

their childhood, though with many ordinary sins, and have, by undiscerned degrees, grown up unto true godliness. These are uncertain when they first had special grace, and were not open scandalous violators of their baptismal vow; and, therefore, I can lay no such injunction on them.

But I would have all do thus, that have thus broken that vow, and are converted afterward to true repentance, for all the reasons which I now mentioned: and the universal church hath ever been for such public repentance in such a case; yea, and for particular gross lapses afterward. And the papists to this day call it the sacrament of penance, though they corrupt it by auricular confession, when it should be open; and by many unwarrantable adjuncts and formalities.

S. What would you have me do after that?

P. I will record your name in the church book among the church communicants, and we will all pray for your confirmation and perseverance; and you must live as a member of the holy catholic church of Christ, in the communion of saints, and return no more to your ungodly, sinful life: and come to me again, and I shall give you further counsel. In the mean time, you may do as the converted eunuch did, (the lord treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia, Acts viii. 39,) even go on your way rejoicing in this, that you are united to Christ, and are justified from all your former sins, and are sincerely entered into the covenant and family of God, and are made a^b fellow-citizen with the saints, and an heir of certain, endless glory.

THE FIFTH DAY'S CONFERENCE.

Directions to the converted against temptations.

Speakers.—Paul, a Teacher; and Saul, a Learner.

PAUL. Welcome, neighbour. How go matters with your soul?

SAUL. I thank God and my Redeemer, and you, his minister, since I publicly repented, renounced my sin, and gave up myself to my God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier. I find myself as in a new world. My^c hopes revive, and I have had already more

^b Eph. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 16—18, 30, 32.

^c Rom. v. 1—6, 10.

comfort in believing, and in seeking God, than ever I had in my life of sin. I am grieved and ashamed that I stood off so long, and have spent so much of my life in wickedness, and in wronging God, who gave me life. I am ashamed that ever such trifles and fooleries possessed my heart, and kept me so long from a holy life, and that I delayed after I was convinced. I could wish, from my very heart, that I had spent all that time of my life in beggary, slavery, or a gaol, which I have spent in a fleshly, sinful course. O had I not now a merciful God, a sufficient Saviour, a pardoning covenant of grace, and a comforting Sanctifier, which way should I look, or what should I do? It amazeth me to think what a dangerous state I so long lived in. O what if God had cut off my life, and taken away my unsanctified soul, what would have become of me for ever! O that I had sooner turned to my God, and sooner cast away my sins, and sooner tried a holy life! But my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour, that he hath pitied a self-destroying sinner, and at last his mercy hath^d abounded where my sin did abound.

P. It is but little of his goodness which as yet you have tasted of, in comparison of what you must find at last. But that you may yet make sure work, I shall spend this day's conference in acquainting you what temptations you have yet to overcome, and what dangers to escape, for yet you have but begun your race and warfare.

S. Your counsel hath hitherto been so good, that I shall gladly hear the rest.

P. 1. The first temptation that you are like to meet with, is a seeming^e difficulty and puzzling darkness in all, or many of the doctrines and practices of godliness. You will think strange of many things that are taught you, and you will be stalled at the difficulties of understanding and believing, of meditating and praying, of watching against sin, and of doing your duty. And by reason of this difficulty, Satan would make God's service seem wearisome, uncomfortable, and grievous to you, and so turn back your love from God.

And all this will be, because you are yet but as a stranger to it; like a scholar that entereth upon books and sciences, which he never meddled with before; or like an apprentice that newly learneth his trade; or like a traveller in a strange way and country. To an ignorant and inexperienced person, that never

^d Rom. v. 12, 13, to the end.

^e John vi. 60; Heb. v. 11, 12; 2 Pet. iii. 16.

meddled with such things before, but hath been used to a contrary course of life, all things will seem strange and difficult at first.

S. What course must I take to escape this temptation ?

1. When you meet with any difficulty, you must still remember that it is your own dark mind, or backward heart, that is the cause, and never suspect God's word or ways, no more than a sick man will blame the meat, instead of his stomach, if he loath a feast. But take occasion to renew your repentance, and think, 'All this is along of myself, who spent my youth in sin and folly, which I should have spent in hearing the word of God, and practising a godly life. What need have I now to double my labour to overcome all this !'

2. Resolve to wait patiently on God in the use of all his means, and teaching, time, and use, and grace will make all more plain, and easy, and delightful to you. Do not expect that it should come all on a sudden, without time, and diligence, and patience.

3. Keep still as an humble disciple of Christ, in a learning mind and way, and turn not, in self-conceitedness, to cavil against what you do not understand. This is the chief thing in which conversion maketh us like little children. (Matt. xviii. 3.) Children are conscious of their ignorance, and are teachable, and set not their wits against their teachers, till they grow towards twenty years of age, and then they grow wise in their own conceits, and begin to think that their tutors are mistaken, and to set their wits against the truth which they should receive. But of this more anon.

II. The second temptation will be, upon these difficulties and your mistakes in religion, to grow so perplexed as to be overwhelmed with doubts and fears, and so to turn melancholy, and ready to despair.

The devil will strive to lose you, and bewilder you in some mistakes, or to make you think that your conversion was not true, because you had no more brokenness of heart for sin, or because you know not just the time when you were converted. Or he will make you think that all religion lieth in striving to weep and break your heart more ; or that you have no grace, because you have not such a lively sense of things invisible, as you have of the things that are seen. Or he will tell you that now you must not think nor talk of the world, but all your thoughts and talk must be of God, and his word and holy things,

and that all other is idle thoughts and talk ; and that you must tie yourself to longer tasks of meditation and prayer than you have time and strength to carry on.

S. Sir, you make me admire to hear you. Can such motions of holiness come from the devil. If I did not know you, I should suspect some carnal malignity against holiness in your speeches.

P. Did not the devil plead Scripture with Christ in his temptations ? (Matt. iv.) And doth he not^t transform himself into an angel of light to deceive ? When he cannot keep you in security and profaneness, he will put on a visor of godliness : and whenever the devil will seem religious and righteous, he will be religious and righteous overmuch.

S. What getteth he by this ? Would he make us more religious ?

P. You little know what he hopeth to get by it. Overdoing is undoing all ; he would destroy all your religion by it. If you run your horse till you tire him or break his wind, is not that the way to lose your journey ? Nothing over violent is durable. If a scholar study so hard as to crack his brains, he will never be a good scholar, or wise man, till he is cured. Our souls here are united to our bodies, and must go on that pace that the body can endure. If Satan can tempt you into longer and deeper musing (especially on the sadder objects in religion) than your body and brain can bear, you will grow melancholy before you are aware, and then you little know how ill a guest you have entertained.

For when once you are melancholy, you will be disabled then from secret prayer and from meditating at all : it will but confound you ; you cannot bear it : and so by overdoing, you will come to do nothing of that sort of duty. And you will then have none but either fanatic whimsies, and visions, and prophecys, or else (more usually) sad despairing thoughts in your mind : all that you hear, and read, and see, you will think maketh against you ; you will believe nothing that soundeth comfortably to you ; you can think none but black and hideous thoughts. The devil will tell you a hundred times over, that you are an hypocrite and unsanctified, and all that ever you did was in hypocrisy, and that none of your sins are yet forgiven ; and that you shall as sure be in hell as if you were there already ; that God is your enemy ; that Christ is no Saviour for you ; that you have sinned against the Holy Ghost, or that the day of grace is

^t 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

past ; that the Spirit is departed, and God hath forsaken you ; that it is now too late, too late to repent and find mercy ; and that you are undone for ever. These black thoughts will be like a beginning of hell to you.

And it is not yourself only that will be the sufferer by this ; but many of the ignorant and wicked will, by seeing you, be hardened into a love of security and sensuality, and will fly from religion as a frightful thing which doth not illuminate men, but make them mad, or cast them into desperation. And so Satan will use you as some Papists have drawn the picture of a Protestant like a devil, or an ass, to affright men from religion ; or as we set up maukins to frighten birds from the corn ; as if he had written on your back for all to read, ‘ See what you must come to, if you will be religious.’

S. You describe to me so sad a case, as almost makes me melancholy to hear it, and it tempts me to be afraid of religion itself, if it tend to this : but what would you have me do to escape it ?

P. Religion itself, as God commandeth it, tendeth not to this. It is a life of holy faith, and hope, and joy : but it is errors about religion that tend to it. And especially when any great cross or disappointment in the world becometh an advantage to the tempter to cast you into worldly discontents and cares, and trouble and perplexity of mind : this is the most usual beginner of melancholy ; and then it turneth to religious trouble afterwards.

And I the rather tell you of it now, because you are capable, through God’s mercy, of preventing it : but it is a disease which, when it seizeth on you, will disable you to think, or believe, or do any thing that much tendeth to your cure ; words are usually in vain ; it overcome the freedom of the will.

The prevention is this : 1. Set not too much by any thing in the world, that so the losing of it may not be able to reach your heart. Take the world as nothing, and it can do nothing with you. Take it for dung, and the loss of it will not trouble you.

2. Keep true apprehensions of the nature of religion, that lieth in faith, hope, and love ; † in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in the forethoughts of everlasting glory ; and in comforting yourself and one another, with remembering that you shall for ever be with the Lord, in thanksgiving to your bountiful God, and in his joyful praises : let these be your

† Rom. xiv. 17 ; 1 Cor. xii. 31, and xiii ; 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.

thoughts, your speeches, your exercise, publicly and secretly. Set yourself more to the daily exercise of divine praises and thanksgiving, to actuate love and joy, than to any other part of duty. Not that you have done repenting; but that these are the chief, the life, the top, the end of all the rest.

3. When you feel any scruples or troubles begin to seize upon you, open them-presently to a judicious minister or friend, before they fasten and take rooting in you. Remember and observe these things.

III. A third temptation that will assault you will be, to be in continual doubt of your own sincerity; so that though you be not melancholy before, Satan would bring you to it, by a life of continual doubts and fears.

And here he hath very great advantage, because man's heart is so dark and deceitful, and because our grace is usually very little and weak; and a little is hardly discerned from none; and because that the greatest assurance of sincerity is a work that requireth much skill, great diligence, and clear helps.

S. I easily believe that this will be my case: I feel some beginnings of it already: but what would you advise me to do to prevent it?

P. I have written a small book on this point alone, called 'The Right Method for Peace of Conscience,' &c. to which I must refer you: but briefly now I say,

1. You must still keep by you in writing the baptismal covenant of grace, with the explication of it, which I gave you, and never mistake the nature of that covenant and of true religion: and on all occasions of doubting, renew your part, that is, your consent; and go no further for marks of godliness and true conversion, if you can truly say, that you still consent to that same covenant: for this is your faith and repentance, and your certain evidence of your right to the benefits of God's part. Find still your true consent, and never doubt of your sincerity.

2. But because he that consenteth to learn will learn, and he that^b consenteth to obey will obey: your life must also testify the truth of your consent. Therefore, instead of over tedious trying and fearing whether you truly consent and obey or not, set yourself heartily to your duty; study to please God, and to live fruitfully in good works; resolve more against those sins which make you question your sincerity; and the practice of a godly life, and the increase of your grace, will be a constant

^b Tit. i. 16; Jam. ii. 14, &c.; Matt. 21, 30—33.

discernible evidence; and you will have the witness in yourself, that you are a son of God.

S. I thank you for this short and full direction. I pray go on to the next temptation.

P. IV. If you escape these sadder thoughts, Satan will tempt you to security, and tell you, that now you are converted, all is sure, and you never need to fear any more. Those that have true grace can never lose it; and sins once pardoned, are never unpardoned again; and therefore now all your danger is past. And if he can thus take off all your fear and care, he will quickly take off your zeal and diligence.

S. Why; Is not all my fear and danger past?

P. No; not as long as you are on earth: tormenting fear you must resist; but preventing¹ fear, and repenting fear, will be still your duty: you are but entered into the holy war. You have many a temptation yet to resist and conquer; temptations from Satan and from men, and from your flesh; temptations of prosperity and adversity. You have constant and various duties to perform, which require strength, and skill, and willingness. You have remaining corruptions yet to mortify, which will be striving to break out against, and to undo, you. You know not how many burdens you have to bear, where flesh, and heart, and friends may fail you. I tell you all the rest of your life must be the practice of what you have promised in your covenant; a labour, a race, a warfare: and you must defend yourself with one hand, as it were, while you build with the other: and all the way to heaven must, step by step, be carried on by labour and victory conjunct. Will you reward a man merely for promising to serve you? Will you excuse a soldier from fighting and watching, because he is enlisted, and engaged to do it? The two first articles of religion are, that God is, and that he is^k the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. If you receive the immoveable kingdom, you must^l serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that our God is a consuming fire. And though it be God that giveth you to will and to do, you must^m work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You must beⁿ "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." You must fight a

¹ Heb. iv. 1, and xii. 1, 2.

^l Heb. xii. 28, 29.

^m 1 Cor. xv. 58; 1 Tim. iv. 8.

^k Heb. xi. 6.

ⁿ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

good fight, and finish your course, and love the appearing of Jesus Christ, if you will expect the crown of righteousness. You must overcome, if you will inherit, and ° be faithful to the death, if you will receive the crown of life. Do you think that you come into Christ's army, vineyard, and family to be careless?

S. But if I cannot fall from grace, nor be unjustified, though there be duty, there is no danger, nor cause for fear.

P. Controversies of that kind are not yet fit for your head, much less to build security upon; it is certain that God's grace will not forsake you, if you ^p forsake it not first: and it is certain that none of his elect shall fall away and perish. But it is certain that Adam lost true grace, and that such apostasy may be not only possible, but too easy in itself, which yet shall never come to pass. The church of Christ lived in joy and peace, without meddling much with that controversy, till Pelagius and Augustin's disputations: and Augustin's opinion was, that all the elect persevere, but not all that are truly sanctified and love God. But this is enough to the present case; that as you have no cause to distrust God, so it is certain that God doth not decree to save men without danger, but to save them from danger; and that your fear and care to escape that danger (of sin and misery) is the means decreed and commanded for your escape; and that God hath no surelier decreed that you shall escape, than he hath decreed that you shall fear it, and so escape by rational care, excepting some unknown dangers which he puts by. (Heb. iv. 1.) "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." The sum of all this is instanced in Heb. xi. 7. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Go on, therefore, with faith, and hope, and joy; but think not that all the danger is past till you are in heaven.

V. The most dangerous temptation of all will be the stirring up the remnants of your own corruption, of sensuality, and pride, and covetousness, to draw you back to your former pleasant sins, especially by appetite and fleshly lust.

1. If you be addicted to your appetite, though you be poor,

^{Rev. ii., and iii.}

^p Jos. xxiv. 26, 40; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, and xv. 2; Isa. i. 28; Jer. xvii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 24; Rom. viii. 21, 29, 30.

you will not want a bait, especially to excess of drinking. And the tempter will tell you, that because you fare hardly, and have small drink at home, you may lawfully comfort your heart with a cup of extraordinary abroad. And so from one cup to two, and so to three, you shall be tempted on, till your appetite become your master, and your love to the drink doth become so strong, that you cannot easily restrain it.

S. God forbid that ever I should again become a swine !

P. If you should but once be overtaken with this sin, you are in great danger of committing it again and again : for the remembrance of the pleasure in your fancy will be a continual temptation to you ; and when Satan hath deceived any man into sin, usually God leaveth that man proportionably to his power, and he gets that advantage of which he is very hardly dispossessed : as he ruleth by deceiving, so where he hath deceived once, he hath double advantage to deceive again.

And then I will foretell you, besides the danger of damnation, and the odious ingratitude to your Saviour, &c., you will live in a kind of hell on earth : the devil and the flesh will draw you one way, and God's Spirit and your conscience will draw you another way. The terrors of God will be upon you ; and no sooner will the pleasure of your sin be over, but conscience will be God's executioner upon you, and some sparks of hell will fall upon it ; so that you will think that the devil is ready to fetch you ; unless you sin yourself into stupidity, and then you are undone for ever.

S. I pray you tell me how to prevent such a misery.

P. Be not confident of your own strength : keep away from the tavern and alehouse : come not within the doors, except in cases of true necessity : keep out of the company of tipplers and drunkards. Let not the ^a tempting cup be in your sight : or if you be unwillingly cast upon temptation, let holy fear renew your resolution.

And so as to the case of fleshly lusts ; if your bodily temper be addicted to it, as you love your soul, keep at a sufficient distance from the bait. If you feel your fancy begin to be infected towards any person, whose comeliness enticeth you, be sure that you never be with them alone without necessity, and that you never be guilty of any immodest looks, or touch, or words ; but keep at such a distance that it may be almost impossible for you to sin. You little know what you have done, when you have

^a Matt. vi. 13, and xxvi. 41 ; Luke viii. 13.

first broken the bounds of modesty : you have set open the door of your fancy to the devil ; so that he can, almost at his pleasure, ever after, represent the same sinful pleasure to you anew : he hath now access to your fancy to stir up^r lustful thoughts and desires ; so that when you should think of your calling, or of your God, or of your soul, your thoughts will be worse than swinish, upon the filth that is not fit to be named. If the devil here get in a foot, he will not easily be got out. And if you should be once guilty of fornication, it will first strongly tempt you to it again, and the devil will say, if once may be pardoned, why not twice ? And if twice, why not thrice ? And next, the flames of hell will be hotter in your conscience than the flames of lust were in your flesh ; and if God do not give you up to hardness of heart, and utterly^a forsake you, you will have no rest till you return from sin to God : which, if you be so happy as to do, you little think how dear it may cost you ; what terrors, what^t heart-breaking, and, perhaps, a sad and disconsolate life, even to your death.

And you will not suffer alone : O what a grief will it be to all the godly, that know or hear of you ! What a reproach to religion ! What a hardening to the wicked, to make them hate religion, to their damnation ! The malignant will triumph, and say, ' No doubt, they are all alike : these are your puritans, your precisians, your holy brethren !' and if you thus wound religion, God will wound your conscience and reputation at the last.

S. You make me tremble to hear of such a horrid state. And the rather because, to confess the truth to you, my nature is not without some lustful inclinations : I entreat you, therefore, to tell me how to subdue and mortify them, and prevent such sin ?

P. You are married already ; and, therefore, I need not advise you to that lawful remedy ; but I charge you to take heed of all quarrels and fancies which would make your own wife distasteful to you. 2. And, above all, be sure that you be not idle in mind or body. You that are a poor labourer, are in ten-fold less danger than rich men and gentlemen are. When a man is idle, the devil findeth him at leisure for filthy thoughts, and immodest dalliance ; but if you will labour hard in your calling from morning to night, so that your business may necessarily take up your thoughts, and also weary and employ your body, you will neither have a mind to filthiness, nor time of dalliance. 3. And be sure that you fare hard for quantity and quality : the

^r Jam. i. 13, 14.^a 1 Thess. iii. 7.

Psalm li.

fire of lust will go out, if it be not fed with idleness, fullness, and pride. Gluttons and drunkards are still laying in fuel for filthy lusts. And great lustful inclinations must have great fasting. And physic and diet will do much (as eating much cold herbs, and drinking cold water). But to have a body still employed in business and labour, and a mind never idle, but still taken up with your calling, or with God, together with a spare diet, is the sum of the cure, with keeping far enough from the baits, and casting out filthy thoughts before they fasten in the mind.

The story is commonly reported of a Lord Keeper in our time, who near Islington, as he passed by, saw a man that had newly hanged himself; and, causing him to be cut down, recovered him to health. And, upon examination, found that he hanged himself for love, as lust is called. He sent him to Bridewell, and gave orders that his labour should be hard, and his usage severe: till at last, the man being cured of love, came and thanked him for the healing of his soul, as well as for the saving of his life.

You will be tempted also to pride and ambition, to seek preferment and domination over others; and to a worldly mind, to thirst after "riches and great matters for yourself and your children after you in the world. And this pride and worldliness are the most mortal sins of all the rest, as possessing the very heart of love, which is the seat that God reserveth for himself. But, against these you must have daily instructions in the public ministry. I will now say no more to you but this: that he that thinketh on the grave, and what man's flesh must shortly turn to, and of the brevity of this life, which every hour expecteth its end; and thinketh how dreadful a thing it will be for a soul to appear in the guilt of pride or worldliness before the holy God, one would think should easily detest these sins, and^x use the world as if he used it not.

S. Proceed, I pray you, to the other temptations.

P. VI. The controversies and differences which you will hear about religion, and the many sects, and parties, and divisions which you will meet with, together with their speeches and usage of one another, will be a great temptation to you.

I. In doctrinals, you will hear some on one side, and some on the other, hotly contending about predestination and providence, and universal redemption, and free-will, and man's merits, and

^x 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; Luke xxii.

^x 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

in what sense Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and about justification, and the law, and the covenants of works and of grace; and of the nature of faith, and repentance, of assurance of salvation, and whether any fall away from grace, with many such like.

II. In matters of church government and God's worship, you will meet with some that are for prelacy, and some against it; some for government by the pastors in equality, some for the people's power of the keys, and some for an universal government of all the world by the pope of Rome. And you will find some against all praying by the book, or a set form of words; and some against all other praying save that, at least, in public; some for images, and many symbolical ceremonies of men's making, in God's public worship, and some against them; some for keeping all from the sacrament, of whose conversion or holiness the people are not satisfied; and some for admitting the scandalous and ignorant, and some for a middle way; with many other differences about words, and gestures, and manner of serving God.

III. And it will increase your temptation to hear all these called by several names, some Greeks, some papists, some protestants; and of them, some Lutherans, and Arminians, some Calvinists, some antinomians, some libertines, some prelatial, some Erastians, some presbyterians, some independents, some anabaptists, besides seekers, quakers, familists, and many more that are truly heretic; and some (especially the papists) would make you believe that all these are so many several religions, of which none but one (that is, their own) is true and saving.

IV. But the greatest part of your temptation will be to see how all these do use one another, and to hear what language they give to one another. You shall find that the papists make it a part of their religion or church laws, that those whom they account heretics must be burnt to death and ashes; and that inquisitions, by torments, must force them to confess and detect themselves and others; and that ^v temporal lords that will not exterminate all such from their dominions, are to be excommunicated first, and next deprived by the pope of their possessions, and their dominions given to others that will do it: and that preachers are to be silenced and cast out, that swear not, subscribe not, and conform not, as their church canons do require

^v Concil. Later. sub Innoc. 3. Can. i. 3.

them. Others, in all countries almost, you will find, inclining to the way of force in various degrees, and saying, that without it the church cannot stand, and discipline would be of no effect, and no union or concord would be maintained: these will call those that do not obey them schismatics, factious, seditious, and such like. Others you will find pleading for liberty of conscience, some for all, and some for many, and some for themselves only; some crying out against the prelates as antichristian persecutors, and formalists, and enemies to all serious, godly men; some will separate from them, as churches not fit for Christians to hold communion with. One party will charge you, as you would escape schism and damnation, not to join with the protestants, or nonconformists or separatists: another will charge you, as you would not be guilty of false worship, idolatry, popery, persecution, &c., not to hold communion with the conforming churches. And the anabaptists will tell you, that your infant baptism was nothing but a sin and a mockery, and that you must be baptised again if you will be saved, say some, or if you will be capable of church communion, say others. The antinomians will tell you, that if you turn not to their opinions, you are a legalist, and a stranger to free grace, and set up a righteousness of your own, against the righteousness of Christ, and are fallen from grace by adhering to the law. The arminians, and jesuits, and Lutherans will tell you, that if you are against them, you blasphemously make God a tyrant, an hypocrite, and the author of sin. The dominicans and anti-arminians will tell you, that if you be of the opinion which they oppose, you make man an idol, and ascribe to him that which is proper to God, and are enemies to God's grace and providence, and near to Socinianism. These, and such other temptations, you must meet with from disputers, who account themselves, or are accounted by their party, the best, the wisest, and most learned of men.

S. You greatly perplex me to hear such unexpected things as these: what then shall I do if I come to see them, and should be thus assaulted? Is religion no plainer or surer a way; or are Christians no wiser or better people than to live in such uncertainties, contentions, and confusions? I thought that their warfare had been only against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Do they live in such a war against each other? I am almost utterly discouraged to hear of such a war as you describe.

P. I had rather you knew it beforehand, that you may be

prepared for it, than to be overthrown hereafter by an unexpected surprise. 1. Religion, you must know, is a thing which consisteth of several parts; as a man's body hath, 1. A head, and a heart, and a liver, and a stomach. These we call essential parts; without which it is not a human body. 2. It hath arms, and hands, and legs, and feet, which we call integral parts; without these it may be a body, but not a whole body. These are, some of them, great and few, and some of them are exceeding small and almost innumerable; there are hundreds, or thousands, of capillary veins, arteries, nerves, and fibres, so small as that the most curious anatomists in the world, that open men's bodies, cannot see them while they are before their eyes; much less the true nature and causes of all the humours, and their motions and effects. 3. There are also nails, and millions of hairs, which are no parts of the body at all, but accidents; even so religion hath, 1. Its essential parts, which I have opened to you in the baptismal covenant. These all true Christians know, and are agreed in. 2. It hath its integral parts, which are next to these. The greater sort of these, some erroneous Christians wanting, are like men that are without a leg or an arm; but the smaller parts are so many that no Christian on earth is so perfect as to know and have them all.

Is not all plain and sure which I have opened to you, and engaged you in? And yet there are a thousand texts of Scripture, and hard points in divinity, which the most learned are disagreed about. All that without which a man cannot be a good and holy Christian and be saved, is plain and easy in itself. And Christ did choose, therefore, to speak to the capacity of the meanest, though it offend some subtle, curious wits, who expected that God should have sent from heaven a philosopher to resolve their doubts about unprofitable creature speculations, rather than a Redeemer to save their souls. Believe and repent, and love God above all, and heaven above earth, and your neighbour as yourself, and mortify the lusts of the flesh by the Spirit, and deny yourself, and suffer patiently, and forgive your enemies, &c. All these are doctrines harder to be practised than to be understood.

But yet the most subtle wits shall not complain for want of work, for God hath put many things into the Scriptures to exercise them. And the nature of the matter doth of itself make multitudes of the lesser things in divinity to be difficult.

II. And as for Christians themselves, you must know, 1. That there are ^a among them abundance of worldly hypocrites, such as you were before your repentance; for such men are of that opinion and side which is uppermost, and maketh most for their advantage and honour in the world. And these strive to get into places of wealth and power, to be the masters of all others. And it is not mere learning, or a doctor's habit, or pastor's chair, or power to hurt others, that will make a holy, mortified man. And what wonder is it if such as these be troublers of the church, and revilers or persecutors of good men; and if they use their religion to serve their pride, and passion, and worldly interest, and ends?

2. And among those that are sincerely devoted to God, there are abundance of lamentable imperfections. 1. Some are yet young and ^b raw of understanding, and never had time, and hard study, and helps sufficient to acquaint them with all these difficult, controverted points. 2. And then it is the common disease of mankind, to be too little distrustful of our own understandings, and to be too confident of our first apprehensions; whereas, alas! the understanding of man is a poor, dark, slippery, fumbling thing; and most men's first conceptions of doctrinal matters are very lame, if not false: because, at first, we come strangers to the matters, and we always leave out one half, at least, that is to be known. And a half knowledge hath half ignorance with it, if not error; because truths are like the parts of a clock, or watch, in such connexion that the ignorance of one part may make us err about the use of all, or many of the rest. And the truth is, wise and judicious Christians are very few; for it is but few that are born with strong natural wits, and few that fall into the hands of right teachers, and few that are patient, diligent students; all which, besides the special helps of God's Spirit, are necessary to make a judicious man.

3. And there are in most of us too much of our inordinate pride, and selfishness, and passion unmortified, according to the various degrees of grace. Most Christians are weak and ^c infants; and weak grace hath strong corruptions; and strong corruptions will be great troublers of the church and family, as they are great troublers of the soul that hath them.

Do you not hear in prayer what large and sad confessions all Christians make, both pastors and people, of their many and

^a John xiii. 10, 11.

^b Heb. v. 11—14.

^c 1 Cor. iii. 1—4; Gal. iii. 1, 2, &c.

great corruptions, of their ignorance, pride, passion, and the like? And do you not hear, by their complaints, that they are their own grievous trouble, and make their own lives a burden to them? And do you think that they dissemble, and mean not as they speak? And do you not think that those corruptions which disturb themselves will disturb the church? It is strange if a church, which consisteth of a thousand self-troublers, have not some hundreds of church troublers.

You will be apt, at your first conversion, to think that true Christians are nearer to perfection than they are; as if the godly had nothing but godliness in them; but when you have tried them longer you will find that grace is weak; and men's faults are many, and very stiff, and hardly cured; and your over-high estimation of the best may, by experience, receive a check, and you will see that men are still but men.

S. But I shall never be able to keep up that fervent love to the brethren which is my duty, if I find them as bad as you describe them. It will tempt me to think that grace itself is less excellent than I thought it, if it do no more, and make men no better. I feel already your very discourse abate my great estimation of religious persons; what then will such experience do?

P. If your estimation be erroneous, and you think them more perfect than they are, the abatement of it is your duty: for God would not have us judge falsely of them, nor ground our love to them upon mistake. But the excellency of holiness, and the true worth of the godly, may be discerned through all these troublesome faults. The use that you must make of all this is such as followeth:

1. You must consider how great God's^d mercy is to man that will bear with so much faultiness in the best; and how tender a physician we have who endureth all these stinking corruptions which we can scarce endure in one another, and the humble can scarce endure in themselves.

2. What constant need we have of a Saviour and a^e Sanctifier, and how much we must still live upon the healing grace of Christ.

3. How bad our case was before conversion, when it is so bad still; and what wretches we should have been if God had left us to ourselves; and what church-troublers the ungodly are, when the better sorts have such troublesome faults.

^d Matt. xviii. 32; Exod. xxxiv. 37; Col. iii. 13; Psalm ciii. 3; Eph. iv. 32.

^e John i. 9; Eph. v. 26.

4. What an excellent thing grace is, that doth not only keep alive under so much sin, but daily works it out, till at last it perfectly overcome it.

5. How ^f tender we must be of judging one another to be ungodly, for such faults as are too common among some of the penitent. Though sin be never the better, because we are all so bad, yet we are the unfitter to be hasty censurers of one another.

6. It is a help to the hope and comfort of a penitent burdened sinner, that yet Christ will ^e pardon him and heal him at the last, when he seeth how much God beareth with and pardoneth in all; as it is a comfort to the sick man to hear that thousands do live that have had the same disease. If almost all God's servants were perfect, it would be hard for the ^h imperfect to believe that they are his servants.

7. It showeth you what need we have all to bear with one another, if ever we will have love and peace; and what a ⁱ self-condemning course it is of persecutors, to ruin the godly upon an accusation of some tolerable error or fault, when all men have such like.

8. It will tell you how little cause any of us have to be ^k proud, and how needful ^l humility and renewed repentance is to those that are still so bad.

9. It will tell you how little reason we have to be ^m secure and idle, and to think that our mortifying work is done, when still we have all so much sin to overcome.

10. It will keep us from too contemptuous and unmerciful carriage towards those that are unconverted, or that are lapsed into sin; and teach us to pity them and pray for them, rather than revile them, when we find so much faultiness among the better sort of Christians. And it will keep us from that ⁿ over-rigid, and censorious, and magisterial expectation or execution of church discipline when faults are so common under high professions.

11. It will make those ^o few Christians the more amiable in your eyes, whose great wisdom, piety, sobriety, peaceableness, and patience, not only keep them from joining with the church troublers, but also maketh them both the supporters and healers

^f Gal. vi. 1—3; Matt. vii. 1—3.

^h 1 John i. 7—9.

^k Isa. lxii. 5.

^l Heb. xii. 28, 29; Phil. ii. 12.

^o Phil. ii. 21.

^e 1 John ii. 1, 2.

ⁱ Matt. xviii. 32; John viii. 6—8.

ⁿ Matt. xviii. 3, and xi. 28, 29.

^m 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

of the rest. For through God's great mercy many such judicious, wise, humble, blameless, charitable, and peaceable men there are, who are to the ordinary weak professors what the healthful are in an hospital or family to the sick, and the aged to the children; that bear with the rest, and help to cure them by degrees, and keep the peace which they would break, and reconcile the differences which others make, and rid out of the church the excrements of reviling, and hatred, and divisions, wherewith the others do defile it. And ^p blessed are these peace-makers, who have the ^q pure and peaceable wisdom from above, for they are eminently the children of God.

12. Lastly, This must teach you to remember the difference between earth and heaven, and to look up with honour and desire to the perfect harmony of holy souls, united in one flame of love to God; and to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus! When shall I be in that peaceable, perfect world, where no ignorance, no sin, no pride, no passion, no carnal domination, troubleth the holy triumphant church?' And it must quicken your prayers, that God's "will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." These are the true uses to be made of all our differences, contentions, scandals, persecutions, and church divisions.

S. O how great a mercy is a wise and seasonable monitor and guide! I was ready to think the scandal described to be so great, as might even warrant, if not necessitate my offence, and the abatement of my liking of godly men, if not of godliness itself. And you have showed me abundance of fruitful uses to be made of it; and that with undeniable evidence of reason.

P. To think ill of Christ, or Christianity, of God, or godliness, for the errors or faults of any man in the world, is a mad and a most disingenuous thing. For, 1. What is all sinfulness but a want of godliness, or that which is its contrary? And wilt you vilify health, because many are sick; or ease, because many have pain; or life, because many die; or light, because many are blind, or in darkness; when, on the contrary, it is pain and sickness that best teacheth men to value ease and health? And should not the sinful confusions in the world, then, and the miscarriages of Christians, cause us to value wisdom, holiness, and peace, the more? It is not godliness, but want of more godliness, that maketh men do all this amiss. There is nothing in the world but more wisdom, and more true godliness, that can

^p Matt. v.

^q Jam. iii. 17.

cure it; and when there is none, the world is so much worse, that it is almost like hell.

2. And is it not God that forbiddeth and condemneth all this? Is it not his law that every sinner breaketh? Is there any one in the world, or all the world, so much against all sin as God is? What would you have him do more to signify his dislike of it? He forbids it; he caused his Son to die for sin; he yet chastiseth the godly themselves for it: and he will cast the impenitent into hell for it; and he will never suffer any sin in his heavenly kingdom. And is it not madness of blasphemy, then, if any will lay the blame of men's sins on God, or on his holy laws?

3. And it is God that is most abused and injured by sin, and displeased with it: and for you to think hardly of him, or of those that please him, because that others, by sin, do injure him, is as unreasonable, and unrighteous, as if many of your neighbours should rob you and beat you; and, therefore, the rest should rob and beat you again, because the first did so, and should beat all that will not beat you. It is no more equal dealing, to think the worse of God, and godliness, and godly men, because that scandalous persons do offend him.

S. But could not God make men better, and cure all this, if he would? Why, then, is the world so bad?

P. God, who, in himself, is infinitely good, in his infinite wisdom, seeth it best to make his creatures in great variety, and not to communicate the same degrees of excellency to them all. As you see that every star is not a sun, nor all stars equal; nor the clouds like the stars; nor the earth and water so pure as the air, nor so active as the fire. As you see a difference between men, and beasts, and birds, and worms, and trees, and plants, and stones, in wonderful variety. And it is folly to accuse God for not making every worm a man, or every man an angel, or every stone a star or sun. Because he is a free Creator and Benefactor, and may make or not make, give or not give, as he pleaseth; and knoweth well why he doth what he doth, which we poor worms are unfit to know. Even so some reasonable creatures he hath made so glorious in holiness and perfection, that they cannot sin; that is, they never will sin; I mean the angels. And some he hath made such as may please him, and be happy, if they will; (assisting them by abundance of instructions, and mercies, and afflictions;) and yet may sin, and

^r Prov. i. 20—25, &c.

perish, if they will not be persuaded. And among these, even mortal men, he freely giveth more mercy to some than he doth to others: but, to all, so much, as that nothing can undo them, if they do not wilfully, obstinately, and impenitently, refuse and abuse the mercy which is given and offered them, even to the last.

Now, it is true, that God could make every man an angel, and every wicked man a saint: and all those to whom he hath left a possibility either to stand or fall, as themselves shall choose, he could have made such, as that to sin should have been impossible to them. But it pleaseth him to do otherwise, and he well knoweth why.

S. VII. You have brought to my mind, and almost here answered already, another temptation, which I have sometimes felt myself. It hath posed me to think that God, who is so good, should make hell for any, and damn men to such torments as I would not have my greatest enemy feel; much more that the far greatest part of the world should all be damned. For if Scripture had never said that few are saved, yet, as long as it saith that none but the holy and obedient are saved, it is all one; for I see that very few are holy; few love God, and his word, and heaven, above this world. Upon these thoughts I have sometimes been tempted to doubt whether God be good and merciful; and sometimes to doubt whether the Scripture, that saith these things, be true. For he that is good will do good: therefore, if God save but one of many, where is the abundance of his goodness?

P. That you may understand these matters well, you must begin at the bottom with the clearest certainties, and so proceed to the rest. And, 1. I ask you, Is it not absolutely certain that God is good; yea, better than all the world? If not, how came all that goodness into the whole world, which we find in nature and virtue, if God did not make it? And he cannot make that which is better than himself.

S. This is not to be questioned, else he were not God.

P. Quest. 2. Is it not certain that there is pain and misery found in the world, even on some creatures that never sinned? What toil do you put your ox and horse to? You beat and abuse them; they have painful diseases, and sometimes broken bones: and you take away the lives of multitudes of harmless creatures at your pleasures; yea, they torment and kill one another; the cat the mouse, and the dog the hare, and the

hawk the birds, &c. Doth not all this stand with the goodness of God?

S. Yes, experience telleth us that.

P. Quest. 3. Doth not a wilful sinner deserve to feel more than an innocent creature?

S. Yes, no doubt of that.

P. Quest. 4. Do not many feel great torments in this world by gout and stone, and many diseases, by poverty, and cares, and sorrows, and injuries from men? And yet God is good.

S. Yes, there needs no proof of that.

P. Quest. 5. Might not God take away the life of an innocent man if he had pleased, as well as of a bird or beast?

S. Yes, no doubt of it. They are all his own.

P. Quest. 6. Might not God freely have made you a labouring horse, a toad, a serpent, when he made you a man?

S. No doubt, if he would.

P. Quest. 7. Might he not then turn you to be a toad if you had never sinned; or lay on you such pain as any of the brutes do undergo?

S. That cannot be denied. It is no more contrary to his goodness to do it to me than unto them.

P. Quest. 8. How much pain would you choose to undergo for ever rather than be made a toad, or to be turned into nothing?

S. Just so much as might not be greater than the pleasure of living as a man.

P. Quest. 9. If God make man an immortal soul, and man afterwards sin, is God bound to change this immortal nature, and to end man's being; may he not continue our natures, when we have depraved them?

S. No doubt of that.

P. Quest. 10. If a man turn his own heart from God, and neither loveth him nor delighteth in him, but is troubled to think of him, who is the cause of this?

S. Himself that did it, and continueth it.

P. Quest. 11. If heaven be the joyful perfection of souls in the love and praise of God, and delight in him, who is it that depriveth this man of heaven?

S. Himself, by depriving himself of joyful love.

P. Quest. 12. If a man turn his own heart to the love of riches and honours, and sensual delights, of meat and drink, and ease and lust, may not God take away from man the things that he abuseth? Or when such a man dieth, is God bound to

supply him with wine and women, with sensual pleasures, in another world ?

S. No, he is not ; but I have heard that after death the sensitive powers cease, and the rational only continue.

P. You have heard men talk of that which they cannot prove, nor is likely. The sensitive soul, or faculties, is totally distinct from the body, which now it worketh in, and will be the same thing when separated. At least, I ask,

Quest. 13. Is God bound to separate a sinner's sensation from his soul ?

S. No doubt but he may continue it ; and I confess I think it likely that sinners who have subjected their reason to sense, should rather, after death, be less reasonable, than less sensitive.

P. Quest. 14. Will not a vehement desire of meat, drink, women, ease, honour, riches, turn to a continual torment, if they cannot have the things desired ?

S. No doubt of that. What else is hunger and thirst, and shame and grief, or scorn and disappointment ?

P. Quest. 15. If the very nature of God be to hate all sin, and to be displeased with sinners, who is it that maketh any man hated of God, and displeasing to him ?

S. He himself that maketh himself a sinner. As a weed or dunghill stinketh when the sun shineth on it, because it is a weed or dunghill.

P. Quest. 16. If a reasonable creature know that he hath brought himself into such a case, in which he hath lost both heaven and all his sensual pleasures, and made himself hateful to God, and angels, and good men, and all this for a little transitory pleasure, which he knew would quickly end, and when he was often told what it would cost him, and might have been happy for ever if he would, is it not likely or certain that the thoughts of this will be a torment to his mind ?

S. Yes, no doubt, unless he have great command of himself.

P. Quest. 17. Is it likely that he who lost the power of his own reason here, by a wilful subjecting it to sense, should, by God's grace, or his own strength, recover the power of it hereafter, so as to be able to restrain his own tormenting conscience or passions ?

S. I think that too late they may be wiser by experience, as knowing good and evil, but not to their own benefit.

P. Quest. 18. If an immortal soul hath thus cast out God

and holiness from itself, besides whom there is no true heaven and happiness; and if it have kindled hell fire in its own nature, in wicked, self-tormenting lusts, passions, and enmity to God, how do you think that it should ever be recovered, or this fire quenched? God pitied his enemies once, and did redeem them; but is he obliged to interpose, and save the final enemies of his grace from their own doings, when the time of grace is past? And no man can expect that such a wicked and enthralled nature should then change, and deliver itself. Therefore their everlasting misery is the everlasting self-tormenting of the wicked: and is God bound to hold all men's hands from cutting their own throats; or to cure every man as oft as he will wound himself, or to build every man's house as oft as he will burn it wilfully, when he is entreated to forbear; or to shut men's mouths for fear lest they should gnaw their own flesh?

S. I perceive that man is his own tormenter, and his every sin is a hell for ever to the sinner.

P. Quest. 19. If all this damnation be not only deserved, but executed by sinners on themselves, who will not be entreated to have mercy on themselves, is it not impudency to turn the accusation against God, and charge him with cruelty against these cruel and obstinate self-destroyers?

S. All that is to be said is, that it pleased not God to make their misery impossible, and to save them from themselves.

P. Quest. 20. Seeing that human government is necessary to the peace and order of the world, and justice as necessary as government, is not divine government, laws, and justice more necessary? else all the sovereigns of the world would be un-governed, and all powerful wickedness be unpunished, and all heart sins, which are the roots of all the rest, and all secret villainies, would be as free as piety itself; and no universal order could be maintained without an universal Governor: and if all governors inflict more punishment on offenders than they are willing of themselves, must not God do so? Sin is voluntary, but punishment is most involuntary: and if sin against man deserve the gallows, or temporal death, sure sin against God deserveth more, even a punishment as durable as the sinner's soul, which is immortal.

S. You have silenced my murmuring thoughts as to the being of hell; but what say you of the numbers that are damned?

P. 1. Remember that it is proved to you that God doth, be-

fore their sin, no worse to any than as a free benefactor to give his own benefits, in various degrees : and that, in the lowest degree, he giveth to all men pardon and salvation, if they will have it, and will not finally and obstinately reject it ?

2. Remember that none are damned but those that wilfully damn themselves, and refuse salvation.

3. Consider that man is as nothing to God, and therefore there is no reason that he should spare sinners for their numbers' sake, when the number maketh the sin the greater, as many fire sticks make the greater flame. Millions of men are not so much to God as two or three flies or wasps to us, who never stick to destroy a thousand of them.

I ask you, Quest. 1. If God damned but one of a million, or of a kingdom, and that only for obstinacy and impenitency in sin, would it much offend you ?

S. No ; for I should see then that his mercy is greatest.

P. 2. If he damned none but the devils, and saved all mankind, would it offend you ?

S. Not much ; because their malice is so great.

P. 3. Do you not grudge sometimes that God doth not punish the wicked, especially the persecutors of his church ? And are not good men ready sometimes to call for fire from heaven, and sometimes to marvel that God doth no more show his hatred against them ? And yet will you grudge at him, because he will do it fully and seasonably in hell ?

S. The Lord pardon us ! we are hardly pleased with his judgments.

P. 4. Do you not know that all this earth is no bigger, in comparison of all the world, than one inch of ground is to all the earth ? And how many thousand, thousand, thousand times is all the earth greater than one inch ? And are not all the rest of the vast and glorious parts of the world as like to be fully inhabited as this ? How know you but those immeasurable regions have a thousand, thousand millions of blessed angels and spiritual inhabitants for one wicked man or devil that is damned ? Are you sure it is not so ?

S. How should I be sure ? God only knoweth. I confess it is likely enough, if we may judge by the different spaces as you compare them.

P. 5. If, when you come to heaven, you shall find that hell was the sinful place of devils, and earth by sin, was one spot of God's world, made next like hell ; and that millions of millions

of angels, and holy spirits, and inhabitants, are glorified for one wicked man or devil that is damned; will you not be ashamed of murmuring at God?

S. I see that it is unfit for poor, dark sinners to judge the Judge of all the world, or to presume to quarrel with his judgments, when we know no better what we say.

P. The uses which you should rather make of the numbers that are condemned, are such as these: 1. To consider how mad a creature an ungodly man is, when so great a number will by no warnings be kept from damning their own souls for ever.

2. That man hath exceeding need of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, who is such a pernicious enemy to himself.

3. How much you are beholden to God, who hath made you, by his grace, to be one of those few that shall be saved.

4. How foolish and unsafe it is to think, and speak, and do as the most do, unless you would speed as the most do for ever: and how unmeet it is for them to be conformed to this world, who hope to be for ever separated from them.

5. How excellent a people those few should be, above the common rates of men, whom God hath called out of so great a number to himself. How fervently should they love him, and how holily and heartily should they serve him.

S. O that we could be such as this mercy doth deserve!

P. Two things more I will conclude with, for your satisfaction.

1. That hell is not to be thought of as a mere furnace of fire, where sinners are fried, as abiding in one place; but the state of the devils, who are now at once tormented in hell, and yet^a rule in the air under one Beelzebub, or prince, and night and day compass the earth, as seeking whom to deceive and devour. This, I say, showeth us, that hell is a state of sin and misery, continued partly by the voluntary pravity of the damned, and consistent with a kind of active and political life. And the greatest resemblance of it is the case of wicked men in deep melancholy, who can neither cease to be wicked nor to torment themselves; or of rogues in irons in the gaol, compared with the state of the angels in heaven.

2. That all great excellencies are rare: there is but one sun (that we know of). The number of men on earth is small, to the number of flies, and worms, and fishes, &c. Gold is not so common as iron, or clay; nor diamonds, or other jewels, so common as pebblestones. The woods are covered with thorns and

^a Eph. ii. 2; Job i. 6—8; 1 Pet. v. 8; Rom. ii. 10; Heb. xiv.

briers, and the commons with heath, and furze, and weeds, without any care and labour of man ; but orchards and gardens must have greater care, and lie in a much narrower room : kings, and nobles, and judges, and doctors, are but a small part of mankind. And if God will have but few of us come to heaven, one of those few shall be of more worth than thousands of the wicked reprobates that perish.

S. But, sir, the chief matter is yet behind. You have told me before of the scandals, errors, and sects, and temptations by them, which will be in the church ; and you have told me now of the multitudes that are wicked ; but you have not told me how I may escape either of these temptations. What shall such an ignorant sinner as I do, when I not only see the ill example of the multitude, high and low, but also hear men that seem learned and godly, condemning one another ; when one saith, this is the true church, and another saith nay, but they are heretics, or antichristian ; one saith, you are damned if you be not of our way, and another saith you are damned if you be not of our way, alas ! I am not able to judge which of them is in the right ; I know not what a Socinian, a quaker, a papist, an antinomian, or any of these parties are, nor what they hold : how, then, shall I answer them, or know whether they be in the right ? what will you advise me to do in this difficulty ?

P. 1. I will first remember you, that all this is no more than Christ foretold us of, and warned all his disciples to prepare for. That false Christs and false prophets should arise, who should deceive, were it possible, the very elect. (Matt. xxiv. 24.) "When they say, here is Christ, and there is Christ, go not after them." (Ver. 26.) That of our own selves, men should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts xx. 30.) That it must be that heresies must arise, that they which are approved may be made manifest. (1 Cor. xi. 19.) That Satan would transform himself into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness, to deceive. (2 Cor. xi. 14.) That some would cause divisions and offences contrary to the apostles' doctrine ; even such as serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies, and by good, fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple. (Rom. xvi. 16, 17.) Among the Corinthians, how quickly did the more carnal sort of Christians fall into factions and divisions, some being of Paul, and some of Apollos, and some of Cephas ? And the Galatians so followed the Jewish teachers, that Paul was afraid of them,

lest he had laboured in vain. And in many of the churches, the Nicolaitans and deceivers (called the woman Jezebel) did teach and seduce the people from the truth. (Rev ii. 3.)

But your safety in this great danger must be thus maintained:

I. You must¹ hold fast to your baptismal Covenant, as explained in the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Commandments; and take all for Christians who are true to that; and take all such Christians for the true catholic church: for that which maketh a man a Christian, maketh him a member of the body politic of Christ, which is his church. So that if any man teacheth you any thing contrary to that, you must reject it; for your baptismal covenant is your Christianity. And if any call him a heretic that owneth this christian covenant, as opened in the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Commandments, believe him not, but take him for a slanderer of your brother, except he prove it, 1. By some proved, contrary profession, which will prove that he doth not indeed believe as he professeth to believe. 2. Or by some impenitent wickedness of life. So that the same covenant which your own Christianity consisteth in, will serve both for a test to try men's doctrines by, and also to try which is the true church, and who are the members of it with whom you must have communion, and who are heretics, whom you must avoid.

II. Adhere to those truths wherein all Christians are² agreed. papists, and protestants, and Greeks, and all sorts truly christian, are agreed in the points forenamed, of the baptismal covenant, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments: and they all confess, that all which we receive for canonical Scripture, is the true, infallible word of God. In all this our divisions are no temptation to you, because we are all of a mind in these.

III. The holy³ Scripture then being acknowledged by all for the word of God, you must receive no doctrine which contradicteth it; nor refuse any doctrine which is asserted in it: but try all by this divine and certain rule.

IV. Because that the doubtful sense of many texts is the occasion of men's different opinions, you may well take up with that sense which hath either of these two marks: 1. That which is so plain and frequently repeated, that to an impartial, sober

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13; Eph. iv. 3—7, 14, 15; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, &c.; Mark xvi. 16.

² 1 Tim. iv. 6, and vi. 3; Rom. xvi. 16, 17.

³ John v. 39.

man it is past controversy; and if any pervert it, the plainness of the text will certainly shame him. 2. That which all Christians (unless some inconsiderate dotards) are agreed in, as the proper sense in all the commentaries of their learned men. And if you hold fast all the texts which are thus plain, and all which papists, Greeks, protestants, &c., do give the same exposition of, you will have a great stock of saving truths.

V. Be sure that you faithfully love and^v practise this much forementioned, which all are agreed in. And then, 1. The very love and practice will help you to such a lively, experimental kind of knowledge as will certainly save your soul, and keep you from every damning error; yea, and will greatly advantage you in all practical, and many doctrinal, controversies. 2. And God will bless you with^s more of his illuminating help. Whereas false hypocrites, that have no religion but opinion, and talk, and proud self-conceit, and contending zeal, deserve to be forsaken of God, and given up to believe many falsehoods, and to lose the truth which they perfidiously abused. Holy souls have great advantage of worldly or opinionative hypocrites, in times of differences and contentions. At least^a these souls shall certainly be saved.

VI. Learn all that you yet understand not,^b in the same humble teachableness from the ministers of Christ in which you first entered into his church. Think not that you are grown too wise to^c need their further teaching. When you once grow proud of your own understanding, and think that you can judge of all things at the first hearing, and that all is false which crosseth your first conceits, and that ministers can add but little to what you know already, then you are as bad as perverted already: for this is the root of a multitude of errors.

VII. The^d judgment of the generality of able, godly, self-denying, impartial ministers, should prevail more with you than the judgment of any partial sect, whether it be great or small, either such as stand for worldly interest, or such as run into parties by division. For the church of Christ hath ever suffered by these two sorts, and therefore they are still both to be suspected.

^v John vii. 17; xiii. 17, and xv. 14; Matt. vii. 22—24.

^s John xv. 3—9; Matt. xxviii. 20; John xiv. 21.

^a Rev. xli. 14.

^b Matt. xviii. 3.

^c 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24.

^d Rom. xvi. 16—18; 1 Cor. i. 10; Eph. iv. 14—16.

1. Ungodly, carnal men, that thrust themselves into the sacred ministry for preferment, will teach you such doctrine as tendeth to their worldly ends, to magnify themselves, and^e keep the world in subjection to them, that all may honour them, and be ruled by their wills. Domination is evidently their work and end; and no wonder if they fit their doctrine to it.

2. On the other side, the raw, injudicious sort of Christians, if once they grow into an over-high esteem of their own understandings and godliness, are exceedingly apt to fasten with confidence upon their own first undigested notions, and publish them as saving truths, when, after twenty years' experience, they will be ashamed of them themselves. And they are as apt to desire to be made conspicuous for their godliness in the world, and to that end to separate from ordinary Christians, as below them, and unworthy of their communion; as among the papists the religious must separate themselves from others, into religious houses and societies, which are accounted holier than the rest. These sects have ever been the nest of errors; and divisions have still tended to sub-divisions; and all to the ruin of love, peace, and godliness, and consequently of the church.

So that the generality of divines and godly people, who you plainly perceive to avoid both these extremes, and to live in concord among themselves, in a self-denying, sober, holy life, neither seeking worldly honours and preferments, nor running from concord into^f proud self-opinionated sects, are they whom you may best trust with the resolution of your doubts, and the conduct of your soul, so far as ministers must be trusted.

For, 1. God is not so likely to guide by his Spirit false-hearted, worldly hypocrites^e whose God is their belly and mammon, as the humble, holy, faithful pastors of his churches. And Christ himself hath given you this direction, (Matt. vii.) "By their fruits ye shall know them." For though a bad man may be in the right, and a good man in the wrong, yet, if in practical controversy you see the generality of bad men go one way, and the generality of good men go the other way, the far greater probability of truth is on the good men's side.

2. But yet it is not so likely that God should reveal his mind to a few good men, and those of the rawer, injudicious sort, and such as are most infected with proud overvaluing their own wisdom and goodness, and such as have had least time, and

^e 1 Pet. v. 3, 4.

^f Phil. iii. 18, 19; Tit. i. 9, 10.

^e 1 Tim. iii. 6; Acts xx. 30.

study, and means to come to great understanding, and such as show themselves the proudest censurers of others, and least tender of the church's peace and concord, and such as are aptest to break all to pieces among themselves. I say, it is not so likely that these are in the right, as the main body of agreeing, humble, godly, peaceable, studious ministers, who have had longer time and better means to know the truth: and the body of Christians, even the church, hath more promises from Christ than particular, dividing persons have.

VIII. The light and law of nature is the primitive, original light and law of God: therefore, receive nothing from any teachers which is certainly against it.

IX. Pray earnestly to God to preserve you from error, and when conscience and experience tell you that any opinion or party would lead you to plain sin, (as to dishonour your superiors, to favour persecution or idolatry, to divide Christians, and set them against each other, to destroy christian love, to favour loose and fleshly living, to neglect God's ordinances, or the like,) be sure so far it must needs be false.

X. Wait still as a doubting learner, where you cannot yet reach to a divine belief.

If you understand but these two lines, it will help you to escape all the cheats of the papists, and the chief perplexities of mind which all our sects would draw you into.

1. Remember that the christian faith and religion is of God, and if you believe the same articles merely upon the word of men, (whether few or many,) it is not formally true faith and religion in you, because it is human only, and not divine. If you believe the priest only, or the church, that there is a resurrection of the body, and a life everlasting, this is not a believing God.

2. Therefore the use that you must make of the teachers of the church is, to help you to know what God hath revealed, what is his word, and so to believe and practise it, and not merely to believe the priests themselves.

3. Yet a certain belief of them in their places is needful towards the promoting of your belief of God. As he that cannot read, and is unlearned, must believe that what is read is in the bible, and that the translation in the main agreeth with the original, and that this bible is the same which the church received from the apostles, and such like. He that will believe his teacher in nothing, can learn nothing of him.

4. But this human faith is another thing, quite different from the belief of God, and it is but a subordinate help to it, and no part of it. If man be not God, to believe man is not to believe God. Therefore, if you should believe all the creed, and all the volumes of councils and canons, merely as the testimony of the church, or whatsoever else you take only on the teacher's word, remember that it is no part of your divine faith or religion, but only an appurtenance to it (good or bad, as the matter is). So far as you learn of, and believe, your teachers, you are a learner and disciple of theirs, and by them may be taught to know what is the word and will of^h Christ, which must be known by its proper evidence, which they must show you, and not upon their bare word alone: for to be a teacher, is to show you that truth and reason of believing which they have learned themselves. But to be an authoritative^l lord of your faith, is another thing; and such say, 'Believe, because we speak it.' But so far as you have learned by your teachers, what is the word and will of Christ,^k and believe and obey it because it is his word, so far you are indeed a Christian, and religious.

5. Therefore, if any tell you this or that is the word of God, or this is the true meaning of the word of God, this is my counsel, and this is your duty: 1. If they be such as you are obliged to hearken to, as being your teachers, or men of credit in such things, hear what they can say, as one that is willing to learn the truth, and hear what others say against it, for it is hard to judge in controversies where both sides are not heard, if the difficulty be considerable. 2. Be not hasty to conclude off or on, that it is true or false; but continue merely as a learner, till you know by all their teaching that the thing is true. And tell them, in the mean time, 'I know not whether it be so or not. I will not pretend to be wiser than I am. I will be a learner, that so I may come to be a believer of it as a truth of God, as soon as I have learned it to be so.'

Either the thing is true or false, before you believe it. If it be false, no teachers or church can make it true, nor can show you the real evidence of truth in it: therefore, if you believe it, whoever tell it you, you are guilty of believing a falsehood fathered upon God, when it had no evidence. If you say that their evidence seemed good to you, that was because you were sinfully rash and hasty in receiving falsehood, and not staying

^h 1 Pet. i. 21.

^l 2 Cor. i. 24, and x. 15.

^k 1 Cor. ii. 5; 1 Thess. i. 8.

till you had time to¹ try it to the full. But if the thing prove true, yet it cannot be expected that you receive it till you have time sufficiently to^m try it. Nor can it be said, that your delay being dangerous, you must presently receive it on your teacher's word: for that is but to be a believer of a man: and which a man cannot know to be God's word without time to try and see the evidence, it is in vain to say, he must do it. And when a man hath first received both all the essentials of the christian religion before mentioned, and all the doctrines, and all the expositions of Scripture, which the generality of Christians in all ages have agreed in, together with all the light and law of nature, the controversies which remain can be of no such necessity, as that we must needs make haste to believe men that tell us they are God's truth, before we have time to prove and learn it to be so indeed.

Whoever, therefore, be your teachers, or whatever church pretendeth to inform you, call nothing God's truth, or word, till you have sufficient evidence to prove it so; but continue as learners in that doubt which you cannot overcome, till you can beⁿ divine believers: and if you do believe any thing merely on your teacher's word, say plainly, 'I believe you as a man in this; but it is no part of my religion and belief of God, till I find, indeed, that it is his word.'

Follow these ten directions, and you will be safe against all the divisions and clamours of contenders, that say, 'Here is the church and truth, and there is the church and truth.' And when sects and reasonings make others at their wits' end, your way will be sure and plain before you.

S. How clear have you made that case to me which I thought would have utterly bewildered and confounded me.

P. VIII. The eighth temptation which I must forewarn you of, is this; you will be in danger to mistake the nature of the christian religion, by minding only some parts of it, and overlooking the rest, and perhaps the greatest, and taking up with the separated parts alone.

God's word is large, and man's mind is narrow: and we are apt, when we observe something, to think that it is all. So some are so intent on duty, that they have poor thoughts of grace and mercy; and some think that the magnifying of grace obligeth them to vilify inherent holiness, and performed duty. And nothing is now more common than to set truth against

¹ 1 Thess. v. 21.

^m Gal. vi. 4.

ⁿ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

truth, and duty against duty; when they are such as God conjoineth. But the instance that I will now warn you of, is this; the true nature of religion is nothing else, but faith turning the soul by repentance from the flesh and world, to the love, and praise, and obedience of God, in the joyful hope of the heavenly glory. Read this over and over again. Now the too common case of Christians is to live so much in the use of mere self-love and fear, as that almost all the notable exercise of their religion is but a timorous care to be saved; and an inquiring after marks, or other ways, by which they may know that they shall be saved; and a performing of duty, as an heavy, but necessary task, that they may be saved; but that which you must aim at is, to study much God's wondrous love in Christ, and the certainty and greatness of the heavenly glory; and so far to mourn for sin as it tendeth to magnify grace, and to cleanse and preserve the heart and life; and to live in the constant delights of divine love, and joyful thankgivings, and praises to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and in the belief and hopes of life everlasting; and, out of love to God and man, to delight in constant obedience to God, and in doing all the good that we can do in the world; and in this way to trust God quietly and gladly with body and soul.

This is true religion; and weeping for sin, and particular ordinances must not be neglected, but esteemed only as lower parts, which are but stepping-stones to this ascent, and never to be set against it, nor our chiefest care to be spent upon them.

S. I thank you for this warning; for I perceive by this that true religion is a very noble and a pleasant life. But most good people that I have known do but ask what they shall do to be saved, and beg for a softer heart that can weep for sin, and keep on in hearing, prayer, and sacraments. And the praises of God do take but little room in their devotions (except some that do it by way of erroneous opposition to humiliation, and confession of sin). And divine love, and the joys of faith, and hope, and holiness are little seen.

P. IX. Your next and sore temptation will be, to^o abate your zeal and diligence by degrees, and to grow to a customary coldness and formality, and lose all the life of your religion. All your spiritual vigour will die away into a carcass and image, if you be not careful to prevent it.

S. What would you have me do to prevent it?

^o Rev. ii. 4, 5, and iii. 15, 16; Matt. xxiv. 12.

P. 1. Let your first and chief labour be every day about your heart; stir up your soul when you find it sluggish. Learn how to preach to it in your meditations, and to ^P chide it, and urge it to its work.

2. Live under the liveliest ministry, and in the most serious christian company you can get; or if that may not be, supply that want by reading the most lively, serious books.

3. Take heed of turning your religion and zeal to by-opinions and parties, instead of the life and practice of faith, hope, and love. For a factious, wrangling, contentious zeal is as destructive of true, holy zeal as a fever is of natural heat and life.

4. Take heed of growhug in love with the world; for, as the thoughts of riches, and rising, grow sweet to you, the thoughts of God and heaven will grow lifeless and unpleasant.

5. Take heed of sinning wilfully; for all such sin doth harden the heart, and forfeit the quickening help of the Spirit.

6. Hold on in the use of all God's ordinances; for intermissions and unconstancy tendeth to a total neglect; and a contented course of lifeless duty tendeth to spiritual death itself.

P. X. Your next temptation is the most dreadful of all the rest: you may be tempted at last to doubt whether the Scripture be the word of God, and whether Christ be indeed the Son of God, and whether there be a heaven and hell, an immortality of the soul. And this may befall you, 1. Either by the company or books of infidels or atheists, who prate against the Scripture and the life to come. 2. Or else by the malicious suggestions of Satan, stirring up in you unbelieving thoughts. 3. But especially in case of melancholy, which is a disease of the body, which giveth him great advantage to molest the mind with blasphemous temptations; so that he will draw you to doubt whether there be a God, or whether he be the Governor of the world, or whether Christ be true; or whether Scripture be God's word: and here he will set before you the texts which you understand not, and persuade you that they are contradictory, and ask you, is it likely that this or this should be true. And thus will your very foundation be assaulted: and the consequence may be either very troublesome or very dangerous to you. If you do abhor these suggestions, it will be a torment to you to be followed with such odious, hideous motions; though as long as you abhor them, they will not condemn you. But if you patiently hearken to them, then your danger will be great.

† Psalm xlii. 5, 11, and xliii. 5.

S. I pray you open the danger to me, that I may the more dread it and avoid it.

P. If God do not, by his grace, stir up your soul to detest and cast away such thoughts, or show you, by his light, the falseness of them, they may bring you to atheism or infidelity itself; and your latter end will be worse than your beginning.

But if you do not turn professed infidel, yet if your doubts or unbelief be the stronger party in you, they will make you an hypocrite, which is a secret infidel. For while you prevalently doubt of the life to come, and whether the Scripture be God's word, you will take this life as your surest portion, and you will secretly resolve to save your life and worldly prosperity, and put the matters of the life to come upon a venture; you will never die nor be undone for Christ, nor ever win heaven for the loss of earth; but only take up that religion which is most in fashion, or which may best quiet your conscience in a fleshly, worldly life: and you will hope, that if there be a heaven, you may have it as a reserve when you can keep the world no longer. But because it seemeth so uncertain to you, you will hold fast what you have in present as long as you can. Therefore, in all controversies and matters of religion you will have an indifferency, covered with the name of moderation; for he that doubteth of all religion, can, in case of danger, be of any, while, indeed, he is heartily of none: and he that doubteth whether there be a heaven will not much stick with you about the way to it; and he that heartily believeth not in Christ will not be very scrupulous about his doctrines or commands. Thus secret unbelief, or prevalent doubting of the christian truth, will make men miserable infidel hypocrites.

S. I tremble to think of so great a danger; and the more, because that I find not myself able to defend the faith against a subtle adversary and deceiver. But what if I should be brought into doubting, will all doubting have such sad and damnable effects?

P. No: the question will be, whether your faith or your unbelief be the stronger and more prevalent. If your doubting be stronger than your belief, then you will be an infidel hypocrite, and will have no religion but what shall give place to your worldly interest, and will never forsake all for Christ; and God, and Christ, and heaven, must come under the world and the flesh; and while, lest it should prove true that there is a life to come, you will think it necessary to have some religion, it will indeed

be none ; because it maketh God no God, and Christ no Christ, and heaven no heaven, by putting them after or below the world.

But if your belief be stronger than your unbelief or doubting; then it will not only resist such temptations, but it will still keep up the interest of God, and heaven, and Christ, and holiness in your heart ; and your faith, though weak, will ^a overcome the world ; your resolutions to forsake all for Christ and heaven will be firm and constant ; you will go on in the serious use of all the means of your salvation ; you will forsake the most gainful and sweetest sins ; you will perform the hardest and the dearest duties ; and though your graces will be all the weaker, and your life the worse for the weakness of your faith, yet you will rather die, or let go all, than forsake your Master, or hazard your hopes of life eternal. And as long as your doubts or unbelief are thus overcome by a faith that is weak, but stronger than they, though you cannot say I am certain that there is another life, or that the Scripture is the word of God, yet Christ will take you for a true believer.

S. This is comfortable ; but methinks, then, all men should be saved, though they have no belief but the mere discerning of a possibility of another life. For all men are most certain that they must die ; and a little time is even as nothing ; and all the pleasures of this little time are but a doting dream ; and vanity and vexation shameth them all. If, then, we are most certain that there is no true felicity here, and that by seeking a better we have nothing here to lose that is worth the keeping, common reason will tell any man that he should let go all for the smallest hope or possibility of an endless, heavenly glory ; for no man in the world can say, ' I am sure that there is no heaven or hell : ' and all can say, we are sure there is nothing but a very short dream of vanity here. And what need faith, then, for the determining of so plain a case ?

P. You speak a great deal of reason ; but you must consider, 1. That reason in all ^r carnal men is much enslaved to their sense, and cannot rightly do its office. Do you not see it in drunkards, fornicators, gluttons, and all voluptuous persons, how they daily go against the plainest reason, yea and their own knowledge, through the violence of sense ? And reason itself, also, is oft bribed and ^s blinded to take part with sensuality. As vain as this world is, it hath the heart of every carnal man ;

^a 1 John v. 4 ; Heb. xi.

^r Rom. viii. 5—9.

^s 1 Cor. ii. 14.

and that reason which shall turn it out of his heart must show him a better in a powerful manner, and that must be with a certainty, or with so strong a probability as seemeth to him near to certainty; yea, and this must be powerfully presented to his mind by God's Spirit within (to heal his blindness and sensual violence), as well as by the word without.

2. And this apprehension of reason must be by¹ faith, which is a rational act. How far the natural evidence of a life to come may carry those that have not the gospel, I now pass by; but we that have both natural and supernatural revelation of it do find all little enough: and that without a prevalent belief of the gospel the heart will not be turned from this world to God, nor sensuality be truly turned into holiness, or overcome.

S. But I heard a learned man say, that if infidels were turned loose, to dispute with professors against Christianity and the Scriptures, they would silence most of the very ministers themselves; and find us far harder work than anabaptists, antinomians, or separatists, or any other sect. And if so, what shall such ignorant persons as I do, and what certainty or stability of faith can I expect to have and keep?

P. 1. It is the merciful providence of God which commonly so ordereth it, that weak and young Christians have but weak temptations to unbelief. Their temptations at first are strongest unto sensuality and the love of the world, and not to infidelity itself. And then they are more troubled with doubtings about their own sincerity, than about the truth of the word of God. You see somewhat like it in every tree that groweth in the earth: whether do you find more young plants and little trees, or more old and great ones, overturned by the winds?

S. More of the old and great ones.

P. And what is the cause of it?

S. Because the great ones more resist the wind, and it hath the fuller stroke at them.

P. And yet the young and little ones have so little rooting, that if they felt the tenth part of the force which falleth on the bigger, it would overthrow them. But the wise God so ordereth it, that the roots and the top shall equally grow together that so the winds may assault the top no more strongly than the roots can bear. And so he dealeth with young believers. But those hypocrites that grow all in the top of outside actions and

¹ Heb. xi. 6; Matt. xi. 27.

professions, and not at all in the roots of inward faith and love, are they that fall in times of trial.

2. And then you must know that it is not the most "subtle wit, but the most sanctified heart, which hath the best advantage against temptations to unbelief; and therefore young ^x Christians, that have but little learning, may stand, when learned doctors ^y fall and perish. And God hath not so ordered the evidences of Christianity as that the finest wits must always make the best believers.

S. I pray you tell me then, how I must be established against all temptations to unbelief, and how I must prove the truth of Christ and the Gospel to be indeed the word of God, so as that I may stand fast against the most subtle reasonings of unbelievers, and may trust God's word to the forsaking of life and all.

P. This case is of itself so great and weighty, as that I cannot sufficiently speak to it in this short discourse; but I advise you seriously to read of it what I have written in a book, called 'The Life of Faith,' Part 2. And if that do not satisfy you, read thoroughly what I have written in four books more: 1. In one called 'The Reasons of the Christian Religion.' 2. One called 'More Reasons for the Christian Religion.' 3. One called 'The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.' And, 4. In the Second Part of 'The Saint's Rest.'

But yet I shall now tell you enough to establish you, if you can but understand much in few words.

You must know, therefore, what your baptismal profession doth contain, when you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

S. I think you will make the baptismal covenant serve for all things, from first to last!

P. As the Father reconcileth us to himself by the Son, who came as his Messenger from heaven, to make known God, and life eternal, to mankind; so the Father and the Son do send the Holy Ghost into the souls of men to be Christ's Advocate, Agent, and Witness, in the world. So that in one word it is ^z the Holy Spirit that is the proof of the truth of Christ, and of the gospel.

S. But I have heard preachers speak much against this argument, and say, that, 1. Thus no man can know that Christ and the gospel are true, but he that hath the Spirit. And what

^y Matt. xi. 25, and xvi. 17.

^z Matt. xiii. 6, 21.

^x Eph. iii. 17—19; Col. ii. 7.

^y Heb. x. 15; 1 John v. 10.

then shall we say to infidels to convince them? 2. And that thus every fanatic that thinks he hath the Spirit will make himself the only judge. 3. And that few godly men do feel such a testimony of the Spirit in themselves, as to tell them what is, and what is not, God's word. 4. And if they did, how shall they prove that it is indeed God's Spirit, and no delusion? So that when our catechisms say, that only the witness of the Spirit can assure us that the Gospel is the word of God, many learned men cry shame upon that assertion.

P. That is, because that those catechisms have not made them understand the matter, one side or both not knowing what is meant here by the testimony of the Spirit; or else they speak of another thing.

Fanatics mean, an inward impulse, or actual word, or suggestion of the Spirit within them, saying, or persuading their minds, that this is the word of God. But this is not the thing that I am speaking of. But I will better tell you how the Holy Spirit is the Advocate and Witness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, to do that on souls which none but God can do, and which God doth not do by any other means but by Christ, his servants, and his doctrine. This work of the ^a Spirit is the extraordinary expression and impression of God's three-fold perfections, his power, his wisdom, and his goodness. This way the Spirit is witness of Christ.

I. Before his coming, in the ^b prophets, and the first edition of the covenant of grace, where, 1. Many miracles; 2. A word of divine wisdom and prophecies fulfilled; 3. And the mercy and holiness of God, were all expressed.

II. In Christ's own ^c person, and his life, appeared the same divine impressions and expressions of the Holy Spirit. 1. In the ^d power which he exercised in working abundance of uncontrolled miracles; healing all diseases by his word, raising the dead, and finally rising from the dead himself, and, after forty days' abode on earth, ascending visibly up to heaven, while his disciples gazed after him. 2. The wisdom of God was notably imprinted on all that holy doctrine, by which he brought life and immortality to light, and taught men to know God and life eternal. 3. Love and goodness were most conspicuous in

^a 2 Tim. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 2.

^b 1 Pet. i. 11; Isa. lix. 21.

^c John iii. 34, and i. 32, 33; Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18; Isa. xi. 2.

^d Rom. i. 4; Heb. iii. 3, 4; Acts vii. 22.

his wonderful work of man's redemption, his condescension, his sufferings, his covenant of grace, with all the rest of his declarations of the Father's love and holiness. And thus the Spirit on Christ himself (which also in a visible shape fell upon him at his baptism) was his witness.

III. In the persons and lives of Christ's * apostles and chief disciples, who were the witnesses and reporters of his own words and miracles, the same impressions and expressions of the Holy Spirit appeared as the witness of the truth of Christ. 1. While they declared his word and miracles, they wrought abundance themselves, (or rather God by them,) to prove that they were true witnesses of Christ. They healed the sick, and raised the dead, and judged and destroyed some obstinate enemies of Christ, by the mere power of God. 2. The wisdom of God did notably appear in the light and harmony of their doctrine and lives. 3. The goodness and love of God appeared in their wonderful holiness, self-denial, and love to souls.

IV. All the same impressions of the Holy Spirit appeared on the Christians who were converted by the apostles, and received their testimony of Christ, and delivered it downwards to us. 1. Miracles of one kind or other were common among them long; even among such culpable churches as the Galatians, (Gal. iii. 1, 3,) and the Corinthians. (2 Cor. xiii. 1, 5.) 2. Prophets, and teachers of eminent wisdom, without universities, or much previous study, were suddenly made such by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. vii. and xii. 13.) Their love and holiness were wonderful, God was all to them, and the world and life itself was as nothing; so that they stand yet as patterns of love, and goodness, and patience, to this day.

V. The sacred † Gospel and doctrine itself, delivered by Christ and his apostles, doth to this day visibly bear this image and superscription of God. 1. In the works of power there recorded, and in the powerful truth of it, which conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil. 2. In its wonderful wisdom, and prophecies fulfilled, and clear directions for man's salvation. 3. In the goodness of itself and its design, being the glass in which we see God's face, the immortal Seed, the Sanctifier of souls, the

* Rev. xix. 10; Acts ii. 16, 18; ii. 4; vi. 10, and v. 3, 5; Joel ii. 28; Gal. iii. 2, 3; Zech. iv. 6; 1 Cor. iv. 10, 12; xii. 4, 7-9, 11; xv. 2, and v. 4, 5; Eph. iii. 5.

† 1 Pet. i. 23, and ii. 2; John vi. 63; Acts xi. 14; Rom. x. 8; Col. i. 5; Heb. iv. 12; Prov. xxv. 5; Psalm xii. 5, 6, and xix. 7-9; 1 John v. 9-12.

most wonderful declaration of God's love and amiableness, and his deed of gift of life eternal. So that God's deep imprinted image and superscription telleth us that it is the word of God.

IV. Lastly. The same ^r Holy Spirit doth, by this same word, imprint the same image of God on every believer, from Adam to this day ; but in a greater degree since the ascension of Christ, and promulgation of the Gospel : so that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, it is because he is none of his. (Rom. viii. 9.) All that are saved have, 1. The spirit of power, which quickeneth them to God as from the dead, and enableth them to overcome the world and the flesh, and to forsake their dearest sins. 2. They have all the spirit of wisdom, or a sound mind, by which they practically, and powerfully, and savingly know God, and Christ, and heaven, and the beauties and mysteries of holiness, and the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, and the madness and misery of the wicked : in a word, they are wise to God and to salvation, though, in their generation, the men of this world may be wiser than they.

3. They have the spirit of holy love, to God and man, and to themselves for God's sake. (2 Tim. i. 7.) They love God above all, and love him in his works, and especially in his word and saints, and love to do good to all they can, and think not life too dear to exercise and manifest this love.

Now this holy image of God is first printed on the Gospel as a seal ; and by it, as the instrument, and by the Spirit, as the hand, it is imprinted on the souls of all believers. And how is it possible for God to set a plainer mark of his approbation on Christ's Gospel, and to tell the world that it is his own, more clearly than by the Holy Spirit, thus witnessing to Christ by all these six particular instances ? 1. The Spirit on the prophets and covenant that foretold Christ. 2. The Spirit on Christ himself. 3. The Spirit on the apostles. 4. The Spirit on the first churches. 5. The impress of the Spirit on the Gospel itself. And, 6. The Spirit on all believers, in all generations.

And now you may see why I told you, that by the Spirit, as Christ's advocate, agent, and witness, I mean another thing, than an inward suggestion of the Spirit, telling us that this is the word of God ; that by witness, I mean especially ' evidence.'

^r 2 Thess. ii. 13 ; 1 John iii. 24 ; iv. 18, and v. 6, 9, 10 ; Rom. viii. 1, 9, 18, 16, 23, 26 ; xii. 11, and ii. 29 ; Gal. iv. 6 ; iii. 14, and v. 5, to the end ; Phil. i. 19, 27 ; ii. 1, and iii. 3 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27 ; xxxvii. 14 ; xxxix. 29 ; al. 19, and xviii. 31, &c. ; Eph. i. 13, 17 ; ii. 18, 22 ; iii. 16 ; iv. 3, 4, and v. 9, 18 ; John iii. 5, 6, and vii. 39 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11, 17, and xii. 12, 13 ; 2 Cor. iii. 3, 17.

Even as the being of a rational soul in all men, having the faculties of vital action, understanding, and free-will, do prove by evidence, that a God who hath life, understanding, and will, is their Creator; so the regenerating of (not one or few, but) all true believers, by the quickening, illuminating, and converting work of the word and Spirit conjunct, powerfully giving us a new vital activity, wisdom, and love to God and holiness, doth in the same sort prove, by way of evidence, that God is the author of the new creature, and consequently the owner of the Gospel that is used thereunto.

And also hence you may see why I told you, that it is not only the subtle wit of the learned, but much more the holiness of every regenerate soul, that best helpeth men to a confirmed belief of the Gospel. If you are truly sanctified, you have the witness in yourself. (1 John v. 7—11.) You have Christ's sanctifying Spirit, which is his mark, his advocate, and agent in you, and your earnest, and pledge, and first-fruits of eternal life. By this you may know that Christ is true, and that you are the child of God, even by the Spirit which he hath given you. (1 John iii. 24; Rom. viii. 9, 16, 26; Gal. iv. 6.) As the likeness of the child to the father is his evidence, so is the divine nature and image on the regenerate. None but God can thus regenerate souls: and God would not do it by a doctrine that is false, to honour it and to deceive the world. And this love to God and holy nature which is in you is the seed of God, which will not suffer you to deny your Father, your Saviour, and your Regenerator. You see now how the weakest may prove Christ and his Gospel to be true, and may stand fast against all the assaults of the devil, even by the great witness of the Holy Spirit, and not in any fanatic sense or feigned operations.

S. The Lord help me to understand and remember it. You have said that which already I see to be the light itself, and feel it give some strength to my belief. And though I was ready to ask you, how I shall be sure that the history of all these things and miracles is true; yet now I am answered by this continued evidence, which is not far off, but is in me, and, down to the end of the world, is continually at hand to answer doubts.

P. The history of these miracles and other facts is also delivered down to us with as great advantage as our acts of parliament, and that there were such men as Alexander, Cæsar, and Constantine in the world, which are most easily proved true.

S. But have none of the heathens had the Spirit, who knew not Jesus Christ?

P. In what measure they had it, and whether to their salvation, I pass by. But as it is the light of the sun itself, which appeareth before sunrise, so was it the Spirit of Christ himself, which illuminated good men before Christ's incarnation, under the first edition of the covenant of grace; and also which gave the heathens that measure of wisdom and virtue which they had. But all was much less than what true Christians commonly have, since the sun is risen.

S. But you have not yet told me, how they that have not the Spirit shall be convinced of the truth of Christ?

P. Do you not see that the works of the Spirit, which I have opened to you, are such as a stander-by, that is rational and true to his own conscience, cannot deny? Might not an unregenerate man have seen the miracles of the prophets, and Christ, and the apostles, and been convinced of them, and of Christ's resurrection, by historical, certain evidence? May he not be convinced of God's image on the Gospel itself, and of the holiness and wisdom of the godly, and plainly see that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, and perceive the Spirit by its fruits? Doubtless he may, if malignity blind him not.

S. I perceive by this, that it greatly concerneth all Christ's servants to cherish and obey the Spirit, and to grow in grace, and live very holy and heavenly, and especially loving and fruitful lives, when their holiness is to be the standing witness for Christ and the Gospel to the world, from age to age? And that the sins of Christians are a greater wrong to Christ than ever I before imagined.

P. I will give you one proof of that from the words of Christ himself. Christ prayeth for them that shall believe on him by the word, "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect into one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 21—23.)

S. This text is so vehement, and layeth so much of the glory of Christians, and so much of the convincing evidence of Christianity to convert the world, upon the unity of believers, that it

stirreth up in me a greater fear of schisms, and divisions, and sects, than I had before. I pray you, therefore, add a short character of each sect, telling me what that evil is in each one which I must avoid.

P. That I must not do now, 1. Lest I be tedious. 2. And what I give you in writing will not be read by any of those sects, if they find a word against themselves.

I will now conclude with these five graces and duties, which must be your general helps against all temptations whatsoever.

I. You must^h grow in holy knowledge: children and fools are more easily cheated than the wise.

II. You must come to a full resolution. Resolve rather to die than wilfully sin. An unresolved person encourageth the tempter, and is more than half overcome already.

III. Be fearful of sinning, as conscious of your badness, and the multitude of temptations; and let watchfulness be your constant work.

IV. Be sure that your heart and life be wholly given up to God, and filled with good, and still employed in his service; and then the tempter will never find you disposed, or at leisure, for his turn. An empty heart (much more a carnal) and an idle life, is ready to entertain any motion unto sin.

V. Look still by faith to Christ and his Spirit, as your only strength. And trust not to your own understanding, goodness, or resolutions: for man, of himself, is very mutable. The Lord that hath converted you, confirm you, and preserve you.

THE SIXTH DAY'S CONFERENCE.

Instructions for a Holy Life.

- I. THE NECESSITY, REASON, AND MEANS OF HOLINESS.
- II. THE PARTS AND PRACTICE OF A HOLY LIFE.
 1. FOR PERSONAL DIRECTION.
 2. FOR FAMILY INSTRUCTION.

Speakers.—Paul, a Teacher; Saul, a Learner.

PAUL. Come, neighbour, methinks by this time you should so well understand your own condition, as to know yourself what further instructions to desire. What would you have me teach you next?

^h 1 Pet. ii. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 18; 2 Thess. i. 3; Eph. i. 17, 18; Phil. i. 9; Col. i. 9, and iii. 10; Prov. xiv. 10.