rides safe by the shore, when the gallant ship advancing with its mast and top-sail, is cast away. Adam in Paradise was overcome, when Job on the dung-hill was a conqueror. Sampson fell asleep on Dalilah's lap: some have fallen so fast asleep on the lap of ease and plenty, that they have

never awaked till they have been in hell. The world's fawning is worse than its frowning; and it is more to be feared when it smiles, than when it thunders. Prosperity in scripture is compared to a candle: "When his candle shined upon my head." How many have burnt their wings about this candle! The corn, being over-ripe, sheds; and fruit, when it mellows, begins to rot; when men do mellow with the sun of prosperity, commonly their souls begin to rot in sin. "How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" His golden weights keep him from ascending up the hill of God; and shall we not be content, though we are placed in a lower orb? What, if we are not in so much bravery, and gallantry as others! we are not in so much danger; as we want the honour of the world, so the temptations. Oh, the abundance of danger that is in abundance! We see by common experience that lunatics when the moon is declining, and in

the wane, are sober enough, but when it is in the full, they are more wild and exorbitant: when men's estates are in the wane, they are more serious about their souls, more humble; but when it is the full of the moon, and they have abundance, then their hearts begin to swell with their estates, and are scarce themselves. Those that write concerning the several climates observe that such as live in the northern parts of the world, if you bring them into the south part, they lose their stomachs, and die quickly; but those that live in the more southern hot climates, bring them into the north, and their stomachs mend, and they are long lived. Give me leave to apply it; bring a man from the cold starving climate of poverty, into the hot southern climate of prosperity, and he begins to lose his appetite to good things, he grows weak, and a thousand to one if all his religion does not die; but bring a Christian from the south to the north, from a rich flourishing

estate into a low condition, let him come into a more cold and hungry air, and then his stomach mends, he hath better appetite after heavenly things, he hungers more after Christ, he thirsts more for grace, he eats more at one meal of the bread of life, than at six before; this man is now like to live and hold out in his religion. Be content then with a modicum; if you have but enough to pay for your passage to heaven, it sufficeth.

Secondly, a prosperous condition is dangerous in regard of others: a great estate for the most part draws envy to it, whereas in a low station is rest. David a shepherd was quiet; but David a courtier was pursued by his enemies: envy cannot endure a superior: an envious man knows not how to live, but upon the ruin of his neighbour; he raiseth himself higher by bringing others lower. Prosperity is an eye-sore to many. Such sheep as have most wool are soonest fleeced. The barren tree grows peaceably; no

man meddles with the ash or willow ; but the apple-tree and the damson shall have many rude suitors. Oh, then, be content to carry a lesser sail ; he that hath less revenues, hath less envy ; such as bear the fairest frontispiece, and make the greatest show in the world, are the white for envy and malice to shoot at.

3. A prosperous condition hath in it a greater reckoning ; every man must be responsible for his talents. Thou that hast great possessions in the world, dost thou trade thy estate for God's glory ? Art thou " rich in good works ? " Grace makes a private person a common good. Dost thou disburse thy money for public uses ? it is lawful, in this sense, to put out our money to use. Oh, let us all remember, an estate is a deposit : we are but stewards, and our Lord and Master will, ere long, say, " Give an account of your stewardship : " the greater our estate, the greater our charge : the more our revenues, the more our reckonings.

You that have a lesser mill going in the world, be content: God will expect less from you, where he hath sowed more sparingly.

The eleventh Argument to Contentment.

The eleventh Argument is, *The example of those who have been eminent for Contentment.* Examples are usually more forcible than precepts. Abraham being called out to hot service, and such as was against flesh and blood, was content. God bids him offer up his son Isaac; this was a great work: Isaac was the son of his old age; the son of his love; the son of the promise: Christ the Messiah was to come of his line, "In Isaac shall thy seed be blessed;" so that to offer up Isaac, seemed not only to oppose Abraham's reason, but his faith too; for if Isaac die, the world, for ought he knew, must be without a Mediator: besides, if Isaac be sacrificed, was there no

other hand to do it but Abraham's? must the father needs be the executioner? must he that was the instrument of giving Isaac his being, be the instrument of taking it away? yet Abraham doth not dispute or hesitate, but believes against hope, and is content with God's prescription. So, when God called him to "leave his country," he was content. Some would have argued thus: what? leave all my friends, my native soil, my brave situation, and go turn pilgrim? Abraham is content: besides, Abraham went blindfold, "he knew not whither he went." God held him in suspense, he must wander he knows not where; and when he doth come to the place God had laid out for him, he knows not what oppositions he shall meet with there; the world doth seldom cast a favourable aspect upon strangers, yet he is content and obeys; "He sojourned in the land of promise;" behold a little his pilgrimage: First he goes to Charran, a city in Mesopo-

tamia; when he had sojourned there awhile his father dies; then he removes to Sichem, then to Bethel, in Canaan; there a famine ariseth; then he went down to Egypt; after that he returns into Canaan, but when he came there (it is true he had a promise) he found nothing to answer his expectation; he had not there one foot of land, but was an exile: in this time of his sojourning he buried his wife; and as for his dwellings, he had no sumptuous buildings, but led his life in poor cottages; all this was enough to have broken any man's heart. Abraham might think thus with himself, Is this the land I must possess? here is no probability of any good; "all things are against me:" well, is he discontented? no: God saith to him, Abraham, go, leave thy country; and this word was enough to lead him all the world over; he is presently upon his march: here was a man had learned to be content. But let us descend a little lower, to heathen Zeno (of whom

Seneca speaks) who had once been very rich, hearing of a shipwreck, and that all his goods were drowned at sea; 'Fortune, saith he (he spake in an heathen dialect) hath dealt well with me; and would have me now to study philosophy;' he was content to change his course of life, to leave off being a merchant, and turn philosopher. And if an heathen said thus, shall not a Christian much more say, when the world is drained from him, God would have me leave off following the world, and study Christ more, and how to get to heaven? Do I see an heathen contented, and a Christian disquieted? How did heathens vilify those things which Christians magnify? though they knew not God, or what true happiness meant, yet would speak very sublimely of a *numen*, or deity, and of the life to come, as Aristotle and Plato; and for those elysian delights which they did but fancy, they undervalued and contemned the things here below; it was the doctrine they

taught their scholars, and which some of them practised, that ‘men should strive to be contented with a little;’ they were willing to make an exchange; to have less good, and more learning: and shall not we be content then to have less of the world, so we may have more of Christ? May not Christians blush to see heathens content with a *viaticum*, so much as would recruit nature, and to see themselves so transported with the love of earthly things, that if they begin a little to abate, and the bill of provision grows short, they murmur, and are like Micah, “Have ye taken away my gods, and do ye ask me what I ail?” Have heathens gone so far in contentment? and is it not sad for us to come short of *them*? These heroes of their time, how did they embrace death itself! Socrates died in prison; Hercules was burnt alive; Cato (whom Seneca calls the lively image and portraiture of virtue) thrust through with a sword; but how bravely, and with what contentment

of spirit did they die ! shall I, saith Seneca, weep for Cato, or Regulus, or the rest of those worthies that died with so much valour and patience ? Did cross providences fail to make them alter their countenance, and do I see a Christian appalled and amazed ! Did death not affright them ? and doth it distract us ? Did the spring-head of nature rise so high ? and shall not grace, like the waters of the sanctuary, rise higher ? we that pretend to live by faith, may we not go to school to them who had no other pilot but reason to guide them ? nay, let me come a step lower, to creatures void of reason ; we see every creature is contented with its allowance ; the beasts with their provender, the birds with their nests, they live only upon providence ; and shall we make ourselves below them ? let a Christian go to school to the ox and the ass, to learn contentedness ; we think we never have enough, and are still laying up ; the fowls of the air do not lay up,

“they reap not, nor gather into barns;” it is an argument which Christ brings, to make Christians contented with their condition; the birds do not lay up, yet they are provided for, are contented: “Are ye not (saith Christ) much better than they?” but if you are discontented, are ye not much worse than they? let these examples quicken us.

The twelfth Argument to Contentment.

The twelfth argument to Contentment is; *Whatever change or trouble a child of God meets with, it is all the hell he shall have.* Whatever eclipse may be upon his name, or estate, I may say of it as Athanasius of his banishment, it is *nubecula cito transitura*, a little cloud which will soon be blown over; and then his gulf is shot, his hell is past.

Death begins a wicked man's hell, but it puts an end to the godly man's. Think with thyself, What if I endure this? it is but temporary: indeed if

all our hell be here, it is but an easy hell. What is the cup of affliction to the cup of damnation? Lazarus could not get a crumb; he was so diseased, that the dogs took pity on him, and, as if they had been his physicians, licked his sores; but this was an easy hell, the angels quickly fetched him out of it. If all our hell be in this life, in the midst of it we may have the love of God, and then it is no more hell but paradise. If our hell be here, we may see to the bottom of it, it is but skin-deep, it cannot touch the soul, and we may see to the end of it: it is a hell that is short-lived: after a wet night of affliction comes a bright morning of the resurrection; if our lives be short, our trials cannot be long. As our riches take wings and fly away, so do our sufferings; then let us be contented.

The thirteenth Argument to Contentment.

The last Argument to Contentment is this: *To have a competency, and to want Contentment, is a great judgment.* For a man to have a huge stomach, that whatever meat you give him, he is still craving, and never satisfied, you say, This is a great judgment upon the man: thou who art *heluo pecuniæ*, a devourer of money, and yet never hast enough, but still criest, "Give, give," this is a sad judgment: "They shall eat and not have enough." The throat of a malicious man is an open sepulchre, so is the heart of a covetous man. Covetousness is not only *malum culpæ*, but *malum pænæ*; it is not only a sin, but the punishment of a sin. It is a secret curse upon a covetous person, he shall thirst and thirst, and never be satisfied: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver;" and is not this a curse? what was it but a severe

judgment upon the people of Judah? "Ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink." Oh, let us take heed of this plague. Did Esau say to his brother, "I have abundance," my brother; or as we translate it, I have enough; and shall not a Christian say so much more? It is sad that our heart should be so dead to heavenly things, and as a sponge to suck in earthly. Let all that hath been said, work our minds to holy contentment.

*Three things inserted by way of
Caution.*

In the next place I come to lay down some necessary Cautions: though I say a man should be contented in every estate; yet there are three estates in which he must not be contented.

I. He must not be contented in a *natural estate*; here he must learn not to be content. A sinner in his pure

naturals is under the wrath of God, and shall he be content, when that dreadful vial is going to be poured out? is it nothing to be under the scorplings of divine fury? "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" A sinner, as a sinner, is under the power of Satan; and shall he in this estate be contented? who would be contented to stay in the enemy's quarters? while we sleep in the lap of sin, the devil doth to us as the Philistines did to Samson, cut the lock of our strength and put out our eyes; be not content, O, sinner, in this estate. For a man to be in debt, body and soul, in fear every hour to be arrested and carried prisoner to hell, shall he now be content? Here I preach against contentment: Oh, get out of this condition: I would hasten you out of it, as the angel hastened Lot out of Sodom; there is the smell of the fire and brimstone upon you. The longer a man stays in his sin, the more sin doth strengthen; it is hard to get out of sin when the heart as a garrison is vic-

tualled and fortified. A young plant is easily removed; but when the tree is once rooted, there is no stirring of it: thou who art rooted in thy pride, unbelief, impenitency, it will cost thee many a sad pull ere thou art plucked out of thy natural estate. It is an hard thing to have a brazen face and a broken heart. "He travaileth with iniquity." Be assured the longer you travail with your sins, the more and the sharper pangs you must expect in the new birth. Oh, be not contented with your natural state. David saith, "Why art thou disquieted, O my soul?" but a sinner should say to himself, Why art thou not disquieted, O, my soul? Why is it that thou layest afflictions so to heart, and canst not lay sin to heart? It is a mercy when we are disquieted about sin; a man had better be at the trouble of setting a bone, than to be lame, and in pain, all his life; blessed is that trouble that brings the soul to Christ. It is one of the worst sights to see a bad conscience

quiet; of the two, better is a fever, than a lethargy. I wonder to see a man in his natural state content; what, contented to go hell?

II. Though in regard of externals a man should be in every state content, yet he must not be content *in such a condition wherein God is apparently dishonoured*. If a man's trade be such that he can hardly use it but he must trespass upon a command, (and so make a trade of sin) he must not content himself in such a condition. God never called any man to such a calling as is sinful; a man in this case had better lose some of his gain, so he may lessen some of his guilt. So for servants that live in a profane family, where the name of God is not called upon, unless when it is taken in vain; they are not to content themselves in such a place, they are to come "out of the tents of these sinners;" there is a double danger in living among the profane.

1. Lest we come to be infected with

the poison of their ill example. Joseph, living in Pharoah's court, had learned to swear "By the life of Pharoah." We are prone to suck in example, men take in deeper impressions by the eye, than by the ear. Dives was a bad pattern, and he had many brethren that, seeing him sin, trod just in his steps: therefore saith he, "I pray thee send him to my Father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, that they come not into this place of torment." Dives knew which way they went; it is easy to catch a disease from another, but not to catch health. The bad will sooner corrupt the good, than the good will convert the bad; take an equal quantity and proportion, so much sweet wine, with so much sour vinegar; the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine will sweeten the vinegar. Sin is compared to the plague, and to leaven, to shew of what a spreading nature it is. A bad master makes a bad servant. Jacob's cattle by looking on the rods

which were speckled and ring-straked, conceived like the rods: we do as we see others before us, especially above us. If the head be sick, the other parts of the body are distempered. If the sun shine not upon the mountains, it must needs set in the vallies. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" and do we lead ourselves into temptation. Lot was the world's miracle, who kept himself fresh in Sodom's salt water.

2. By living in an evil family, we are liable to incur their punishments. "Pour out thy wrath upon the families that call not upon thy name." For want of pouring out prayer, the wrath of God was ready to be poured out. It is dangerous living in the tents of Kedar. When God sends his flying roll written within and without with curses, it enters into the house of the thief and perjurer, and it consumes the timber and the stones thereof. Is it not of sad consequence to live in a profane perjured family, when the sin

of the governor pulls his house about his ears! If the stone and timber be destroyed, how shall the servant escape? And suppose God send not a temporal roll of curses in the family, there is a spiritual roll, and that is worse. Be not content to live where religion dies. "Salute the brethren, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house:" the house of the godly is a little church; the house of the wicked a little hell. Oh, incorporate yourselves into a religious family; the house of a good man is perfumed with a blessing. When the holy oil of grace is poured on the head, the savour of this ointment sweetly diffuseth itself, and the virtue of it runs down upon the skirts of the family. Pious examples are very magnetical and forcible. Seneca said to his sister, Though I leave you not wealth, yet I will leave you a good example. Let us ingraft ourselves among the saints; by being often among the spices, we come to smell of them.

III. The third Caution is, though in

every condition we must be content, *yet we are not to content ourselves with a little grace.* Grace is the best blessing. Though we should be contented with a competency of estate, yet not with a competency of grace. It was the end of Christ's ascension to heaven, "to give gifts;" and the end of those gifts, "that we may grow up into him who is the head, Christ." Where the Apostle distinguisheth between our being in Christ, and our growing in him: our ingrafting and our flourishing: be not content with a modicum in Religion.

It is not enough that there be life, but there must be fruit. Barrenness in the law was accounted a curse. The farther we are from fruit, the nearer we are to cursing. It is a sad thing when men are fruitful only "in the unfruitful works of darkness." Be not content with a dram or two of grace; next to a still-born, a starveling in Christ is worst. Oh, covet more grace, never think thou hast enough;

we are bid to "covet the best things ;" it is an heavenly ambition, when we desire to be high in God's favour ; a blessed contention, when all the strife is, who shall be the most holy. St. Paul, though he was content with a little of the world, yet not with a little grace ; he "reached forward," and "pressed towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." A true Christian is a wonder, he is the most contented, and yet the least satisfied : he is contented with a morsel of bread, and a little water in the cruse, yet never satisfied with grace ; he pants and breathes after more ; this is his prayer, Lord, more conformity to Christ, more communion with Christ ; he would fain have Christ's image more lively pictured upon his soul. True grace is always progressive : as the saints are called lamps and stars in regard of their light ; so "trees of righteousness" for their growth ; they are indeed, like the tree of life, bringing forth several sorts of fruit.

1. A true Christian grows *in beauty*. Grace is the best complexion of the soul; it is at the first plantation, like Rachel, fair to look upon; but still the more it lives, the more it sends forth its rays of beauty. Abraham's faith was at first beautiful; but at last it shone in its orient colours, and grew so illustrious, that God himself was in love with it, and makes his faith a pattern to all believers.

2. A true Christian grows *in sweetness*. A poisonous weed may grow as much as the hyssop, or rosemary; the poppy in the field, as the corn; the crab, as the pearmain; but the one hath a harsh, sour taste, the other mellows as it grows: A hypocrite may grow in outward dimensions, as much as a child of God; he may pray as much, profess as much; but he grows only in magnitude, he brings forth sour grapes, his duties are leavened with pride; the other ripens as he grows; he grows in love, humility, faith, which mellow and sweeten his

duties, and make them come off with a better relish. The believer grows as the flower, he casts a fragrancy and perfume.

3. A true Christian grows *in strength* ; he grows still more rooted and settled. The more the tree grows, the more it spreads its roots in the earth ; a Christian who is a plant of the heavenly Jerusalem, the longer he grows, the more he incorporates into Christ, and sucks spiritual juice and sap from him ; he is a dwarf in regard of humility, but a giant in regard of strength. He is strong to do duties, to bear burdens, to resist temptations.

4. He grows *in the exercise of his grace* ; He hath not only oil in his lamps, but his lamps are burning and shining. Grace is agile and dexterous. Christ's vines do flourish, hence we read of a "lively hope," and a "fervent love ;" here is the activity of grace. Indeed sometimes grace is as a sleepy habit in the soul, like sap in the vine, not exerting its vigour ; which

may be occasioned through spiritual sloth, or by reason of falling into some sin; but this is only *pro tempore*, for a while; the spring of grace will come, the flowers will appear; and “the fig-tree put forth her green figs.” The fresh gales of the Spirit do sweetly revive and refocillate grace. The Church of Christ, whose heart was a garden, and her graces as precious spices, prays for the heavenly breathings of the Spirit, that her sacred spices might flow out:

5. A true Christian grows *both in the kind and in the degree of grace*. To his spiritual living he gets an augmentation: he adds “to faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance, &c.” Here is grace growing in the kind: and he goes on from faith to faith; there is grace growing in the degree. We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren, because your faith groweth exceedingly; it increaseth over and above. And the apostle speaks of those spiritual

plants which were laden with gospel fruit, Phil. i. 11. A Christian is compared to the vine, (an emblem of fruitfulness,) he must bear full clusters; we are bid to "perfect that which is lacking in our faith." A Christian must never be so old as to be past bearing; he brings forth "fruit in his old age." An heaven-born plant is ever growing; he never thinks he grows enough; he is not content unless he add every day one cubit to his spiritual stature. We must not be content just with so much grace as will keep life and soul together; a dram or two must not suffice, but we must be still increasing "with the increase of God." We had need "renew our strength as the eagle;" our sins are renewed, our wants are renewed, our temptations are renewed, and shall not our strength be renewed? Oh, be not content with the first embryo of grace, grace in its infancy and minority. You look for degrees of glory; be you Christians of degrees. Though a be-

liever should be contented with a modicum in his estate, yet not with a modicum in religion. A Christian of the right breed labours still to excel himself, and to come near unto that holiness in God, who is the original, the pattern and prototype of all holiness.

Use 4.—Shewing how a Christian may know whether he hath learned this divine Art.

Thus having laid down these three cautions, I proceed in the next place to a use of trial.

How may a Christian know that he hath learned this lesson of Contentment? I shall lay down some characters by which you shall know it.

1. A contented spirit is a *silent spirit*. He hath not one word to say against God; “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.” Contentment silenceth all dispute; “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence.” There is a sinful silence, when God is dishonoured, his truth wounded and

men hold their peace; this silence is a loud sin; and there is a holy silence, when the soul sits down quiet and content with its condition. When Samuel tells Eli that heavy message from God, that he would "judge his house, and that the iniquity of his family should not be purged away with sacrifice for ever;" doth Eli murmur or dispute? No, he hath not one word to say against God: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." A discontented spirit saith, as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord?" why should I suffer all this? why should I be brought into this low condition? Who is the Lord? But a gracious heart saith as Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what he will" with me. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, had "offered up strange fire," and "fire went from the Lord and devoured them," is Aaron now in a passion of discontent? No, "Aaron held his peace." A contented spirit is never angry, unless with himself for having

hard thoughts of God. When Jonah said "I do well to be angry;" this was not a contented spirit, it did not become a prophet.

2. A contented spirit is a *cheerful spirit*: Contentment is something more than patience; for patience denotes only submission, contentment denotes cheerfulness. A contented Christian is more than passive; he doth not only bear the cross, but "take up the cross." He looks upon God as a wise God; and whatever he doth, though it be not *ad voluntatem*, yet *ad sanitatem*, it is in order to a cure: hence the contented Christian is cheerful, and with the apostle, "takes pleasure in infirmities, distresses," &c. He doth not only submit to God's dealings, but rejoices in them; he doth not only say, Just is the Lord in all that is befallen me; but Good is the Lord. This is to be contented. A sullen melancholy is hateful; it is said, God loves a cheerful giver; aye, and God loves a cheerful liver. We are bid in Scripture

not to be careful, but we are now here bid to be cheerful. He that is contented with his condition, doth not abate of his spiritual joy; and indeed he hath that within him which is the ground of cheerfulness; he carries a pardon sealed in his heart.

3. A contented spirit is a *thankful spirit*. This is a degree above the other; "In every thing giving thanks." A gracious heart spies mercy in every condition, therefore hath his heart screwed up to thankfulness; others will bless God for prosperity, he blesseth him for affliction. Thus he reasons with himself, Am I in want? God sees it better for me to want, than to abound; God is now dieting me, he sees it better, for my spiritual health, sometimes to be kept fasting; therefore he doth not only submit, but is thankful. The male-content is ever complaining of his condition: the contented spirit is ever giving thanks. Oh, what height of grace is this! A contented heart is a temple, where the

praises of God are sung forth ; not a sepulchre, wherein they are buried. A contented Christian, in the greatest straits hath his heart enlarged, and dilated in thankfulness. He oft contemplates God's love in election ; he sees that he is a monument of mercy, therefore desires to be a pattern of praise. There is always gratulatory music in a contented soul ; the spirit of grace works in the heart like new wine, which under the heaviest pressures of sorrow, will have a vent open for thankfulness ; this is to be content.

4. He that is content, *no condition comes amiss to him* ; so it is in the text, *in whatsoever state I am*. A contented Christian can turn himself to any thing, either want, or abound. The people of Israel knew neither how to abound, nor yet how to want ; when they were in want, they murmured, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness ?" and when they were filled, then they lifted up the heel. Paul knew how to manage every es-

tate? he could be either a note higher, or lower, he was, (in this sense) an Universalist, he could do any thing that God would have him : If he were in prosperity, he knew how to be thankful ; if in adversity, he knew how to be patient ; he was neither lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other. He could carry a greater sail, or lesser ; thus a contented Christian knows how to turn himself to any condition. We have those who can be contented in some estate ; but not in *every* estate : they can be content in a wealthy estate, when they have the streams of milk and honey : while God's candle shines upon their head, now they are content ; but if the wind turn and be against them, now they are discontented. While they have a silver crutch to lean upon, they are contented ; but if God breaks this crutch, now they are discontented ; but Paul had learned in every state to carry himself with equanimity of mind : others could be content with

their affliction, so God would give them leave to pick and choose. They could be content to bear such a cross; they could better endure sickness than poverty, or bear loss of estate than loss of children; if they might have such a man's cross, they could be content; any condition but the present: this is not to be content.

A contented Christian doth not choose his cross, but leaves God to choose for him; he is content both for the kind, and for the duration. A contented spirit saith: Let God apply what medicine he pleaseth, and let it lie on as long as it will; I know, when it hath done its cure, and eaten the venom of sin out of my heart, God will take it off again. In a word, a contented Christian, being sweetly captivated under the authority of the word, desires to be wholly at God's disposal, and is willing to live in that sphere and climate where God has set him; and if at any time he hath been an instrument of doing noble and brave

service in the public, he knows he is but a rational tool, a servant to authority, and is content to return to his former private condition of life. Cincinnatus, after he had done worthily, and purchased to himself great fame in his dictatorship, did notwithstanding afterwards voluntarily return to till and manure his four acres of ground. Thus should it be with Christians, professing godliness with contentment; lest otherwise they discover only to the world a brutish valour, being so untamed and headstrong, that when they have conquered others, yet they are not able to rule their own spirits.

5. He that is contented with his condition, to rid himself out of trouble will not run himself into sin. I deny not but a Christian may lawfully seek to change his condition; so far as God's providence doth go before, he may follow; but when men will not follow providence, but run before it, as he said, "This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?" if

God doth not open the door by his providence, they will break it open, and wind themselves out of affliction by sin, bringing their souls into trouble by bringing their estates out of trouble. This is far from holy contentment, this is unbelief broken out into rebellion. A contented Christian is willing to wait God's leisure, and will not stir till God open a door. As Paul said in another case, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out." So with reverence saith the contented Christian, God hath cast me into this condition; and though it be sad and troublesome, yet I will not stir till God by a clear providence fetch me out. Thus those brave spirited Christians, in Heb. xi. 35. "They accepted not deliverance," that is, upon base dishonourable terms. They would rather stay in prison, than purchase their liberty by carnal com-

pliance. Estius observes on the place, they might not only have had their enlargement, but been raised to honour, and put into offices of trust; yet the honour of religion was dearer to them than either liberty or honour. A contented Christian will not remove, till, as the Israelites, he see "a pillar of cloud and fire" going before him: "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." It is good to stay God's leisure, and not to extricate ourselves out of trouble, till we see the star of God's providence pointing out a way to us.

Use 5.—Containing a Christian Directory, or Rules about Contentment.

I proceed now to an use of direction, to shew Christians how they may attain to this divine Art of Contentment. Certainly it is feasible; others of God's saints have reached to it. St. Paul here had it; and what do we think of those we read of in the little

book of martyrs? (Heb. xi.) who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, who wandered about in deserts and caves, yet were contented : so that it is possible to be had. And here I shall lay down some rules for holy contentment.

Rule 1.—*Advance faith.*

All our disquiets do issue immediately from unbelief, it is this that raiseth the storm of discontent in the heart. Oh, set faith at work: it is the property of faith to silence our doubtings, to scatter our fears, to still the heart when the passions are up. Faith works the heart to a sweet serene composure; it is not having food and raiment, but having faith, which will make us content. Faith chides down passion; when reason begins to sink, let faith swim.

Quest. How doth Faith work Contentment?

Ans. 1. Faith shews the soul, that

whatever its trials are, yet it is from the hand of a father; it is indeed a bitter cup, but "Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me to drink?" it is love to my soul: God corrects with the same love he crowns me; God is now training me up for heaven, he carves me, to make me a polished shaft. These sufferings bring forth patience, humility, even "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." And if God can bring such sweet fruit out of a sour stock, let him graft me where he please. Thus faith brings the heart to holy contentment.

2. Faith sucks the honey of contentment out of the hive of the promise. Christ is the vine, the promises are the clusters of grapes that grow upon this vine: and faith presseth the sweet wine of contentment out of these spiritual clusters of the promises. I will shew you but one cluster—"The Lord will give grace and glory:" here is enough for faith to live upon. The promise is the flower out of which faith distils the

spirit, and quintessence of divine contentment. In a word, faith carries up the soul, and makes it aspire after more noble and generous delights than earth affords, and to live in the world above the world. Would you lead contented lives? live up to the height of your faith.

Rule 2.—*Labour for assurance.*

O, let us get the interest cleared between God and our own souls! Interest is a word much in use; a pleasing word; interest in great friends, interest-money. Oh, if there be an interest worth looking after, it is an interest between God and the soul: Labour to say, "My God." To be without money, and without friends, and without God too, is sad; but he whose faith doth flourish into assurance, that can say, "I know in whom I have believed," as St. Paul, that man hath enough to give his heart contentment. When a man's debts are paid, and he can go

abroad without fear of arrest, what contentment is this ! Oh, let your title be cleared ; if God be our's, whatever we want in the creature is infinitely made up in him. Do I want bread ? I have Christ the bread of life. Am I under defilement ? his blood is like the trees of the sanctuary ; not only for meat, but medicine. If any thing in the world be worth labouring for ; it is to get sound evidences that God is our's. If this be once cleared, what can come amiss ? No matter what storms I meet with, so that I know where to put in for harbour. He that hath God to be his God, is so well contented with his condition, that he doth not much care whether he hath any thing else. To rest in a condition where a Christian cannot say God is his God, is matter of fear ; and if he can say so truly, and yet is not contented, it is matter of shame. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God ;" it was sad with him, Ziklag burnt, his wives taken captive, his all lost, and like to have lost his soldiers'

hearts too, for "they spake of stoning him;" yet he had the ground of contentment within him, viz. an interest in God, and this was a pillar of supportment to his spirit. He that knows God is his, and all that is in God is for his good; if this doth not satisfy, I know nothing that will.

Rule 3.—*Get an humble spirit.*

The humble man is the contented man; if his estate be low, his heart is lower than his estate; therefore be content. If his esteem in the world be low, he that is little in his own eyes will not be much troubled to be little in the eyes of others. He hath a meaner opinion of himself, than others can have of him. The humble man studies his own unworthiness; he looks upon himself as "less than the least of God's mercies," and then a little will content him: he cries out with Paul, that he is "the chief of sinners;" therefore doth not murmur, but admire.

He doth not say his comforts are small, but his sins are great; he thinks it a mercy he is out of hell, therefore is contented. He doth not go to carve out a more happy condition to himself; he knows the worst piece God cuts him is better than he deserves. A proud man is never contented, he is one that hath an high opinion of himself; therefore under small blessings is disdainful, under small crosses impatient. The humble spirit is the contented spirit; if his cross be light, he reckons it in the inventory of his mercies; if it be heavy, yet takes it upon his knees, knowing that when his estate is worse, it is to make him better. Where you lay humility for the foundation, Contentment will be the superstructure.

Rule 4.—*Keep a clear conscience.*

Contentment is the manna that is laid up in the ark of a good conscience: Oh, take heed of indulging any sin. It is as natural for guilt to breed dis-

quiet, as for putrid matter to breed vermin. Sin lies as Jonah in the ship, it raiseth a tempest. If dust or motes be gotten into the eye, they make the eye water, and cause a soreness in it; if the eye be clear, then it is free from that soreness.—If sin be gotten into the conscience, which is as the eye of the soul, then grief and disquiet breed there; but keep the eye of conscience clear, and all is well. What Solomon saith of a good stomach, I may say of a good conscience: “To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet;” so to a good conscience every bitter thing is sweet; it can pick contentment out of the cross. Good conscience turns the waters of Marah into wine. Would you have a quiet heart? get a smiling conscience. I wonder not to hear Paul say, he was in every state content; when he could make that triumph, “I have lived in all good conscience to this day.” When once a man’s reckonings are clear, it must needs let in an abundance of content-

ment into the heart. Good conscience can suck contentment out of the bitterest drug ; under slanders, " This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience : " In case of imprisonment, Paul had his prison-songs, and could play the sweet lessons of contentment, when his feet were in the stocks ; one calls it *bonæ conscientiæ Paradisus*, the Paradise of a good conscience ; and if it be so, then in prison we may be in Paradise. When the times are troublesome, good conscience makes a calm ! if conscience be clear, what though the days be cloudy ? is it not a contentment, to have a friend always by to speak a good word for us ? such a friend is conscience. Good conscience, as David's harp, drives away the evil spirit of discontent. When thoughts begin to arise, and the heart is disquieted, conscience saith to a man as the king did to Nehemiah, " Why is thy countenance sad ? " So saith conscience, hast not thou the seed of God in thee ? art not thou an heir of the promise ?

Hast not thou a treasure that thou canst never be plundered of? Why is thy countenance sad? O keep conscience clear; and you shall never want contentment. For a man to keep the pipes of his body, the veins and arteries, free from colds and obstructions, is the best way to maintain health: so, to keep conscience clear, and to preserve it from the obstructions of guilt, is the best way to maintain contentment. First, conscience is pure, and then peaceable.

Rule 5.—*Learn to deny yourselves.*

Look well to your affections, bridle them in. Do two things:

1. Mortify your desires. 2. Moderate your delights.

1. *Mortify your desires.* We must not be of the dragon's temper, who (they say) is so thirsty, that no water will quench his thirst; "Mortify therefore your inordinate affections;" in the Greek it is *ἐπιθυμίας κακῆς*, your evil

affection; to shew that our desires, when they are inordinate, are *evil*. Crucify your desires, be as dead men; a dead man hath no appetite.

Quest. How should a Christian martyr his desires?

Answer. Get a right judgment of the things here below: they are mean beggarly things: "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" The appetite must be guided by reason; the affections are the feet of the soul, therefore they must follow the judgment, not lead it.—Often seriously meditate of mortality; death will soon crop those flowers which we delight in, and pull down the fabric of those bodies which we so garnish and beautify. Think when you are locking up your money in your chest, who shall shortly lock you up in your coffin.

2. *Moderate your delights.* Set not your hearts too much upon any creature. What we over-love, we shall over-grieve; Rachel set her heart too much upon her children, and when she

had lost them, she lost herself too : such a vein of grief was opened, as could not be stanchèd ; “she refused to be comforted.” Here was discontent. When we let any creature lie too near our heart, when God pulls away that comfort, a piece of our heart is rent away with it. Too much fondness ends in frowardness. Those that would be content in the want of mercy, must be moderate in the enjoyment. Let us take heed of ingulphing ourselves in pleasure ; better have a spare diet, than by having too much to surfeit.

Rule 6.—*Get much of heaven into your heart.*

Spiritual things satisfy ; the more of heaven is in us, the less earth will content. He that hath once tasted the love of God, his thirst is much quenched towards sublunary things ; the joys of God’s Spirit are heart-filling and heart-cheering joys ; he that hath these, hath heaven begun in him, Rom. xiv. 17.

and shall we not be content to be in heaven? Oh, get a sublime heart, "Seek the things that are above;" fly aloft in your affections; thirst after the graces and comforts of the Spirit; the eagle, that flies above in the air, fears not the stinging of the serpent; the serpent creeps on his belly, and stings only such creatures as go upon the earth.

Discontent is a serpent that stings only an earthly heart; an heavenly soul that with the eagle flies aloft, finds abundantly enough in God to give contentment, and is not stung with the cares and disquiets of the world.

Rule. 7.—Look not so much on the dark side of your condition, as on the light.

God doth chequer his providences, white and black, as the pillar of cloud had its light side and dark; look on the light side of thy estate; who looks on the back side of a landscape? Sup-

pose thou art cast in a law-suit, there is the dark side : yet thou hast some land left, there is the light side. Thou hast sickness in thy body, there is the dark side : but grace in thy soul, there is the light side. Thou hast a child taken away, there is the dark side ; thy husband lives, there is the light side. God's providences in this life are various, represented by those speckled horses among the myrtle-trees, which were the red and white ; (Zeeh. i. 9.) mercies and afflictions are interwoven ; God doth speckle his work. Oh, saith one, I want such a comfort ; but weigh all thy mercies in the balance, and that will make thee content. If a man did want a finger, would he be so discontented for the loss of that, as not to be thankful for all the other parts and joints of the body ? Look on the light side of your condition, and then all your discontents will easily disband ; do not pore upon your losses, but ponder upon your mercies. What ! wouldst thou have no cross at all ? Why should one man

think to have all good things, when himself is good but in part? wouldst thou have no evil about thee, who hast so much evil in thee? Thou art not fully sanctified in this life, how then thinkest thou to be fully satisfied? never look for perfection of contentment till there be perfection of grace.

Rule 8.—*Consider in what a posture we stand here in the world.*

1. We are in a *military* condition, we are soldiers; now a soldier is content with any thing: what though he hath not his stately house, his rich furniture, his soft bed, his full table, yet he doth not complain; he can lie in straw as well as down: he minds not his lodging, but his thoughts run upon dividing the spoil, and the garland of honour that shall be set upon his head; and for hope of this, is content to run any hazard, endure any hardship. Were it not absurd to hear him complain that he wants such provision, and is fain to lie out in the fields? A

Christian is a military person, he fights the Lord's battles, he is Christ's ensign bearer. Now what though he endures hard fare, and the bullets fly about? he fights for a crown, and therefore must be content.

2. We are in a *peregrine* condition; pilgrims and travellers: a man that is in a strange country is contented with any diet or usage, he is glad of any thing, though he hath not that respect or attendance as he looks for at home; nor is capable of the privileges and immunities of that place: he is content; he knows when he comes into his own country he hath lands to inherit, and there he shall have honour and respect: so it is with a child of God, he is in a pilgrim-condition: "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." Therefore let a Christian be content: he is in the world, but not of the world; he is born of God, and is a citizen of the new Jerusalem, therefore, though "he hunger and thirst, and have no cer-

tain dwelling place," yet he must be content; it will be better when he comes into his own country.

3. We are in a *mendicant* condition; we are beggars; we beg at heaven's gate, "Give us this day our daily bread;" we live upon God's alms, therefore must be content with any thing; a beggar must not pick and choose, he is contented with the refuse. Oh, why dost thou murmur that art a beggar, and art fed out of the alm's-basket of God's providence?

Rule 9.—*Let not your hopes depend extrinsicè upon these outward things.*

Lean not upon sandy pillars; we oft build our comforts upon such a friend, or estate, and when that prop is removed, all our joy is gone, and our hearts begin either to fail or fret. A lame man leans on his crutches, and if they break he is undone; let not thy contentment go upon crutches which may soon fail; the ground of

contentment must be within thyself. The word *αὐτάρκεια*, which is used for contentment, signifies self-sufficiency; a Christian hath that from within that is able to support him, that strength of faith and good hope through grace, as bears up his heart in the deficiency of outward comforts. The philosophers of old, when their estates were gone, yet could take contentment in the goods of the mind, their learning and virtue: and shall not a believer much more in the grace of the Spirit, that rich enamel and embroidery of the soul? Say with thyself, If friends leave me, if riches take wings, yet I have that within comforts me, viz. an heavenly treasure, *Omnia mea mecum porto*; when the blossoms of my estate are blown off, still there is the sap of contentment in the root of my heart: I have still an interest in God, and that interest cannot be broken off. Oh, never place your felicity in these dull and beggarly things here below.

Rule 10.—*Let us often compare our condition.*

Quest. How should I compare ?

Ans. Make this five-fold comparison.

I. Let us compare our condition and our desert together ; if we have not what we desire, we have more than we deserve. For our mercies, we have deserved less ; for our afflictions, we have deserved more. First, in regard of our mercies, we have deserved less. What can we deserve ? “ Can man be profitable to the Almighty ? ” We live upon free grace. Alexander gave a great gift to one of his subjects ; the man being much taken with it, This, saith he, is more than I am worthy of ; I do not give thee this, saith the king, because thou art worthy of it, but I give a gift like Alexander. Whatever we have is not merit, but bounty ; the least bit of bread is more than God owes us ; we can bring

fagots to our own burning, but not one flower to the garland of our salvation; he that hath the least mercy will die in God's debt. Secondly, in regard of our afflictions, we have deserved more. "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." Is our condition sad? we have deserved it should be worse: hath God taken away our estate from us? he might have taken away Christ from us: hath he thrown us into prison? he might have thrown us into hell; he might as well damn us, as whip us; this should make us contented.

2. Let us compare our condition with others; and this will make us content; we look at them who are above us; let us look at them who are below us; we see one in his silks, another in his sackcloth; one hath the waters of a full cup wrung out to him, another is mingling his drink with tears; how many pale faces do we behold, whom, not sickness, but want hath brought into a consumption!

think of this, and be content. It is worse with them, who perhaps deserve better than we, and are higher in God's favour. Am I in prison? was not Daniel in a worse place, viz. the lions' den? Do I live in a mean cottage? look on those who are banished from their houses. We read of the primitive saints, that "they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins, of whom the world was not worthy." Hast thou a gentle fit of an ague? look on them who are tormented with the stone and gout, &c: others of God's children have had greater afflictions, and have borne them better than we. Daniel fed upon pulse, and drank water, yet was fairer than they who ate of the king's portion; some Christians who have been in a lower condition, that have fed upon pulse and water, have looked better, viz. been more patient and contented than we who enjoy abundance. Do others rejoice in affliction, and do we repine? Can they take up their

cross and walk cheerfully under it, and do we under a lighter cross murmur?

3. Let us compare our condition with Christ's upon earth; what a poor, mean condition was he pleased to be in for us: he was contented with any thing! "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." He could have brought down an house from heaven with him, or challenged the high places of the earth; but he was contented to be in the wine-press, that we might be in the wine-cellar; and to live poor, that we might die rich: the manger was his cradle, the cobwebs his canopy: he who is now preparing mansions for us in heaven, had none for himself on earth; "he had no where to lay his head." Christ came in *formâ pauperis*; "who being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant." We read not of any sums of money he had: when he wanted money, he

was fain to work a miracle for it. Jesus Christ was in a low condition ; he was never high, but when he was lifted up upon the cross, and that was his humility ; he was content to live poor, and die cursed. Oh, compare your condition with Christ's !

4. Let us compare our condition with what it was once, and this will make us content.

First, let us compare our spiritual estate with what it was once. What were we when we lay in our blood ? we were heirs apparent to hell, having no right to pluck one leaf from the tree of the promise ; it was a Christless and hopeless condition, but now God hath cut off the entail of hell and damnation ; he hath taken you out of the wild olive of nature, and engrafted you into Christ ; making you living branches of that living vine ; he hath not only caused the light to shine upon you, but into you, and hath interested you in all the privileges of sonship : Is not here that which may make the soul content ?

Secondly, let us compare our temporal estate with what it was once : alas, we had nothing when we stepped out of the womb ; “ For we brought nothing with us into the world ; ” if we have not that which we desire, we have more than we did bring with us ; we brought nothing with us but sin : other creatures bring something with them into the world ; the lamb brings wool, the silk-worm silk, but we have brought nothing with us. What if our condition at present be low, it is better than it was once ; therefore having food and raiment, let us be content ; whatever we have, God’s providence fetched it in to us ; and if we lose all, yet we have as much as we brought with us. This was that that made Job content, “ Naked came I out of my mother’s womb : ” as if he had said, though God hath taken away all from me, yet why should I murmur ? I am as rich now as I was when I came into the world, I have as much left as I brought with me : naked came

I hither : therefore "blessed be the name of the Lord."

5. Let us compare our condition with what it shall be shortly. There is a time shortly coming, when if we had all the riches of India they would do us no good ; we must die, and can carry nothing with us, so saith the apostle, "It is certain we can carry nothing out of the world ;" therefore it follows, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." Open the rich man's grave, and see what is there ; you may find the miser's bones, but not his riches : were we to live for ever here, or could we carry our riches into another world, then indeed we might be discontented when we look upon our empty bags ; but it is not so ; God may presently seal a warrant for death to apprehend us ; and when we die we cannot carry our estate with us. Honour and riches descend not into the grave ; why then are we troubled at our outward condition ? why do we disguise ourselves

with discontent? Oh! lay up a stock of grace, be rich in faith and good works, these riches will follow us; no other coin but grace will pass current in heaven, silver and gold will not go there; labour to "be rich towards God;" and as for other things, be not solicitous, "we shall carry nothing with us."

Rule 11.—*Try not to bring your condition to your mind, but bring your mind to your condition.*

The way for a Christian to be contented, is not by raising his estate higher, but by bringing his spirit lower: not by making his barns wider, but his heart narrower; one man a whole lordship or manor will not content; another is satisfied with a few acres of land; what is the difference? the one studies to satisfy curiosity, the other necessity; the one thinks what he may *have*, the other thinks what he may *spare*.

Rule 12.—*Study the vanity of the creature.*

It matters not whether we have more or less of these things, they have vanity written upon the frontispiece of them; the world is like a shadow that declineth: it is delightful, but deceitful; it promiseth more than we find, and it fails us when we have most need of it. All the world rings changes, and is constant only in its disappointments: what then if we have less of that which is at best but voluble and fluid! The world is as full of mutation as motion; and what if God cuts us short in sublunaries! The more a man hath to do with the world, the more he hath to do with vanity. The world may be compared to ice, which is smooth, but slippery: or to the Egyptian temples, without very beautiful and sumptuous, but within nothing to be seen but the image of an ape; every creature saith concerning

satisfaction, "It is not in me." The world is not a filling, but a flying comfort. It is like a game at tennis: Providence bandies her golden balls, first to one, and then to another. Why are we discontented at the loss of these things, but because we expect that from them which is not, and repose that in them which we ought not! "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd," what a vanity was it! is it much to see a withering gourd smitten? or to see the moon dressing itself in a new shape and figure?

Rule 13.—*Get fancy regulated.*

It is the fancy which raiseth the price of things above their real worth; what is the reason one tulip is worth five pounds, another perhaps not worth one shilling; fancy raiseth the price: the difference is rather imaginary than real. So why it should be better to have thousands than hundreds, is, because men fancy it so; if we could

fancy a lower condition better, as having less care in it, and less account, it would be far more eligible; the water that springs out of the rock drinks as sweet as if it came out of a golden chalice; things are as we fancy them. Ever since the fall, the fancy is distempered; "God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil." Fancy looks through wrong spectacles; pray that God will sanctify your fancy; a lower condition would content if the mind and fancy were set right. Diogenes preferred his cynical life before Alexander's royalty; he fancied his little cloister best.—Fabricius, a poor man, yet despised the gold of king Pyrrhus.

Could we cure a distempered fancy, we might soon conquer a discontented heart.

Rule 14.—*Consider how little will suffice nature.*

The body is but of small continent, and is easily recruited. Christ hath

taught us to pray for "our daily bread." Nature is content with a little. 'Not to thirst, nor to starve is enough,' saith Gregory Nazianzen; 'Meat and drink is a Christian's riches,' saith St. Hierome; and the apostle saith, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

The stomach is sooner filled than the eye: how quickly would a man be content, if he would study rather to satisfy his hunger than his humour!

Rule 15.—*Believe the present condition is best for us.*

Flesh and blood is not a competent judge. Surfeited stomachs are for banquetting stuff; but a man that regards his health, is rather for solid food. Vain men fancy such a condition best, and would flourish in their bravery; whereas a wise Christian hath his will melted into God's will, and thinks it best to be at his finding: God is wise, he knows whether we need food or

physic; and if we could acquiesce in providence, the quarrel would soon be at an end. Oh, what a strange creature would man be, if he were what he could wish himself! Be content to be at God's allowance: God knows which is the fittest pasture to put his sheep in; sometimes a more barren ground doth well, whereas rank pasture may rot. Do I meet with such a cross? God shews me what the world is: he hath no better way to wean me, than by putting me to a step-mother. Doth God stint me in my allowance? he is now dieting me. Do I meet with loss? it is, that God may keep me from being lost. Every cross wind shall at last blow me to the right port. Did we believe that condition best which God doth parcel out to us, we should cheerfully submit and say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places."

Rule 16.—*Do not too much indulge the flesh.*

We have taken an oath in baptism

to forsake the flesh. The flesh is a worse enemy than the devil; it is a bosom traitor: an enemy within is worst. If there were no devil to tempt, the flesh would be another Eve, to tempt to the forbidden fruit. Oh, take heed of giving way to it: whence is all our discontent, but from the fleshly part! The flesh puts us upon the immoderate pursuit of the world; it consults for ease and plenty; and if it be not satisfied, then discontents begin to arise. Oh, let it not have the reins; martyr the flesh; in spiritual things the flesh is a sluggard; in secular things an horse-leech, crying, "Give, give." The flesh is an enemy to suffering; it will sooner make man a courtier than a martyr. Oh, keep it under, put its neck under Christ's yoke, stretch and nail it to his cross; never let a Christian look for contentment in his spirit, till there be confinement in his flesh.

Rule 17.—*Meditate much on the glory which shall be revealed.*

There are great things laid up in heaven: though it be sad for the present, yet let us be content in that it will shortly be better; it is but a while, and we shall be with Christ, bathing our souls in the fountain of his love; we shall never complain of wants or injuries any more; our cross may be heavy, but one sight of Christ will make us forget all our former sorrows. There are two things which should give contentment:

1. That God will make us able to bear our troubles. ‘God (saith Chrysostome) doth like a lutanist who will not let the strings of his lute be too slack, lest it spoil the music; nor will he suffer them to be too hard stretched or screwed up, lest they break: So doth God deal with us: he will not let us have too much prosperity, lest this spoil the music of prayer and repentance; nor yet too much adversity,

lest "the spirit fail before him, and the souls which he hath made." "

2. When we have suffered awhile, we shall be perfected in glory; the cross shall be our ladder by which we shall climb up to heaven. Be then content, and the scene will alter. God will ere long turn our water into wine; the hope of this is enough to drive away all distempers from the heart. Blessed be God, it will be better: "We have no continuing city here," therefore our afflictions cannot continue. A wise man looks still to the end. "The end of the just man is peace." Methinks the smoothness of the end should make amends for the ruggedness of the way. O, eternity, eternity! think often of the "Kingdom prepared." David was advanced from the field to the throne. First, he held his shepherd's staff, and shortly after the royal sceptre. God's people may be put to hard services here; but God hath chosen them to be kings to sit upon the throne with the Lord Jesus. This being weighed

in the balance of faith, would be an excellent means to bring the heart to Contentment.

Rule 18.—*Be much in prayer.*

The last rule for Contentment, is Be much in prayer. Beg of God, that he will work our hearts to this blessed frame, "Is any man afflicted? let him pray: So, is any man discontented? let him pray: Prayer gives vent. The opening of a vein lets out the bad blood. When the heart is filled with sorrow and disquiet, prayer lets out the bad blood. The key of prayer oiled with tears, unlocks the heart of all its discontents. Prayer is an holy spell or charm to drive away trouble: Prayer is the unbosoming of the soul, the unloading of all our cares in God's breast, and this ushers in sweet contentment. When there is any burden upon our spirits, by opening our mind to a friend, we find our heart finely eased and quieted: it is not our strong resolutions, but our strong requests to

God, which must give the heart ease in trouble; by prayer the strength of Christ is brought into the soul; and where that is, a man is able to go through any condition. Paul could be in every state content; but that you may not think he was able to do this of himself, he tells you, that though he could want and abound, and "do all things," yet it was through Christ strengthening him? it is the child that writes, but it is the scrivener guides his hand. St. Paul arrived at the hardest duty in religion, Contentment; but the Spirit was his pilot, and Christ his strength, and this strength was ushered in by holy prayer. Prayer is a powerful orator. Prayer is an orator with God, and an exorcist against sin. The best way is to pray down discontent. What Luther saith of concupiscence, I may say of discontent; prayer is a sacred leech, to suck out the venom and swelling of this passion. Prayer com-
poseth the heart, and brings it into tune. Hath God deprived you of

many comforts ? bless God that he has left you the Spirit of Prayer.

Use 6. The last use is of comfort, or an encouraging word to the contented Christian. If there be a heaven upon earth, thou hast it. Oh, Christian, thou mayest insult over thy troubles, and with the leviathan “laugh at the shaking of a spear.” What shall I say ? thou art a crown to thy profession ; thou dost hold it out to all the world, that there is virtue enough in religion to give the soul contentment. Thou shewest height of grace. When grace is crowning, it is not so much for us to be content ; but when grace is conflicting, and meets with crosses, temptations, agonies, now to be content, this is a glorious thing indeed.

To a contented Christian I shall say two things for a farewell.

First. God is exceedingly taken with such a frame of heart. God saith of a contented Christian, as David once said of Goliath’s sword, “There is none like that, Give it me.” If you would

please God, and be men of his heart, be contented. It is said that Rebecca made Isaac savoury meat, such as her husband loved: would you give God such a dish as he loves, bring him this of Contentment. The musician hath many lessons to play; but he hath one above all the rest: There are many lessons of holy music that delight God; the lesson of repentance, humility, &c. But this lesson of Contentment is the sweetest lesson that a Believer can play, God hates a froward Spirit.

Secondly. The contented Christian shall be no loser. What lost Job by his patience? God gave him three times as much as he had before. What lost Abraham by his Contentment? he was content to leave his country at God's call; the Lord makes a covenant with him, that he would be his God, Gen. xvii. He changeth his name; no more Abram, but Abraham, the father of many nations. God makes his seed as the stars of heaven; nay, honours him with this title, "The Father of the

faithful." The Lord makes known his secrets to him, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?" God settles a rich inheritance upon him, that land which was a type of heaven, and afterwards translated him into the blessed paradise. God will be sure to reward the contented Christian. As our Saviour said in another case to Nathaniel, "Because I said I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these." So I say, Art thou contented, O Christian, with a little? thou shalt see greater things than these: God will distil the sweet influences of his love into thy soul; he will raise thee up friends; he will bless the oil in the cruse; and when that is done, he will crown thee with an eternal enjoyment of himself; he will give thee Heaven, where thou shalt have as much contentment as thy soul can possibly thirst after!

B. BENSLEY, ANDOVER.

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