

CHAPTER XXIV.

Brief Directions for Families, about the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

OMITTING those things which concern the public administration of this sacrament, (for the reasons before intimated Part ii.) I shall here only give you some brief Directions for your private duty herein.

Direct. 1. 'Understand well the proper ends to which this sacrament was instituted by Christ; and take heed that you use it not to ends, for which it never was appointed.' The true ends are these, 1. To be a solemn commemoration of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, to keep it, as it were, in the eye of the church, in his bodily absence till he come^a. 2. To be a solemn renewing of the holy covenant which was first entered in baptism, between Christ and the receiver; and in that covenant it is on Christ's part, a solemn delivery of himself first, and with himself the benefits of pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and right to life eternal. And on man's part, it is our solemn acceptance of Christ with his benefits, upon his terms, and a delivering up of ourselves to him, as his redeemed ones, even to the Father, as our reconciled Father, and to the Son as our Lord and Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier, with professed thankfulness for so great a benefit. 3. It is appointed to be a lively objective means, by which the Spirit of Christ should work to stir up, and exercise, and increase the repentance, faith, desire, love, hope, joy, thankfulness, and new obedience of believers; by a lively representation of the evil of sin, the infinite love of God in Christ, the firmness of the covenant or promise, the greatness and sureness of the mercy given, and the blessedness purchased and promised to us, and the great obligations that are laid upon us^b. And that herein believers might be solemnly called out to the most serious exercise of all these graces, and might be provoked and as-

^a 1 Cor. xi. 24—26.

^b Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25. Heb. ix. 15—18. 1 Cor. x. 16, 24. John vi. 32. 35. 51. 58.

sisted to stir up themselves to this communion with God in Christ, and to pray for more as through a sacrificed Christ^c. 4. It is appointed to be the solemn profession of believers, of their faith, and love, and gratitude, and obedience to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of continuing firm in the Christian religion. And a badge of the church before the world. 5. And it is appointed to be a sign and means of the unity, love, and communion of saints, and their readiness to communicate to each other.

The false, mistaken ends which you must avoid are these. 1. You must not with the Papists, think that the end of it is to turn bread into no bread, and wine into no wine, and to make them really the true body and blood of Jesus Christ. For if sense (which telleth all men that it is still bread and wine,) be not to be believed, then we cannot believe that ever there was a Gospel, or an apostle, or a pope, or a man, or any thing in the world. And the apostle expressly calleth it bread three times, in three verses together, after the consecration^d. And he telleth us, that the use of it is (not to make the Lord's body really present, but) "to shew the Lord's death till he come;" that is, as a visible representing and commemorating sign, to be instead of his bodily presence till he come.

2. Nor must you with the Papists use this sacrament to sacrifice Christ again really unto the Father, to propitiate him for the quick and dead, and ease souls in purgatory, and deliver them out of it. For Christ having died once dieth no more, and without killing him, there is no sacrificing him. By once offering up himself, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and now there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin: having finished the sacrificing work on earth, he is now passed into the heavens, to appear before God for his redeemed ones^e.

3. Nor is it any better than odious impiety to receive the sacrament, to confirm some confederacies or oaths of secrecy, for rebellions or other unlawful designs; as the powder-plotters in England did.

^c 1 Cor. xi. 27—29. 31. x. 16, 17. 21. xi. 25, 26. vi. 14. Acts ii. 42. 46. xx. 7.

^d 1 Cor. xi. 26—28.

^e Rom. vi. 9. 1 Cor. xv. 3. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Heb. ix. 16. x. 12. 26. ix. 24.

4. Nor is it any other than impious profanation of these sacred mysteries, for the priest to constrain or suffer notoriously ignorant, and ungodly persons, to receive them^f; either to make themselves believe that they are indeed the children of God, or to be a means which ungodly men should use to make them godly, or which infidels or impenitent persons must use to help them to repentance and faith in Christ. For though there is that in it which may become a means of their conversion, (as a thief that stealeth a bible or sermon book, may be converted by it,) yet is it not to be used by the receiver to that end. For that were to tell God a lie, as the means of their conversion; for who-soever cometh to receive a sealed pardon, doth thereby profess repentance, as also by the words adjoined he must do; and whosoever taketh, and eateth, and drinketh the bread and wine, doth actually profess thereby, that he taketh and applieth Christ himself by faith: and therefore, if he do neither of these, he lieth openly to God; and lies and false covenants are not the appointed means of conversion. Not that the minister is a liar in his delivery of it: for he doth but conditionally seal and deliver God's covenant and benefits to the receiver, to be his, if he truly repent and believe: but the receiver himself lieth, if he do not actually repent and believe, as he there professeth to do.

5. Also it is an impious profanation of the sacrament, if any priest for the love of filthy lucre, shall give it to those that ought not to receive it, that he may have his fees or offerings; or, that the priest may have so much money that is bequeathed for saying a mass for such or such a soul.

6. And it is an odious profanation of the sacrament, to use it as a league or bond of faction, to gather persons into the party, and tie them fast to it, that they may depend upon the priest, and his faction and interest may thereby be strengthened, and he may seem to have many followers.

^f Non absque probatione et examine panem illum præbendum esse neque novis neque veteribus Christianis. Quod si quis est fornicator, aut ebriosus, aut idolis serviens, cum ejusmodi etiam communem cibum capere vetat apostolus, nedum cœlesti mensa communicare, saith a Jesuit, Acosta, lib. vi. cap. 10. And after, Neque enim ubi perspecta est superstitionis antiquæ aut ebriositatis, aut sæcæ consuetudinis macula, ad altare Indus debet admitti, nisi contraria opera illam manifeste et diligenter eluerit.—Christianis concedatur; sed Non-Christianis, dignis moribus subtrahatur. Pag. 549.

7. And it is a dangerous abuse of it, to receive it, that you may be pardoned, or sanctified, or saved, barely by the work done, or by the outward exercise alone. As if God were there obliged to give you grace, while you strive not with your own hearts, to stir them up to love, or desire, or faith, or obedience, by the means that are before you; or, as if God would pardon and save you for eating so much bread and drinking so much wine, when the canon biddeth you; or, as if the sacrament conveyed grace, like as charms are supposed to work, by saying over so many words.

8. Lastly, It is no appointed end of this sacrament, that the receiver thereby profess himself certain of the sincerity of his own repentance and faith: (for it is not managed on the ground of such certainty only by the receiver; much less by the minister that delivereth it.) But only he professeth, that as far as he can discern by observing his own heart, he is truly willing to have Christ and his benefits, on the terms that they are offered; and that he doth consent to the covenant which he is there to renew. Think not therefore that the sacrament is instituted for any of these (mistaken) ends.

Direct. 11. 'Distinctly understand the parts of the sacrament, that you may distinctly use them, and not do you know not what.' This sacrament containeth these three parts. 1. The consecration of the bread and wine, which maketh it the representative body and blood of Christ. 2. The representation and commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ. 3. The communion: or, communication by Christ, and reception by the people.

I. In the consecration, the church doth first offer the creatures of bread and wine, to be accepted of God, to this sacred use. And God accepteth them, and blesseth them to this use; which he signifieth both by the words of his own institution, and by the action of his ministers, and their benediction. They being the agents of God to the people in this accepting and blessing, as they are the agents of the people to God, in offering or dedicating the creatures to this use.

This consecration having a special respect to God the Father, in it we acknowledge his three grand relations. 1. That he is the Creator, and so the Owner of all the crea-

tures; for we offer them to him as his own. 2. That he is our righteous Governor, whose law it was, that Adam and we have broken, and who required satisfaction, and hath received the sacrifice and atonement, and hath dispensed with the strict and proper execution of that law, and will rule us hereafter by the law of grace. 3. That he is our Father or Benefactor, who hath freely given us a Redeemer, and the covenant of grace, whose love and favour we have forfeited by sin, but desire and hope to be reconciled by Christ.

As Christ himself was incarnate and true Christ, before he was sacrificed to God, and was sacrificed to God before that sacrifice be communicated for life and nourishment to souls; so in the sacrament, consecration must first make the creature to be the flesh and blood of Christ representative; and then the sacrificing of that flesh and blood must be represented and commemorated; and then the sacrificed flesh and blood communicated to the receivers for their spiritual life.

II. The commemoration chiefly (but not only) respecteth God the Son. For he hath ordained, that these consecrated representations should in their manner and measure, supply the room of his bodily presence, while his body is in heaven: and that thus, as it were, in effigy, in representation, he might be still crucified before the church's eyes; and they might be affected, as if they had seen him on the cross. And that by faith and prayer, they might, as it were, offer him up to God; that is, might shew the Father that sacrifice, once made for sin, in which they trust, and for which it is that they expect all the acceptance of their persons with God, and hope for audience when they beg for mercy, and offer up prayer or praises to him.

III. In the communication, though the sacrament have respect to the Father, as the principal Giver, and to the Son, as both the Gift and Giver, yet hath it a special respect to the Holy Ghost, as being that Spirit given in the flesh and blood, which quickeneth souls; without which, the flesh will profit nothing; and whose operations must convey and apply Christ's saving benefits to us^s.

^s John vi. 63. vii. 39. iii. 5. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. xv. 45. Gal. iii. 14. iv. 6. Eph. ii. 22.

These three being the parts of the sacrament in whole, as comprehending that sacred action and participation which is essential to it. The material parts, called the relate and correlate, are, 1. Substantial and qualitative. 2. Active and passive. 1. The first, are the bread and wine as signs, and the body and blood of Christ, with his graces and benefits, as the things signified and given. The second, are the actions of breaking, pouring out, and delivering on the minister's part, (after the consecration,) and the taking, eating, and drinking, by the receivers as the sign. And the thing signified is the crucifying or sacrificing of Christ, and the delivering himself with his benefits to the believer, and the receiver's thankful accepting, and using the said gift. To these add the relative form, and the ends, and you have the definition of this sacrament. Of which see more in my "Universal Concord," p. 46, &c.

Direct. III. 'Look upon the minister as the agent or officer of Christ, who is commissioned by him to seal and deliver to you the covenant and its benefits: and take the bread and wine, as if you heard Christ himself saying to you, 'Take of my body and blood, and the pardon and grace which is thereby purchased.' It is a great help in the application, to have mercy and pardon brought us by the hand of a commissioned officer of Christ.

Direct. IV. In your preparation beforehand, take heed of these two extremes: 1. That you come not profanely and carelessly, with common hearts, as to a common work^h. For God will be sanctified in them that draw near himⁱ: and they that eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body from common bread, but eating as if it were a common meal, do eat death to themselves, instead of life. 2. Take heed lest your mistakes of the nature of this sacrament, should possess you with such fears of unworthy receiving, and the following dangers, as may quite discompose and unfit your souls for the joyful exercises of faith, and love, and praise, and thanksgiving, to which you are invited. Many that are scrupulous of receiving it in any, save a feast-

^h Quinam autem indigni, ineptive sint, quibus Angelorum panis præbetur, sacerdotum ipsorum audita confessione, cæterisque perspectis judicium esto. Acosta, lib. vi. cap. 10. pag. 549.

ⁱ Levit. x. 3.

ing gesture, are too little careful and scrupulous of receiving it in any, save a feasting frame of mind.

The first extreme is caused by profaneness and negligence, or by gross ignorance of the nature of the sacramental work. The latter extreme is frequently caused as followeth: 1. By setting this sacrament at a greater distance from other parts of God's worship, than there is cause; so that the excess of reverence doth overwhelm the minds of some with terrors. 2. By studying more the terrible words of eating and drinking damnation to themselves, if they do it unworthily, than all the expressions of love and mercy, which that blessed feast is furnished with. So that when the views of infinite love should ravish them, they are studying wrath and vengeance to terrify them, as if they came to Moses, and not to Christ. 3. By not understanding what maketh a receiver worthy or unworthy, but taking their unwilling infirmities for condemning unworthiness. 4. By receiving it so seldom, as to make it strange to them, whereas if it were administered every Lord's day, as it was in the primitive churches, it would better acquaint them with it, and cure that fear that cometh from strangeness. 5. By imagining, that none that want assurance of their own sincerity, can receive in faith. 6. By contracting an ill habit of mistaken religiousness, placing it all in poring on themselves, and mourning for their corruptions, and not in studying the love of God in Christ, and living in the daily praises of his name, and joyful thanksgiving for his exceeding mercies. 7. And if besides all these the body contract a weak or timorous, melancholy distemper, it will leave the mind capable of almost nothing, but fear and trouble, even in the sweetest works. From many such cases it cometh to pass, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is become more terrible, and uncomfortable to abundance of such distempered Christians, than any other ordinance of God; and that which should most comfort them, doth trouble them most.

Quest. 'But is not this sacrament more holy and dreadful, and should it not have more preparation than other parts of worship?'

Answ. For the degree indeed, it should have very careful preparation: and we cannot well compare it with other

parts of worship; as praise, thanksgiving, covenanting with God, prayer, &c. because that all these other parts are here comprised and performed. But doubtless, God must also be sanctified in all his other worship, and his name must not be taken in vain. And when this sacrament was received every Lord's day, and often in the week besides, Christians were supposed to live continually in a state of general preparation, and not to be so far from a due particular preparation, as many poor Christians think they are.

Quest. II. 'How often should the sacrament be now administered, that it neither grow into contempt or strangeness?'

Ans. Ordinarily in well disciplined churches it should be still every Lord's day: for 1. We have no reason to prove, that the apostles' example and appointment in this case, was proper to those times, any more than that praise and thanksgiving daily is proper to them: and we may as well deny the obligation of other institutions, or apostolical orders as that. 2. It is a part of the settled order for the Lord's day worship; and omitting it, maimeth and altereth the worship of the day; and occasioneth the omission of the thanksgiving and praise, and lively commemorations of Christ which should be then most performed: and so Christians by use, grow habituated to sadness, and a mourning, melancholy religion, and grow unacquainted with much of the worship and spirit of the gospel. 3. Hereby the Papists' lamentable corruptions of this ordinance have grown up, even by an excess of reverence and fear, which seldom receiving doth increase, till they are come to worship bread as their God. 4. By seldom communicating, men are seduced to think all proper communion of churches lieth in that sacrament, and to be more profanely bold in abusing many other parts of worship. 5. There are better means (by teaching and discipline) to keep the sacrament from contempt, than the omitting or displacing of it. 6. Every Lord's day is no oftener than Christians need it. 7. The frequency will teach them to live prepared, and not only to make much ado once a month or quarter, when the same work is neglected all the year besides; even as one that liveth in continual expectation of death, will live in continual preparation: when he that expecteth it but in some grie-

vous sickness, will then be frightened into some seeming preparations, which are not the habit of his soul, but laid by again when the disease is over.

2. But yet I must add, that in some undisciplined churches, and upon some occasions it may be longer omitted or seldomer used; no duty is a duty at all times: and therefore extraordinary cases may raise such impediments, as may hinder us a long time from this, and many other privileges. But the ordinary faultiness of our imperfect hearts, that are apt to grow customary and dull, is no good reason why it should be seldom; any more than why other special duties of worship and church-communion should be seldom. Read well the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, and you will find that they were then as bad as the true Christians are now, and that even in this sacrament they were very culpable; and yet Paul seeketh not to cure them by their seldomer communicating.

Quest. III. 'Are all the members of the visible church to be admitted to this sacrament, or communicate?'

Ans. All are not to seek it, or to take it, because many may know their own unfitness, when the church or pastors know it not: but all that come to seek it, are to be admitted by the pastors, except such children, idiots, ignorant persons, or heretics, as know not what they are to receive and do, and such as are notoriously wicked or scandalous, and have not manifested their repentance. But then it is presupposed, that none should be numbered with the adult members of the church, but those that have personally owned their baptismal covenant, by a credible profession of true Christianity.

Quest. IV. 'May a man that hath knowledge, and civility, and common gifts, come and take this sacrament, if he know that he is yet void of true repentance, and other saving grace?'

Ans. No; for he then knoweth himself to be one that is incapable of it in his present state.

Quest. V. 'May an ungodly man receive this sacrament, who knoweth not himself to be ungodly?'

Ans. No; for he ought to know it, and his sinful ignorance of his own condition, will not make his sin to be his duty; nor excuse his other faults before God.

Quest. VI. 'Must a sincere Christian receive, that is uncertain of his sincerity, and in continual doubting?'

Ans. Two preparations are necessary to this sacrament; the general preparation, which is a state of grace, and this the doubting Christian hath; and the particular preparation, which consisteth in his present actual fitness: and all the question is of this. And to know this, you must further distinguish, between immediate duty and more remote, and between the degrees of doubtfulness in Christians. 1. The nearest immediate duty of the doubting Christian is, to use the means to have his doubts resolved, till he know his case, and then his next duty is, to receive the sacrament; and both these still remain his duty, to be performed in this order: and if he say, 'I cannot be resolved, when I have done my best;' yet certainly it is some sin of his own that keepeth him in the dark, and hindereth his assurance; and therefore duty ceaseth not to be duty. The law of Christ still obligeth him, both to get assurance, and to receive: and the want both of the knowledge of his state, and of receiving the sacrament, are his continual sin, if he lie in it never so long through these scruples, though it be an infirmity that God will not condemn him for. (For he is supposed to be in a state of grace.) But you will say, 'What if still he cannot be resolved whether he have true faith and repentance, or not? what should he do while he is in doubt?' I answer, it is one thing to ask, what is his duty in this case; and another thing to ask, which is the smaller or less dangerous sin? Still his duty is both to get the knowledge of his heart, and to communicate: but while he sinneth (through infirmity) in failing of the first, were he better also omit the other or not? To be well resolved of that, you must discern, 1. Whether his judgment of himself, do rather incline to think and hope that he is sincere in his repentance and faith, or that he is not. 2. And whether the consequents are like to be good or bad to him. If his hopes that he is sincere, be as great or greater than his fears of the contrary, then there is no such ill consequent to be feared as may hinder his communicating; but it is his best way to do it, and wait on God in the use of his ordinance. But if the persuasion of his gracelessness be greater than the hopes of his sincerity, then he must observe how

he is like to be affected, if he do communicate. If he find that it is like to clear up his mind, and increase his hopes by the actuating of his grace, he is yet best to go : but if he find that his heart is like to be overwhelmed with horror, and sunk into despair, by running into the supposed guilt of unworthy receiving, then it will be worse to do it, than to omit it. Many such fearful Christians I have known, that are fain many years to absent themselves from the sacrament; because if they should receive it while they are persuaded of their utter unworthiness, they would be swallowed up of desperation, and think that they had taken their own damnation, (as the twenty-fifth Article of the church of England saith, the unworthy receivers do.) So that the chief sin of such a doubting receiver, is not that he receiveth, though he doubt; for doubting will not excuse us for the sinful omission of a duty (no more of this than of prayer or thanksgiving): but only prudence requireth such a one to forbear that, which through his own distemper would be a means of his despair or ruin: as that physic or food, how good soever, is not to be taken, which would kill the taker: God's ordinances are not appointed for our destruction, but for our edification; and so must be used as tendeth thereunto. Yet to those Christians, who are in this case, and dare not communicate, I must put this question, How dare you so long refuse it? He that consenteth to the covenant, may boldly come and signify his consent, and receive the sealed covenant of God; for consent is your preparation, or the necessary condition of your right: if you consent not, you refuse all the mercy of the covenant. And dare you live in such a state? Suppose a pardon be offered to a condemned thief, but so, that if he after cast it in the dirt, or turn traitor, he shall die a sorer death; will he rather choose to die than take it, and say, I am afraid I shall abuse it? To refuse God's covenant is certain death; but to consent is your preparation and your life.

Quest. VII. 'But what if superiors compel such a Christian to communicate, or else they will excommunicate and imprison him: what then should he choose?'

Answ. If he could do it without his own soul's hurt, he should obey them (supposing that it is nothing but that

which in itself is good that they command him^b). But they have their power to edification, and not to destruction, and he must value his soul above his body; and therefore it is past question, that it is a smaller hurt to be excommunicated, and lie and die in prison, than to cast his soul into despair, by doing that which he thinketh is a grievous sin, and would be his damnation. But all means must be used to cure the mistake of his own understanding.

Quest. viii. 'Is not the case of an hypocrite that knoweth not himself to be an hypocrite, and of a sincere Christian that knoweth not himself to be sincere, all one as to communicating: when both are equally in doubt?'

Ans. No: for being and seeing are things that must be distinguished. The one hath grace in being, though he see it not; and therefore hath a right to the blessings of the covenant; and therefore at once remaineth obliged both to discern his title, and to come and take it: and therefore if he come doubtfully, his sin is not that he receiveth, but in the manner of receiving, that he doth it doubtfully; and therefore it will be a greater sin not to receive at all, unless in the last mentioned case, wherein the consequents are like to be worse to him. But the other hath no true repentance or faith, or love in being; and therefore hath no right to the blessings of the covenant; and therefore, at present, is obliged to discern that he is graceless, and to repent of it: and it is not his sin that he doubteth of his title, but that he demandeth and taketh what he hath no title to; and therefore it is a greater sin in him to take it, than to delay in order to his recovery and preparation. Yea, even in point of comfort, there is some disparity: for though the true Christian hath far greater terrors than hypocrites, when he taketh himself to be an unworthy receiver (as being more sensible and regardful of the weight of the matter), yet usually in the midst of all his fears, there are some secret testimonies in his heart of the love of God, which are a cordial of hope that keep him from sinking into despair, and have more life and power in them, than all the hypocrites' false persuasions of his own sincerity.

Quest. ix. 'Wherein lieth the sin of an hypocrite, and ungodly person, if he do receive?'

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 10. Matt. x. 28.

Answ. His sin is, 1. In lying and hypocrisy; in that he professeth to repent unfeignedly of his sin, and to be resolved for a holy life, and to believe in Christ, and to accept him on his covenant terms, and to give up himself to God, as his Father, his Saviour, and his Sanctifier, and to forsake the flesh, the world, and the devil: when indeed, he never did any of this, but secretly abhorreth it at his heart, and will not be persuaded to it: and so all this profession, and his very covenanting itself, and his receiving, as it is a professing-covenanting sign, is nothing but a very lie. And what it is to lie to the Holy Ghost, the case of Ananias and Sapphira telleth us. 2. It is usurpation to come and lay claim to those benefits, which he hath no title to. 3. It is a profanation of these holy mysteries, to be thus used; and it is a taking of God's name in vain, who is a jealous God, and will be sanctified of all that draw near unto himⁱ. 4. And it is a wrong to the church of God, and the communion of saints, and the honour of the Christian religion, that such ungodly hypocrites intrude as members: as it is to the king's army, when the enemies' spies creep in amongst them; or to his marriage-feast to have a guest in rags^k.

Object. 'But it is no lie, because they think they say true in their profession.'

Answ. That is through their sinful negligence and self-deceit: and he is a liar that speaks a falsehood, which he may and ought to know to be a falsehood, though he do not know it. There is a liar in rashness and negligence, as well as of set purpose.

Quest. x. 'Doth all unworthy receiving make a man liable to damnation? Or, what unworthiness is it that is so threatened^l.'

Answ. There are three sorts of unworthiness (or unfitness) and three sorts of judgment answerably to be feared. 1. There is the utter unworthiness of an infidel, or impenitent, ungodly hypocrite. And damnation to hell fire, is the punishment that such must expect, if conversion prevent it not. 2. There is an unworthiness through some great and scandalous crime, which a regenerate person falleth into; and this should stop him from the sacrament

^l Commandment ii, iii. Lev. x. 2, 3.

^k Matt. xxii. 11, 12.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

for a time, till he have repented and cast away his sin. And if he come before he rise from his fall by a particular repentance (as the Corinthians that sinned in the very use of the sacrament itself), they may expect some notable temporal judgment at the present¹; and if repentance did not prevent it, they might fear eternal punishment. 3. There is that measure of unworthiness which consisteth in the ordinary infirmities of a saint; and this should not at all deter them from the sacrament, because it is accompanied with a greater worthiness; yea, though their weakness appear in the time and manner of their receiving: but yet ordinary corrections may follow these ordinary infirmities. (The grosser abuse of the sacrament itself, I join under the second rank.)

Quest. xi. 'What is the particular preparation needful to a fit communicant?'

Ans. This bringeth me up to the next Direction.

Direct. v. 'Let your preparation to this sacrament consist of these particulars following. 1. In your duty with your own consciences and hearts. 2. In your duty towards God. 3. And in your duty towards your neighbour.'

I. Your duty with your hearts consisteth in these particulars. 1. That you do your best in the close examination of your hearts about your states, and the sincerity of your faith, repentance and obedience: to know whether your hearts are true to God, in the covenant which you are to renew and to seal. Which may be done by these inquiries, and discerned by these signs, (1.) Whether you truly loathe yourselves for all the sins of your hearts and lives, and are a greater offence and burden to yourselves, because of your imperfections and corruptions, than all the world beside is^m. (2.) Whether you have no sin but what you are truly desirous to know; and no known sin, but what you are truly desirous to be rid of; and so desirous, as that you had rather be perfectly freed from sin, than from any affliction in the worldⁿ. (3.) Whether you love the searching and reforming light, even the most searching parts of the Word of God, and the most searching books, and searching sermons, that by them you may be brought to know your-

¹ Vide Synod Dortdract. suffrag. Theol. Brittan. in Artic. 5.

^m Ezek. vi. 9. xx. 43. xxxvi. 31. Rom. vii. 24.

ⁿ Rom. vii. 18. 22. 24. viii. 18.

selves, in order to your settled peace and reformation^p. (4.) Whether you truly love that degree of holiness in others which you have not yet attained yourselves, and love Christ in his children, with such an unfeigned love, as will cause you to relieve them according to your abilities, and suffer for their sakes, when it is your duty^p. (5.) Whether you can truly say, that there is no degree of holiness so high, but you desire it, and had rather be perfect in the love of God, and the obedience of his will, than have all the riches and pleasures of this world^q. And had rather be one of the holiest saints, than of the most renowned, prosperous princes upon earth^r. (6.) Whether you have so far laid up your treasure, and your hopes in heaven, as that you are resolved to take that only for your portion; and that the hopes of heaven, and interest of your souls, hath the pre-eminence in your hearts against all that stands in competition with it^s. (7.) Whether the chiefest care of your hearts, and endeavour of your lives, be to serve and please God, and to enjoy him for ever, rather than for any worldly thing^t. (8.) Whether it be your daily desire and endeavour to mortify the flesh, and master its rebellious opposition to the Spirit; and you so far prevail, as not to live, and walk, and be led by the flesh, but that the course and drift of your life is spiritual^u. (9.) Whether the world, and all its honour, wealth and pleasure appear to you so small and contemptible a thing, as that you esteem it as dung, and nothing in comparison of Christ, and the love of God and glory? and are resolved, that you will rather let go all, than your part in Christ? And, which useth to carry it in the time of trial, in your deliberate choice^x? (10.) Whether you are resolved upon a course of holiness and obedience, and to use those means which God doth make known to

^p John iii. 19—21.

^q 1 John iii. 14. 16. 1 Peter i. 22. iii. 8. James ii. 12—15. Matt. xxv. 40, &c.

^r Rom. vii. 18. 21. 24. Psalm cxix. 5. Matt. v. 6.

^s Psalm xv. 4. xvi. 2. Psalm lxxxiv. 10. lxx. 4.

^t Col. iii. 1. 3. 4. Matt. vi. 20, 21.

^u Matt. vi. 23. John v. 26. 2 Cor. v. 1. 6—9.

^x Rom. viii. 1. 6—10. 13. Gal. v. 17. 21, 22.

^y Phil. iii. 7—9. 13. 18—20. 1 John ii. 15. Luke xiv. 26. 30. 33. Matt. xiii. 19. 21.

you, to be the way to please him, and to subdue your corruption; and yet feeling the frailties of your hearts, and the burden of your sins, do trust in Christ as your righteousness before God, and in the Holy Ghost, whose grace alone can illuminate, sanctify, and confirm you^v. By these signs you may safely try your states.

2. When this is done, you are also to try the strength and measure of your grace; that you may perceive your weakness, and know for what help you should seek to Christ. And to find out what inward corruptions and sinful inclinations are yet strongest in you, that you may know what to lament, and to ask forgiveness of, and help against. My book called "Directions for Weak Christians," will give you fuller advice in this.

3. You are also to take a strict account of your lives^z; and to look over your dealings with God and men, in secret and in public, especially of late, since the last renewal of your covenant with God, and to hear what God and conscience have to say about your sins, and all their aggravations^a.

4. And you must labour to get your hearts affected with your condition, as you do discover it. To be humbled for what is sinful, and to be desirous of help against your weakness, and thankful for the grace which you discern.

5. Lastly, you must consider of all the work that you are to do, and all the mercies which you are going to receive, and what graces are necessary to all this, and how they must be used; and accordingly look up all those graces, and prepare them for the exercise to which they are to be called out. I shall name you the particulars anon.

II. Your duty towards God in your preparation for this sacrament, is, 1. To cast down yourselves before him in humble, penitent confession, and lamentation of all the sins which you discover; and to beg his pardon in secret, before you come to have it publicly sealed and delivered. 2. To look up to him with that thankfulness, love, and joy, as becomes one that is going to receive so great a

^v Acts xi. 23. Psalm cxix. 57. 63. 69. 106. 1 Cor. i. 30. Rom. viii. 9. John xv. 5. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^z Psalm iv. 4—6.

^a Psalm cxix. 23. 1 Cor. xi. 28.

mercy from him; and humbly to beg that grace which may prepare you, and quicken you to, and in the work.

III. Your duty towards others in this your preparation, is, 1. To forgive those that have done you wrong, and to confess your fault to those whom you have wronged, and ask them forgiveness, and make them amends and restitution so far as is in your power; and to be reconciled to those with whom you are fallen out; and to see, that you love your neighbours as yourselves. 2. That you seek advice of your pastors, or some fit persons, in cases that are too hard for yourselves to resolve, and where you need their special help. 3. That you lovingly admonish them that you know do intend to communicate unworthily, and to come thither in their ungodliness, and gross sin unrepented of: that you shew not such hatred of your brother, as to suffer sin upon him: but tell him his faults, as Christ hath directed you, Matt. xviii. 15—17. And do your parts to promote Christ's discipline, and keep pure the church. See 1 Cor. v. throughout.

Direct. VI. 'When you come to the holy communion, let not the over-scrupulous regard of the person of the minister, or the company, or the imperfections of the ministration, disturb your meditations, nor call away your minds from the high and serious employment of the day.' Hypocrites who place their religion in bodily exercises, have taught many weak Christians to take up unnecessary scruples, and to turn their eye and observation too much to things without them.

Quest. 'But should we have no regard to the due celebration of these sacred mysteries, and to the minister, and communicants, and manner of administration?'

Answer. Yes: you should have so much regard to them, 1. As to see that nothing be amiss through your default, which is in your power to amend. 2. And that you join not in the committing of any known sin. But (1.) Take not every sin of another for your sin, and think not that you are guilty of that in others, which you cannot amend; or, that you must forsake the church and worship of God, for these corruptions which you are not guilty of, or deny your own mercies, because others usurp them or abuse them. (2.) If you suspect any thing imposed upon you to be sinful to you,

try it before you come thither; and leave not your minds open to disturbance, when they should be wholly employed with Christ.

Quest. 1. ' May we lawfully receive this sacrament from an ungodly and unworthy minister ?'

Answ. Whoever you may lawfully commit the guidance of your souls to as your pastor, you may lawfully receive the sacrament from, yea, and in some cases from some others: for in case you come into a church that you are no member of, you may lawfully join in communion with that church, for that present, as a stranger, though they have a pastor so faulty, as you might not lawfully commit the ordinary conduct of your soul to. For it is their fault and not yours, that they chose no better; and, in some cases, such a fault as will not warrant you to avoid communion with them. But you may not receive, if you know it, from a heretic, that teacheth any error against the essence of Christianity. 2. Nor from a man so utterly ignorant of the Christian faith or duty, or so utterly unable to teach it to others, as to be notoriously incapable of the ministry. 3. Nor from a man professedly ungodly, or that setteth himself to preach down godliness itself. These you must never own as ministers of Christ, that are utterly incapable of it. But see that you take none for such that are not such. And there are three sorts more, which you may not receive from, when you have your choice, nor take them for your pastors: but in case of necessity imposed on you by others, it is lawful and your duty. And that is, (1.) Usurpers that make themselves your pastors, without a lawful call, and perhaps do forcibly thrust out the lawful pastors of the church. (2.) Weak, ignorant, cold and lifeless preachers, that are tolerable in case of necessity, but not to be compared with worthier men. (3.) Ministers of scandalous, vicious lives. It is a sin in you to prefer any one of these before a better, and to choose them when you have your choice; but it is a sin on the other side, if you rather submit not to one of these, than be quite without, and have none at all. You own not their faults in such a case, by submitting to their ministry.

Quest. II. ' May we communicate with unworthy persons, or in an undisciplined church ?'

Ans. You must here distinguish if you will not err^b: and that, 1. Between persons so unworthy as to be no Christians, and those that are culpable, scandalous Christians. 2. Between a few members, and the whole society, or the denominating part. 3. Between sin professed and owned, and sin disowned by a seeming penitence. 4. And between a case of liberty, when I have my choice of a better society; and a case of necessity, when I must communicate with the worser society, or with none: and so I answer,

1. You ought not to communicate at all in this sacrament with a society that professeth not Christianity: if the whole body, or denominating part be such; that is, 1. With such as never made profession of Christianity at all. 2. Or have apostatized from it. 3. Or, that openly own any heresy inconsistent with the essential faith or duty of a Christian. 4. Or, that are notoriously ignorant what Christianity is.

2. It is the duty of the pastors and governors of the church, to keep away notorious, scandalous offenders, till they shew repentance; and the people's duty to assist them by private reproof, and informing the church when there is cause. Therefore, if it be through the neglect of your own duty, that the church is corrupted and undisciplined, the sin is yours, whether you receive with them or not.

3. If you rather choose a corrupted, undisciplined church to communicate with, when you have your choice of a better, 'cæteris paribus,' it is your fault.

But on the contrary, it is not your sin, but your duty to communicate with that church which hath a true pastor, and where the denominating part of the members are capable of church communion, though there may some infidels, or heathens, or incapable persons violently intrude, or scandalous persons are admitted through the neglect of discipline; in case you have not your choice to hold personal communion with a better church, and in case also you be not guilty of the corruption, but by seasonable and modest professing

^b Gildas de Excid. Britt. speaketh thus to the better sort of pastors then. Quis perosus est consilium malignantium, et cum impiis non sedit? Quis eorum salutari in arca (hoc est, nunc Ecclesia,) nullum Deo adversantem ut Noe diluvii tempore, non admisit, ut perspicue monstraretur non nisi innocios vel pœnitentes egregios, in dominica domo esse debere? Josseline's Ed. pp. 61, 62.

your dissent, do clear yourself of the guilt of such intrusion and corruption. For here the reasons and ends of a lawful separation are removed; because it tendeth not to God's honour, or their reformation, or your benefit: for all these are more crossed by holding communion with no church, than with such a corrupted church. And this is to be preferred before none, as much as a better before this.

Quest. III. ' But what if I cannot communicate unless I conform to an imposed gesture, as kneeling or sitting?'

Ans. 1. For sitting or standing, no doubt it is lawful in itself: for else authority were not to be obeyed, if they should command it; and else the church had sinned in forbearing kneeling in the act of receiving, so many hundred years after Christ; as is plain they did, by the canons of general councils (Nic. i. and Trull.) that universally forbade to adore kneeling, any Lord's day in the year, and any week day between Easter and Whitsuntide; and by the fathers, Tertullian, Epiphanius, &c., that make this an apostolic or universal tradition. 2. And for kneeling, I never yet heard any thing to prove it unlawful; if there be any thing, it must be either some Word of God, or the nature of the ordinance, which is supposed to be contradicted^c. But 1. There is no Word of God for any gesture, nor against any gesture: Christ's example can never be proved to be intended to oblige us more in this, than in many other circumstances that are confessed not obligatory: as that he delivered it but to ministers, and but to a family, to twelve, and after supper, and on a Thursday night, and in an upper room, &c.: and his gesture was not such a sitting as ours. 2. And for the nature of the ordinance, it is mixed: and if it be lawful to take a pardon from the king upon our knees, I know not what can make it unlawful to take a sealed pardon from Christ (by his ambassador) upon our knees.

Quest. IV. ' But what if I cannot receive it, but according to the administration of the Common prayer-book? or some other imposed form of prayer? Is it lawful so to take it?'

Ans. If it be unlawful to receive it, when it is administered with the Common prayer-book, it is either, 1. Because it is a form of prayer. 2. Or because that form hath

^c Mr. Paybodie's book, I think unanswerable.

some forbidden matter in it. 3. Or because that form is imposed. 4. Or because it is imposed to some evil end and consequent. 1. That it is not unlawful, because a form, is proved before, and indeed needs no proof with any that is judicious. 2. Nor yet for any evil in this particular form : for in this part the Common Prayer is generally approved. 3. Nor yet, because it is imposed : for a command maketh not that unlawful to us, which is lawful before ; but it maketh many things lawful and duties, that else would have been unlawful accidentally. 4. And the intentions of the commanders, we have little to do with ; and for the consequents they must be weighed on both sides ; and the consequents of our refusal will not be found light.

In the general, I must here tell all the people of God, in the bitter sorrow of my soul, that at last it is time for them to discern that temptation, that hath in all ages of the church almost, made this sacrament of our union, to be the grand occasion or instrument of our divisions ; and that true humility, and acquaintance with ourselves, and sincere love to Christ and one another, would shew some men, that it was but their pride, and prejudice, and ignorance, that made them think so heinously of other men's manner of worship : and that on all sides among true Christians, the manner of their worship is not so odious, as prejudice, and faction, and partiality representeth it : and that God accepteth that which they reject. And they should see how the devil hath undone the common people by this means ; by teaching them every one to expect salvation for being of that party which he taketh to be the right church, and for worshipping in that manner which he and his party thinketh best : and so wonderful a thing is prejudice, that every party by this is brought to account that ridiculous and vile, which the other party accounted best.

Quest. v. ' But what if my conscience be not satisfied, but I am still in doubt, must I not forbear? Seeing he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not in faith ; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin^d.'

Answ. The apostle there speaketh not of eating in the sacrament, but of eating meats which he doubteth of whether they are lawful, but is sure that it is lawful to for-

^d Rom. xiv. 24.

bear them. And in case of doubting about things indifferent, the surer side is to forbear them, because there may be sin in doing; but there can be none on the other side, in forbearing. But in case of duties, your doubting will not disoblige you; else men might give over praying, and hearing God's Word, and believing, and obeying their rulers, and maintaining their families, when they are but blind enough to doubt of it. 2. Your erring conscience is not a law maker, and cannot make it your duty to obey it: for God is your king, and the office of conscience is to discern his law, and urge you to obedience, and not to make you laws of its own: so that if it speak falsely, it doth not oblige you, but deceive you: it doth only 'ligare,' or insnare you, but not 'obligare,' or make a sin a duty: it casteth you into a necessity of sinning more or less, till you relinquish the error; but in the case of such duties as these, it is a sin to do them with a doubting conscience, but (ordinarily) it is a greater sin to forbear.

Object. 'But some divines write, that conscience being God's officer, when it erreth, God himself doth bind me by it to follow that error, and the evil which it requireth becometh my duty.'

Ans. A dangerous error tending to the subversion of souls and kingdoms, and highly dishonourable to God. God hath made it your duty to know his will, and do it: and if you ignorantly mistake him, will you lay the blame on him, and draw him into participation of your sin, when he forbiddeth you both the error and the sin? And doth he at once forbid and command the same thing? At that very moment, God is so far from obliging you to follow your error, that he still obligeth you to lay it by, and do the contrary. If you say, 'You cannot,' I answer, your impotency, is a sinful impotency; and you can use the means, in which his grace can help you: and he will not change his law, nor make you kings and rulers of yourselves instead of him, because you are ignorant or impotent.

Direct. VII. 'In the time of the administration, go along with the minister throughout the work, and keep your hearts close to Jesus Christ, in the exercise of all those graces which are suited to the several parts of the administration.' Think not that all the work must be the minis-

ter's: it should be a busy day with you, and your hearts should be taken up with as much diligence, as your hands be in your common labour; but not in a toilsome, weary diligence, but in such delightful business as becometh the guests of the God of heaven, at so sweet a feast, and in the receiving of such invaluable gifts.

Here I should distinctly shew you, I. What graces they be that you must there exercise. II. What there is objectively presented before you in the Sacrament, to exercise all these graces. III. At what seasons in the administration each of these inward works are to be done.

I. The graces to be exercised are these, (besides that holy fear and reverence common to all worship,) 1. A humble sense of the odiousness of sin, and of our undone condition as in ourselves, and a displeasure against ourselves, and loathing of ourselves, and melting repentance for the sins we have committed; as against our Creator, and as against the love and mercy of a Redeemer, and against the Holy Spirit of Grace. 2. A hungering and thirsting desire after the Lord Jesus, and his grace, and the favour of God and communion with him, which are there represented and offered to the soul. 3. A lively faith in our Redeemer, his death, resurrection, and intercession; and a trusting our miserable souls upon him, as our sufficient Saviour and help; and a hearty acceptance of him and his benefits upon his offered terms. 4. A joy and gladness in the sense of that unspeakable mercy which is here offered us. 5. A thankful heart towards him from whom we do receive it. 6. A fervent love to him that by such love doth seek our love. 7. A triumphant hope of life eternal, which is purchased for us, and sealed to us. 8. A willingness and resolution to deny ourselves, and all this world, and suffer for him that hath suffered for our redemption. 9. A love to our brethren, our neighbours, and our enemies, with a readiness to relieve them, and to forgive them when they do us wrong. 10. And a firm resolution for future obedience, to our Creator, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier, according to our covenant.

II. In the naming of these graces, I have named their objects, which you should observe as distinctly as you can that they may be operative. I. To help your humiliation

and repentance, you bring thither a loaden miserable soul, to receive a pardon and relief: and you see before you the sacrificed Son of God, who made his soul an offering for sin, and became a curse for us to save us who were accursed.

2. To draw out your desires, you have the most excellent gifts and the most needful mercies presented to you that this world is capable of: even the pardon of sin, the love of God, the Spirit of grace, and the hopes of glory, and Christ himself with whom all this is given.

3. To exercise your faith you have Christ here first represented as crucified before your eyes: and then with his benefits, freely given you, and offered to your acceptance, with a command that you refuse them not.

4. To exercise your delight and gladness, you have this Saviour and this salvation tendered to you; and all that your souls can well desire set before you.

5. To exercise your thankfulness, what could do more than so great a gift, so dearly purchased, so surely sealed, and so freely offered?

6. To exercise your love to God in Christ, you have the fullest manifestation of his attractive love, even offered to your eyes, and taste, and heart, that a soul on earth can reasonably expect; in such wonderful condescension, that the greatness and strangeness of it surpasseth a natural man's belief.

7. To exercise your hopes of life eternal, you have the price of it here set before you; you have the gift of it here sealed to you; and you have that Saviour represented to you in his suffering, who is now there reigning, that you may remember him as expectants of his glorious coming to judge the world, and glorify you with himself.

8. To exercise your self-denial and resolution for suffering, and contempt of the world and fleshly pleasures, you have before you both the greatest example and obligation, that ever could be offered to the world; when you see and receive a crucified Christ, that so strangely denied himself for you, and set so little by the world and flesh.

9. To exercise your love to brethren, yea, and enemies, you have his example before your eyes, that loved you to the death when you were enemies: and you have his holy servants before your eyes, who are amiable in him through the workings of his Spirit, and on whom he will have you shew your love to himself.

10. And to excite your resolution for future obedience, you see his double title to

the government of you, as Creator and as Redeemer; and you feel the obligations of mercy and gratitude; and you are to renew a covenant with him to that end; even openly where all the church are witnesses. So that you see here are powerful objects before you to draw out all these graces, and that they are all but such as the work requireth you then to exercise.

III. But that you may be the readier when it cometh to practice, I shall as it were lead you by the hand, through all the parts of the administration, and tell you when and how to exercise every grace, and those that are to be joined together I shall take together, that needless distinctness do not trouble you.

1. When you are called up and going to the table of the Lord, exercise your humility, desire, and thankfulness, and say in your hearts, 'What, Lord, dost thou call such a wretch as I? What! me, that have so oft despised thy mercy, and wilfully offended thee, and preferred the filth of this world, and the pleasures of the flesh before thee? Alas, it is thy wrath in hell that is my due: but if love will choose such an unworthy guest, and mercy will be honoured upon such sin and misery, I come Lord at thy call: I gladly come: let thy will be done; and let that mercy which inviteth me, make me acceptable, and graciously entertain me; and let me not come without the wedding garment, nor unreverently rush on holy things, nor turn thy mercies to my bane.'

2. When the minister is confessing sin, prostrate your very souls in the sense of your unworthiness, and let your particular sins be in your eye, with their heinous aggravations. The whole need not the physician, but the sick. But here I need not put words into your mouths or minds, because the minister goeth before you, and your hearts must concur with his confessions, and put in also the secret sins which he omitteth.

3. When you look on the bread and wine which is provided and offered for this holy use, remember that it is the Creator of all things, on whom you live, whose laws you did offend; and say in your hearts, 'O Lord, how great is my offence! who have broken the laws of him that made me, and on whom the whole creation doth depend! I had my

being from thee, and my daily bread ; and should I have requited thee with disobedience? Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

4. When the words of the institution are read, and the bread and wine are solemnly consecrated, by separating them to that sacred use, and the acceptance and blessing of God is desired, admire the mercy that prepared us a Redeemer, and say, "O God, how wonderful is thy wisdom and thy love! How strangely dost thou glorify thy mercy over those sins that gave thee advantage to glorify thy justice! Even thou our God whom we have offended, hast out of thy own treasury satisfied thy own justice, and given us a Saviour by such a miracle of wisdom, love, and condescension, as men or angels shall never be able fully to comprehend: so didst thou love the sinful world, as to give thy Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. O thou that hast prepared us so full a remedy, and so precious a gift, sanctify these creatures to be the representative body and blood of Christ, and prepare my heart for so great a gift, and so high, and holy, and honourable a work."

5. When you behold the consecrated bread and wine, discern the Lord's body, and reverence it as the representative body and blood of Jesus Christ; and take heed of profaning it, by looking on it as common bread and wine; though it be not transubstantiate, but still is very bread and wine in its natural being, yet it is Christ's body and blood in representation and effect. Look on it as the consecrated bread of life, which with the quickening Spirit must nourish you to life eternal.

6. When you see the breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine, let repentance, and love, and desire, and thankfulness, thus work within you: "O wondrous love! O hateful sin! How merciful, Lord, hast thou been to sinners! and how cruel have we been to ourselves and thee! Could love stoop lower? Could God be merciful at a dearer rate? Could my sin have done a more horrid deed, than put to death the Son of God? How small a matter hath tempted me to that, which must cost so dear before it was forgiven! How dear payed my Saviour for

that which I might have avoided at a very cheap rate! At how low a price have I valued his blood, when I have sinned and sinned again for nothing! This is my doing! My sins were the thorns, the nails, the spear! Can a murderer of Christ be a small offender? O dreadful justice! It was I and such other sinners that deserved to bear the punishment, who were guilty of the sin; and to have been fuel for the unquenchable flames for ever. O precious sacrifice! O hateful sin! O gracious Saviour! How can man's dull and narrow heart be duly affected with such transcendent things? or heaven make its due impression upon an inch of flesh? Shall I ever again have a dull apprehension of such love? or ever have a favourable thought of sin? or ever have a fearless thought of justice? O break or melt this hardened heart, that it may be somewhat conformed to my crucified Lord! The tears of love and true repentance are easier than the flames from which I am redeemed. O hide me in these wounds, and wash me in this precious blood! This is the sacrifice in which I trust: this is the righteousness by which I must be justified, and saved from the curse of thy violated law! As thou hast accepted this, O Father, for the world, upon the cross, behold it still on the behalf of sinners; and hear his blood that crieth unto thee for mercy to the miserable, and pardon us, and accept us as thy reconciled children, for the sake of this crucified Christ alone! We can offer thee no other sacrifice for sin; and we need no other."

7. When the minister applieth himself to God by prayer, for the efficacy of this sacrament, that in it he will give us Christ and his benefits, and pardon, and justify us, and accept us as his reconciled children, join heartily and earnestly in these requests, as one that knoweth the need and worth of such a mercy.

8. When the minister delivereth you the consecrated bread and wine, look upon him as the messenger of Christ, and hear him as if Christ by him said to you, "Take this my broken body and blood, and feed on it to everlasting life; and take with it my sealed covenant, and therein the sealed testimony of my love, and the sealed pardon of your sins, and a sealed gift of life eternal; so be it, you unfeignedly consent unto my covenant, and give up yourselves to me as my redeemed ones." Even as in deliver-

ing the possession of house or lands, the deliverer giveth a key, and a twig, and a turf, and saith, " I deliver you this house, and I deliver you this land ;" so doth the minister by Christ's authority deliver you Christ, and pardon, and title to eternal life. Here is an image of a sacrificed Christ of God's own appointing, which you may lawfully use: and more than an image; even an investing instrument, by which these highest mercies are solemnly delivered to you in the name of Christ. Let your hearts therefore say with joy and thankfulness, with faith and love, " O matchless bounty of the eternal God! what a gift is this! and unto what unworthy sinners! And will God stoop so low to man? and come so near him? and thus reconcile his worthless enemies? Will he freely pardon all that I have done? and take me into his family and love, and feed me with the flesh and blood of Christ? I believe; Lord, help mine unbelief. I humbly and thankfully accept thy gifts! Open thou my heart, that I may yet more joyfully and thankfully accept them. Seeing God will glorify his love and mercy by such incomprehensible gifts as these, behold, Lord, a wretch that needeth all this mercy! And seeing it is the offer of thy grace and covenant, my soul doth gladly take thee for my God and Father, for my Saviour and my Sanctifier. And here I give up myself unto thee, as thy created, redeemed, and (I hope) regenerate one; as thy own, thy subject, and thy child, to be saved and sanctified by thee, to be beloved by thee, and to love thee to everlasting. O seal up this covenant and pardon, by thy Spirit, which thou sealest and deliverest to me in thy sacrament; that without reserve I may be entirely and for ever thine!"

9. When you see the communicants receiving with you, let your very hearts be united to the saints in love, and say, " How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! How amiable is the family of the Lord! How good and pleasant is the unity of brethren! How dear to me are the precious members of my Lord! though they have yet all their spots and weaknesses which he pardoneth and so must we. My goodness, O Lord, extendeth not unto thee; but unto thy saints, the excellent ones on earth, in whom is my delight. What portion of my estate thou requirest, I willingly give unto the poor, and if I have wronged any man, I am willing to res-

tore it. And seeing thou hast loved me an enemy, and forgiven me so great a debt, I heartily forgive those that have done me wrong, and love my enemies. O keep me in thy family all my days, for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand, and the door-keepers in thy house are happier than the most prosperous of the wicked^c.”

10. When the minister returneth thanks and praise to God, stir up your souls to the greatest alacrity; and suppose you saw the heavenly hosts of saints and angels praising the same God in the presence of his glory; and think with yourselves, that you belong to the same family and society as they, and are learning their work, and must shortly arrive at their perfection: strive therefore to imitate them in love and joy; and let your very souls be poured out in praises and thanksgiving. And when you have the next leisure for your private thoughts, (as when the minister is exhorting you to your duty,) exercise your love, and thanks, and faith, and hope, and self-denial, and resolution for future obedience, in some such breathings of your souls as these: “O my gracious God, thou hast surpassed all human comprehension in thy love! Is this thy usage of unworthy prodigals? I feared lest thy wrath as a consuming fire would have devoured such a guilty soul; and thou wouldst have charged upon me all my folly. But while I condemned myself, thou hast forgiven and justified me; and surprised me with the sweetest embracements of thy love! I see now that thy thoughts are above our thoughts, and thy ways above our ways, and thy love excelleth the love of man, even more than the heavens are above the earth. With how dear a price hast thou redeemed a wretch that deserved thy everlasting vengeance! with how precious and sweet a feast hast thou entertained me, who deserved to be cast out with the workers of iniquity! Shall I ever more slight such love as this? shall it not overcome my rebelliousness, and melt down my cold and hardened heart? shall I be saved from hell, and not be thankful? Angels are admiring these miracles of love? and shall not I admire them? Their love to us doth cause them to rejoice, while they stand by and see our heavenly feast: and should it not

^c Numb. xxiv. 5. Psal. cxxxiii. xv. 4. xvi. 2, 3. Luke xix. 8. Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

be sweeter to us that are the guests that feed upon it? My God, how dearly hast thou purchased my love! how strangely hast thou deserved and sought it! Nothing is so much my grief and shame, as that I can answer such love with no more fervent, fruitful love. O what an addition would it be to all this precious mercy, if thou wouldst give me a heart to answer these thine invitations, that thy love, thus poured out, might draw forth mine, and my soul might flame by its approaching unto these thy flames! and that love, drawn out by the sense of love, might be all my life; O that I could love thee as much as I would love thee! yea, as much as thou wouldst have me love thee! But this is too great a happiness for earth! But thou hast shewed me the place where I may attain it! My Lord is there, in full possession: who hath left me these pledges, till he come and fetch us to himself, and feast us there in our Master's joy. O blessed place! O happy company that see his glory, and are filled with the streams of those rivers of consolation! yea, happy we whom thou hast called from our dark and miserable state, and made us heirs of that felicity, and passengers to it, and expectants of it, under the conduct of so sure a guide! O then we shall love thee, without these sinful pauses and defects; in another measure and in another manner than now we do: when thou shalt reveal and communicate thy attractive love, in another measure and manner than now! Till then, my God, I am devoted to thee; by right and covenant I am thine! My soul here beareth witness against myself, that my defects of love have no excuse: thou deservest all, if I had the love of all the saints in heaven and earth to give thee. What hath the world to do with my affections? And what is this sordid, corruptible flesh, that its desires and pleasures should call down my soul, and tempt it to neglect my God? What is there in all the sufferings that man can lay upon me, that I should not joyfully accept them for his sake, that hath redeemed me from hell, by such unmatched, voluntary sufferings? Lord, seeing thou regardest, and so regardest, so vile a worm, my heart, my tongue, my hand confess, that I am wholly thine. O let me live to none but thee, and to thy service, and thy saints on earth! And O let me no more return unto iniquity! nor venture on that sin that killed my Lord! And

now thou hast chosen so low a dwelling, O be not strange to the heart that thou hast so freely chosen! O make it the daily residence of thy Spirit! Quicken it by thy grace; adorn it with thy gifts; employ it in thy love; delight it in its attendance on thee; refresh it with thy joys and the light of thy countenance; and destroy this carnality, selfishness, and unbelief: and let the world see that God will make a palace of the lowest heart, when he chooseth it for the place of his own abode."

Direct. VIII. 'When you come home review the mercy which you have received, and the duty which you have done, and the covenant you have made: and 1. Betake yourselves to God in praise and prayer, for the perfecting of his work. And 2. Take heed to your hearts that they grow not cold, and that worldly things or diverting trifles, do not blot out the sacred impressions which Christ hath made, and that they cool not quickly into their former dull and sleepy frame. 3. And see that your lives be actuated by the grace that you have here received, that even they that you converse with may perceive that you have been with God.' Especially when temptations would draw you again to sin; and when the injuries of friends or enemies would provoke you, and when you are called to testify your love to Christ, by any costly work or suffering; remember then what was so lately before your eyes, and upon your heart, and what you resolved on, and what a covenant you made with God. Yet judge not of the fruit of your receiving, so much by feeling, as by faith; for more is promised than you yet possess.

CHAPTER XXV.

Directions for Fearful, Troubled Christians that are perplexed with Doubts of their Sincerity and Justification.

HAVING directed families in the duties of their relations, and in the right worshipping of God, I shall speak something of the special duties of some Christians, who in regard of their state of soul and body, have special need of