

DIRECTIONS

FOR

WEAK, DISTEMPERED CHRISTIANS,

TO

GROW UP TO A CONFIRMED STATE OF GRACE.

WITH

MOTIVES

**OPENING THE LAMENTABLE EFFECTS OF THEIR WEAKNESSES AND
DISTEMPERS.**

**PUBLISHED ALSO TO FURTHER THAT REPENTANCE, WHICH WARS,
AND PLAGUES, AND FLAMES, AND CHURCH-CONVULSIONS
HAVE SO LONG AND LOUDLY PREACHED
TO ENGLAND.**

*To my dearly beloved, the Church of Christ at Kidderminster
in Worcestershire.*

I SUPPOSE you do not only remember, that ten years ago I preached these sermons to you ; but also what schisms, what revilings of the ministers of Christ, what heresies of Ranters, Seekers, and others ; what cruelties against one another, and what remorseless overturnings of government ; and worst of all, what bold appeals to God himself, as if he were the approver of all this, did give you and me extraordinary occasions of such thoughts and lamentations as are here expressed ? But though the great mercy of God did preserve yourselves from these transgressions, and made it your lot to behold them with daily complaints and sorrows, yet I must not so flatter you as to say, that the ordinary weaknesses of Christians are not at all among you. The things which I especially loved in you, I will freely praise, which were, A special measure of humility ; a plain simplicity in religion ; a freedom from the common errors ; a readiness to receive the truth ; a catholic temper, without addictedness to any sect ; a freedom from schism, and separating ways, and a unity and unanimity in religion ; a hatred and disowning of the usurpations, and perturbations, and rebellions against the civil government, and an open bearing of your testimonies in all these cases ; together with seriousness in religion, and sober, righteous, charitable, and godly conversations. But yet, with all this, which is truly amiable, I know you have your frailties and imperfections. The weaker sort of Christians (either in knowledge or in holiness) are the greater number in the best congregation that I ever yet knew. (To say nothing of the unsound.) And what may be your case these eight years since I have been separated from your presence, I cannot tell, though, through the mercy of God, I hear not of your declining. It is our sin which hath parted us asunder, let us lay the blame upon ourselves ; I have now done expecting my ancient comforts in labouring among you any more. For these six years'

time, in which I thought my great experience had made me more capable of serving my Master better than before, his wisdom and justice have caused me to spend in grievous silence. And now my decays and disability of body are so much increased, that if I had leave, I have not strength, nor can ever reasonably expect it; therefore, once more I am glad to speak to you as I may, and shall be thankful if Authority will permit these instructions to come to your view, that the weak may have some more counsel and assistance. And if any shall miscarry, and disgrace religion, there may remain on record one more testimony, what doctrine it was that you were taught. The Lord be your teacher, and your strength, and save you from yourselves, and from this present evil world, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Your servant,

RICHARD BAXTER.

October 31, 1668.

PREFACE.

READERS,

THAT you may neither misunderstand this book nor me, I owe you this pre-advertisement, That it was preached in a lecture at Kidderminster in Worcestershire, about seven or eight years ago, 1658. That the sad experience of the distempers of weak, well-meaning people (though not in that place) yet in those times, (especially of those who ran after the most gross deceivers, distracted the churches, reviled, afflicted, and busily attempted to pull down the pastors, and actually pulled down the higher powers whom God forbade them to resist,) was the chief occasion of the preaching of these sermons; and that the special reasons for my publishing them now, are these that follow. 1. Because I perceive not that yet people are sufficiently humbled for those miscarriages, or have yet well found out their sins, which by many and sore judgments, have found them out. 2. Because I perceive that it is too ordinary to speak to weak Christians only by way of comfort, and too rare to shew them the evil of their distempers: and that the very terms are used as if they imported nothing but what is to be loved, or tenderly gainsayed. And most that hear themselves called weak Christians, do take it for a word of honouring pity, and feel in it no humbling matter of reproof. As if the comfort of being a living man, did nullify the trouble and pain of infancy, of a lethargy, a leprosy, a fever, gout or stone. The scandals which have dishonoured religion in this age, do tell us that it is not all a preacher's work to convince and convert the infidels and profane ones, but that much of it lieth in detecting hypocrisies, and humbling the weak, and healing their distempers, and saving and raising them from their falls. The thoughts of the case of such Christians as these, did tempt Augustine once to doubt whether there were not

a purgatory ; it seemed so hard to him to believe, either that men who in the rest of their lives were godly and honest, should go to hell ; or that men so guilty of particular crimes and scandals (of which their ignorance and error kept them from repenting) could go straight to heaven. And no doubt but it was the heinous sins and great distempers of men professing godliness, which caused human reason to invent and entertain this doctrine of purging-pains. But when God hath cast men into many purgatories, and yet they repent not, I fear it threateneth worse than purgatory. 3. Moreover, I remembered the request of that learned, pious, peaceable A. B. Usher, which I mentioned in the preface to my "Call to the Unconverted;" according to which I had before published, 1. That "Call." 2. "Directions against Miscarrying in the Work of Conversion." 3. And this I intended for the third part, when I began it; but was hindered from bringing it to the purposed perfection, (the fourth part being "Directions for Peace of Conscience," being extant long before). 4. But that which since urged me to this publication was, that the last sermon which I preached publicly, was at Blackfriars, on this text, Col. ii. 6, 7. and presently after, there came forth a book called "Farewell Sermons," among which this of mine was one. Who did it, or to what end I know not, nor doth it concern me to inquire. But I took it as an injury, both as it was done without my knowledge, and against my will, and to the offence of my superiors; and because it was taken by the notary so imperfectly, that much of it was nonsense; especially when some foreigners that lived in Poland, Hungary, and Helvetia, were earnest to buy this with the rest of my writings, I perceived how far the injury was like to go both against me, and many others of my brethren. Therefore, finding since, among the relics of my scattered papers, this imperfect piece which I had before written on that text, I was desirous to publish it, as for the benefit of weak Christians, so to right myself, and to cashier that farewell sermon.

If the reader will but peruse these Directions impartially, and read them as he doth the prescripts of his physicians, which are not written merely to be read, but must be daily practised whatever it cost him, as he loveth his life; then I make no doubt, notwithstanding the weakness of the composition, but it may further the cure of his spiritual weaknesses

and distempers, and of the consequent troubles and losses of others and himself. I hope I shall not meet with many, besides malignant hypocrites, who will be so impenitent and peevish, as to fly in the face of the reprover and director, and say that I open the nakedness of many servants of Christ, to the reproach and dishonour of religion. I have told you from the word of God, that it is God's way, and must be ours, to lay the just dishonour upon the sinner, that it may not fall upon religion and on God. And that the defending or excusing odious sins, in tenderness of the persons who committed them, is the surest and worst way to bring dishonour (first or last) both upon religion and on them. A Noah, a Lot, a David, a Solomon, a Peter, &c. shall be dishonoured by God in holy record to all ages, that God may not be more dishonoured by them! And the truly penitent are willing that it should be so; and account their honour a very cheap sacrifice, to offer up to the honour of religion which they have wronged. And till you come to this, you come short of true repentance. He that defendeth his open sin (unless he could deny the fact), doth as bad as say, 'God liketh it; Christ bid me do it; the Scripture is for it, or not against it; religion taught it me, or doth not forbid it me; the godly allow it, and will do the like.' And what can be said more blasphemously against God, or more injuriously against religion, the Scriptures, and the saints? But he that confesseth his sin, doth as good as say, 'Lay all the blame on me, who do deserve it; and not on God, on Christ, on Scripture, on religion, or on the servants of God; for I learned it not from any of them, nor was encouraged to it by them; none are greater enemies to it than they; if I had hearkened to them, I had done otherwise.' It is one of the chief reasons why repentance is so necessary, because it justifieth God and godliness.

And alas, it is too late to talk of concealing those weaknesses and crimes of Christians, which are so visible before all the world! Which have had such public effects upon churches, kingdoms, and states; which have kept almost all the Christian churches, in a torn, and bleeding, woful state, for so many hundred years, to this present day, which have separated the churches of the east and west, and defiled both. And have drawn so much blood in Christian countries, and keep us yet like distracted persons, gazing strange-

ly at our nearest friends, and running away by peevish separation, from our brethren, with whom we must live in heaven; and mistakingly using those as enemies, with whom (if we are Christians as we profess) we are united in the same Head, and by the same Spirit, which is a Spirit of Love. In a word, when our faults are so conspicuous as to harden the infidels, heathens, and ungodly, and to hinder the conversion of the world; and when they sound so loud in the mouths of our common reproaching enemies; and when they have contracted so much malignity as to refuse a cure by such wars, divisions, church-desolations, plagues and flames, as we have seen, it is then too late to say to the preachers of repentance, 'Be silent, lest you open the nakedness of Christians, and disgrace religion and the church.' We must not be silent, lest we disgrace religion and the church to save the credit of the sinners.

Whoever readeth the holy Scriptures, and ever understood the Christian faith, must needs know that nothing in all the world, is so much against every one of our errors and misdoings. It is only for want of more religion, that any professors of religion do miscarry. Nothing but the doctrine of Christianity and godliness did at first destroy the reign of their sin; and nothing else can subdue the rest, and finish the cure. It is no disgrace to life that so many men's lives are burdensome with sickness, which the dead are not troubled with. Nor is it any disgrace to learning, that scholars, for want of more learning, have troubled the world with their contentious disputes. Nor is it any disgrace to reason, that men's different reasons, for want of more reason, doth set the world together by the ears. We can never magnify you enough as you are Christians and godly, unless we should ascribe more to you than your bounteous Lord hath given you, who hath made you little lower than angels, and crowned you with glory and honour; Psal. viii. 5, 6. But your sins are so much the more odious, as they are brought so near the holy presence: and as they are aggravated by greater mercies and professions. And God is so far from being reconciled, or reconcilable to any one of them, that though he see not such iniquity in Jacob, as is in heathens and the ungodly, (because it is not in them to be seen) yet he seeth more aggravated iniquity in such sins as you do commit, in many respects, than in the heathens.

And (that which is our common trouble, is) that you hurt not yourselves alone by your iniquities ; families are hurt by them ; neighbours are hurt by them ; churches are distracted by them ; kingdoms are afflicted by them ; and thousands of blind sinners are hardened and everlastingly undone by them. The ignorant husband saith, ' I will never follow sermons nor Scriptures, nor be so religious, while I see my wife, that maketh so much ado with religion, to be as peevish and discontented, and foul-tongued, and unkind, and contemptuous, and disobedient as those that have no religion.' The master that is profane saith, ' I like not your religion, when that servant which most professeth religion in my house, is as lazy, and negligent, and as surly and saucy, and as ready to dishonour me, and answer again, and as proud of his little knowledge, as those that have no religion at all.' The like I might say of all other relations. All the dishonour that this casteth upon grace is, that you have too little of it ; and it is so weak in you, that its victory over your flesh and passions is lamentably imperfect. A servant hearing a high commendation of a gentleman, (that he was of extraordinary wisdom and godliness, and bounty, and patience, and affability, and what not) did think with himself, ' How happy a man were I, if I could but dwell in this man's house ' which at last he procured, but ere long went away. His friend meeting him, asked him how he came so quickly to forsake his happiness ? Did not his master prove as was reported ? He answered, ' Yes, and better than report could make him, or I could ever have believed. But though my master was so good, my mistress was so unreasonable, and clamorous, and cruel, that she would beat us, and pull us by the hair, and throw scalding water upon us ; and there was no living with her.' So faith I hope is the master in your hearts ; and that is as good as can be well believed ; but the flesh is mistress, which should be but a servant ; and that maketh such troublesome work with some of you, that some quiet-natured infidels are less vexatious companions than you. Nay, and I wonder if you can be very confident of your own sincerity, as long as such fleshly vices, and headstrong passions do keep up the power of a mistress in you. I wonder if you do not fear, lest (as a woman said, ' I will call my husband Lord with Sarah, if I may have my will fulfilled,' so) grace and faith should have no more than the

regent titles, while your flesh hath so much of its will fulfilled. I know too many cheat themselves into comfort, with the false opinion, that because they have a party in them that striveth against their sins, it is a certain sign that they have the Spirit and are sanctified, though the flesh even in the main doth get the victory. And I know that many have sincerity indeed, who yet have many a foil by boisterous passions, and fleshly inclinations : but I am sure, till you know which party is predominant, and truly beareth the governing sway, you can never know whether you are sincere. As once a servant, when his master and mistress were fighting, answered one at the door, who desired to speak with the master of the house, 'You must stay till I see who gets the better before I can tell you who is the master of the house.' So truly I fear the conflict is so hard with many Christians, between the Spirit and the flesh, and holdeth so long in a doubtful state ; and sense, and passion, and unbelief, and pride, and worldliness, and selfishness prevail so much, that they may stay themselves a great while before they can be well resolved which is master. For (to prosecute my similitude) in innocent man, spiritual reason was absolutely master, and fleshly sense was an obsequious servant, (though yet it had an appetite which needed government and restraint). In wicked men, the fleshly sense and appetite is master, and reason is a servant, though reason and the motions of the Spirit may make some resistance. In strong Christians spiritual reason is master, and the fleshly sense and appetite is a servant, but a boisterous and rebellious servant, tamed according to the degrees of grace and spiritual victory ; like a horse that is broken and well ridden, but oft needeth the spur, and oft the reins. So that a Paul may cry out, " O wretched man," &c. In a weak Christian the Spirit is master, but the flesh is mistress, and is not kept in the servitude which it was made for, as it ought. And, therefore, his life is blemished with scandals, and his soul with many foul corruptions ; he is a trouble to himself and others. The good which he doth, is done with much reluctancy, and weakness ; and the evil which he forbearth, is oftentimes very hardly forborne. His flesh hath so much power left, that he is usually uncertain of his own sincerity ; and yet too patient both with his sin and his uncertainty. And he is many times a greater troubler of the

church, than many moderate unbelievers. The hypocrite, or almost-christian, hath the flesh for his master, as other wicked men, but reason and the commoner grace of the Spirit, may be as mistress with him; and may have so much power and respect, above a state of utter servitude, as may delude him into a confident conceit, that grace hath the victory, and that he is truly spiritual; when yet the supremacy is exercised by the flesh. "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.—He shall not be hurt of the second death.—He shall eat of the hidden manna.—He shall have power over the nations.—I will give him the morning star. I will confess him before my Father and the angels.—He shall be a pillar in the temple of God, and go out no more. I will grant to him to sit with me in my throne;" Rev. ii. 7. 11. 17. 26. 28. iii. 5. 12. 21.

RICHARD BAXTER.

1665.

DIRECTIONS

TO

THE CONVERTED,

FOR THEIR

ESTABLISHMENT, GROWTH, AND PERSEVERANCE.

PART I.

COLOSSIANS II. 6, 7.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

As ministers are called in God's word the fathers of those that are converted by their ministry (1 Cor. iv. 14, 15.), so are they likened thus far to the mothers, that they travail as in birth of their people's souls, till Christ be formed in them; Gal. iv. 19. And as Christ saith, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world;" John xvi. 21. So while we are seeking and hoping for your conversion, and are as in travail of you till you are born again; not only our labour, but much more our fears of you, and cares for you, and compassion of you in your danger and misery, doth make the time seem very long to us; and O what happy men should we think ourselves, if all or the most part of our people were converted! And when we see but now and then one come home, we remember no more the anguish of our fears and sorrows, nor think all our la-

hours ill bestowed, for joy that a Christian is new-born unto Christ. But yet for all the mother's joy, her work, her care, her sorrow, is not at an end as soon as she is delivered. Many a foul hand, and many a troublesome hour, and many a waking night, she must have with the child, whose birth she so rejoiced in; and after that, many a year of care and labour to bring it up, and provide for it in the world; and in her old age, when she expecteth from her children the love, and honour, and thanks, and comfort that was due to her as a mother, and for all her labour, and care, and pains, perhaps one child will prove kind, and of another she must take it well that he is not very unkind, and a third perhaps may break her heart; and yet she must still be a mother to them all. And so it befalls us; when we have greatly rejoiced at the real and seeming conversion of now and then one of our hearers, our work with them is not at an end, nor may we lay aside our care and labour for them. We have for some years (usually) the nurse's work to do; and many a troublesome day and night, the weakness, the uncleanness, the peevish, childish exceptions, the querulous and quarrelsome disposition of our beloved converts, will put us to. And after all that, when they begin to go on their own legs, and think themselves sufficient for themselves without our help, many a fall and hurt they may catch, and many fallings out may they have with one another, to the great trouble of themselves and us. And when they are grown up to strength of parts and gifts, some that seem sincere may turn prodigals or apostates, and some fall a quarrelling about the inheritance, and make most woful divisions, in Christ's family; and some perhaps despise us that have thus spent our days and strength in studies, and prayers, and fears, and cares, and labours, for their salvation; yea, perhaps be ready to spit in our faces, and reproach our persons, yea, and our very office and calling itself, as the experience of these times of ours, seconding the experience of all ages of the church before us, doth, alas! too evidently and openly testify. And yet some will be faithful, and constant, and thankful to Christ and us. And that all might be so, for Christ's sake and their own, must still be our care, and desires, and endeavours. In these several cases, we find blessed Paul with his children in his Epistles, sometimes rejoicing with them in their steadfastness; sometimes defending himself and his

ministry against their unkind and childish wranglings; as with the Corinthians you may find him; sometimes he is put (but seldom) to a severe correction of the obstinate, delivering them up to satan, for a warning to the rest; sometimes he is fain to watch with them, as in their sickness, when they are infected with some dangerous error, or other disease; and is brought even to make great question of their lives, lest he hath laboured for them in vain, and themselves have run in vain, and lest they be fallen from grace, and Christ should profit them nothing; receiving himself no better requital of all his labours from them that once would have pulled out his eyes for him, than to be taken "for their enemy, because he tells them the truth; and the more he loveth them, the less to be loved of them;" as you may read in Gal. i. 6, 7. iii. 1. 3, 4. iv. 11. 14—16. 19, 20. v. 2. 4. 7. But with the most we find him, as one that is yet between hope and fear of them, directing and exhorting them to spiritual steadfastness, and growth, and perseverance to the end; and this is the work which we here find him upon with the Colossians in this text; which containeth, 1. A supposition of the work (the great work) already done; viz. "They have received Christ Jesus the Lord." 2. An inference of further duty, and exhortation thereto, which in sum is their confirmation and progress. The parts of this duty are expressed in several metaphors. The first is taken from a tree or other plant, and is called our "rooting in Christ." After the receiving of Christ, there is a further rootedness in him to be sought. The second is taken from a building, and is called, "being built up in him," as a house is upon the foundation. All the work is not done when the chief cornerstone and foundation is laid. The third part is taken from those pillars and stronger parts of the building, which are firm upon the foundation, and it is called a being "stablished or confirmed in the faith." And having made mention of faith, lest they should hearken to innovations and the conceits of men under pretence of faith, he addeth, "as ye have been taught," to shew them what faith or religion it is that they must be established in; even that which by the apostles they had been taught. And lastly, he expresseth the measure that they should aim at, and one special way in which their faith should be exercised, "abounding therein with thanksgiv-

ing." The matter is not great, whether we take the relative to refer to Christ, and read it with the vulgar Latin, "abounding in him with thanksgiving;" or as the Ethiopic, "abound with thanksgiving to him;" or whether we take it as relating to thanksgiving itself, as the Arabic translator, and some Greek copies have it, "abounding in thanksgiving;" or as the ordinary Greek copies, and the Syriac translator, referring it to faith, "abounding in it (that is, in that faith) with thanksgiving." For in the upshot it comes to the same, "to abound in Christ," and, "to abound in faith in Christ," and, "to abound in a believing thanksgiving to Christ." And all this is comprehended in one foregoing general of "walking in Christ;" the whole life of a Christian being divided into these two parts, Receiving Christ, and, Walking in him. Here are these several terms therefore briefly to be opened. 1. What is meant by, "receiving Christ Jesus the Lord." 2. What is meant by "walking in him." 3. What by "being rooted in him." 4. What by "being built up in him." 5. What by "being confirmed or stablished in the faith." 6. What by this directive limitation, "as ye have been taught." 7. What by "abounding therein with thanksgiving."

And for the first, you must observe the act and the object. The act is "receiving;" the object is "Christ Jesus the Lord." To receive Christ, is not only (as some annotators mistake it) to receive his doctrine, though it is certain that his doctrine must be received, and the rest is implied in this. But when the understanding receiveth the Gospel by assent, the will also accepteth or receiveth Christ as he is offered, by consent; and both these together are the receiving of Christ; that is, the true justifying faith of God's elect. It is not therefore a physical, passive reception, as wood receiveth the fire, and as our souls receive the graces of the Spirit; but it is a moral reception, or reputative, which is active and metaphorical. This will be better understood when the object is considered, which is, "Christ Jesus the Lord." To receive Christ as Christ, or the anointed Messiah, and as the Saviour and our Lord, is to believe that he is such, and to consent that he be such to us, and to trust in him, and resign ourselves to him as such. The relation we do indeed receive by a proper passive reception; I mean our relation of being the redeemed members, sub-

jects, disciples of this Christ. But the person of Christ we only receive by such an active, moral, reputative reception, as a servant by consent receives a master, a patient by consent receives a physician, a wife by consent receives a husband, and as a scholar or pupil by consent receives a teacher or tutor, or the subjects by consent receive a sovereign. So that it is the same thing that is called, "receiving Jesus the Lord," and, "believing in him," as it is expounded, John i. 12. There are three great observable acts of faith essential to it; the first is, Assent to the truth of the Gospel. The second is, Consent or acceptance of Christ and life, as the offered good. The third is, Affiance in Christ for the accomplishing of the ends of his office. Now the word 'faith' doth most properly express the first act and the last, and the word 'receiving' doth most properly express the middlemost; but whichever term is used, when it is justifying faith that is spoken of, all three are intended or included. By what hath been said, you may discern whether you have received Christ or not; for your faith may be known by these acts which are its parts. 1. If you sincerely believe the Gospel to be true; which must be with a belief so strong at least, as that you are resolved to venture your happiness upon this belief, and let go all for the hope that is set before you. 2. If an offered Christ, in his relation as a full and perfect Saviour, be heartily welcome to you. If you consent to the Gospel offer, and are but truly willing to be his, and that he be yours in that relation. Faith is not only called a "receiving of Christ," but is oft expressed by this term of "willing" him; and therefore the promise is to "who-soever will;" Rev. xxii. 17. and the wicked are denied a part in Christ, because "they will not have him reign over them;" Luke xix. 27. or "will not come to him that they may have life;" John vi. 40. even because they "would have none of him;" Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12. which is, because they are not true believers or disciples of Christ. 3. If you thus by consent take Christ for your Saviour, Teacher, and Lord, it must needs follow that you fiducially rely upon him, or trust him to accomplish the ends of his relations; that you trust to him for deliverance from the guilt, and power, and punishment of sin, and for quickening, strengthening, and preserving grace, and for everlasting life, that you resign yourselves up to him as his disciples, to learn of him,

with a confidence or trust, that he will infallibly teach you the way to happiness. And that you also give up yourselves to him as his subjects, with a trust that he will govern you in truth and righteousness, in order to your salvation, and will defend you from destroying enemies. This much is of the very being of faith, or the "receiving Christ Jesus the Lord;" and these parts are inseparable; he that hath one in truth, hath all. Whenever we find in Scripture, the promise of justification or salvation made to us, if we believe, it is this believing, and none but this, that is intended. It is not only believing in Christ as a sacrifice or priest, that is the faith which justifieth, and believing in him as a Teacher or Lord, that sanctifieth: the effects are not thus parcelled out to several essential parts of this same faith; but it is this one entire faith in all these essential parts, that is the undivided condition of all these benefits; and in that way of a condition of the free promise it doth procure them. So much for the meaning of the first words, "Receiving Christ Jesus the Lord." I will be briefer about the next. The second, is, "walking in him," which is no more but the living as Christians, when once we are become Christians, and using that Christ to the ends which we received him for, when once we have received him. Two things are necessary to such as we, that have lost our way: the first is, to get into the right way (and that is to get into Christ, who is the way): the other is to travel on when we are in it: for it is not enough to bring us to our journey's end, that we have found out the right way. The next word to be explained, is, "rooted;" which doth not intimate that any are really planted into Christ, without any rooting in him at all; but by "rooted," is meant, "deeply rooted;" for the roots increase under ground, as well as the tree above ground. Rooting hath two ends, and both are here implied: the first is for the firmness of the tree, that blustering winds may not overturn it. The second is for nutriment, that it may receive that nourishment from the earth, which may cause its preservation, growth, and fruitfulness. This is the rootedness of Christians in Christ, that they may be confirmed in him against all assaults, and may draw from him that nutriment that is necessary to their growth and fruit. The next term is, "built up in him." No house consisteth of a bare foundation. Five things are expressly contained in

our being "built up in him." The first is, that we are united or conjoined to him, as the building is on the foundation. The second is, that we rest wholly on him as our support, as the building doth on the foundation. The third is, that we are also conjoined one unto another, and are become one spiritual building in the Lord. The fourth is, that the fabric doth increase in bigness, as the house doth by being built up; so that it importeth our increase in grace, and the increase of the church by us. The fifth is, the fitness of the building to its intended ends and use; till it be built up, it is not fit for habitation; and till Christians are built up, God hath not that use of them to which he doth intend them. The next term is, "stablished or confirmed in the faith," which signifieth but that strengthening and fixing of us that may prevent our falling or shaking; and it compriseth these two things: first, that we be soundly bottomed on Christ, who is our foundation. And secondly, that we be cemented and firmly joined to each other. And this comprehendeth their stability in the doctrine of faith: and therefore he addeth "as ye have been taught," to fortify them against heresies, which indeed are all but novelties; that so they may know how to try the doctrines that afterwards should be offered them, and stick fast to that which the apostles taught. He next requireth them to "abound therein," to let them know that as it is no small matters that they expect by Christ, so they should not rest in small degrees of grace or duty; but especially the duty of "thanksgiving," which is an evangelical and celestial duty, and so admirably beseems a people that have partaken of such admirable salvation, and is so suitable to our mercies, and our condition, and God's just expectation. As it is love and grace, whose eternal praise is designed by the Gospel, and are magnified in the church by the Redeemer's great and blessed work: so it is returns of love, and praise, and joy, that should be the most abounding or overflowing part of all our Christian affections and performances. After this explication, you may see that the sense of the text lieth plain in this proposition.

Doct. 'Those that have savingly received Christ Jesus the Lord, must be so far from resting here as if all were done, that they must spend the rest of their days in walking in him, being rooted and built up in him, and stablished in

the faith as the apostles taught it, and abounding in it, especially with joyful praises to our Redeemer.'

And because that my design is only to direct young Christians how they may come to be established and confirmed in Christ, I shall therefore pass over all other things that the full handling of this text requireth; and shall only give you, I. A short intimation here, what this confirmation and stability is, (which shall be more fully opened to you in the Directions). II. And shew you the need of seeking it. And III. How you may attain it.

I. This confirmation is the habitual strength of grace, distinct from present actual confirmation by the influence of grace from God; for though God may in an instant confirm a weak person against some particular temptation, by his free assistance, yet that is not it which we have here to speak of, but habitual confirmation in a state of grace. And ordinarily we may expect, that God's co-operating assisting grace should bear some proportion with our habitual grace. Even as in nature he concurrerth with the strongest men, to do greater works than he causeth the weak to do; and with the wisest men to understand more than the foolish do: I say but that ordinarily it is thus.

A confirmed Christian as contrary to a weak one, 1. Is not to be judged of by his freedom from all scruples, doubts, or fears. 2. Nor by his eminency in men's esteem or observation. 3. Nor by his strength of memory. 4. Or freedom of utterance in praying, preaching, or discourse. 5. Or by his seemly deportment and courtesy towards others. 6. Nor by his sedate, calm, and lovely temper, and freedom from some haste and heats which other tempers are more prone to. 7. Nor by a man-pleasing or dissembling faculty to bridle the tongue, when it would open the corruption of the mind, and to suppress all words which would make others know how bad the heart is. There are many endowments laudable and desirable, which will not shew so much as sincerity in grace; and much less a state of confirmation and stability.

But confirmation lieth in the great degree of all those graces which constitute a Christian. And the great degree appeareth in the operations of them. As, 1. When holiness is as a new nature in us, and giveth us a promptitude to holy actions, and maketh us free and ready to them, and

maketh them easy and familiar to us; whereas the weak go heavily, and can scarce drive on and force their minds. 2. When there is a constancy or frequency of holy actions; which sheweth the strength and stability of holy inclinations. 3. When they are powerful to bear down oppositions and temptations, and can get over the greatest impediments in the way, and make an advantage of all resistance, and despise the most splendid baits of sin. 4. When it is still getting ground, and drawing the soul upward, and nearer to God, its rest and end: and when the heart groweth more heavenly and divine, and stranger to earth and earthly things. 5. And when holy and heavenly things are more sweet and delectable to the soul, and are sought and used with more love and pleasure. All these do shew, that the operations of grace are vigorous and strong, and consequently that the habits are so also.

And this confirmation should be found, 1. In the understanding. 2. In the will. 3. In the affections. 4. In the life.

1. When the mind of man hath a larger comprehension of the truths of God, and the order, and method, and usefulness of every truth: and a deeper apprehension of the certainty of them, and of the goodness of the matter expressed in them: when knowledge and faith come nearest unto sight or intention, and we have the fullest, the truest, and the firmest and most certain apprehension of things revealed and unseen; when the nature, and the reasons, and the ends and benefits of the Christian religion are all most clearly, orderly, decently, constantly and powerfully printed on the mind, then is that mind in a confirmed state.

2. When the will is guided by such a confirmed understanding, and is not brutishly resolved, he knoweth not for what or why: when light hath fixed it in such resolutions as are past all notable doubtings, deliberations, waverings, or unwilling backwardness: and a man is in seeking God and his salvation, and avoiding known sin, as a natural man is about the questions, Whether he should preserve his life, and make provision for it? And whether he should poison, or famish, or torment himself? When the inclination of the will to God, and heaven, and holiness, are most like to its natural inclination to good as good, and to its own felicity: and its action is so free as to have least indetermination, and

to be most like to natural, necessary acts, as those are of blessed spirits in heaven: when the least intimation from God prevaieth, and the will doth answer him with readiness and delight. And when it taketh pleasure to trample upon all opposition, and when all that can be offered to corrupt the heart, and draw it to sin, and loosen it from God, prevaieth but as so much filth and dung would do; Phil. iii. 7—9. This is a confirmed state of will.

3. When the affections do proceed from such a will, and are ready to assist, excite, and serve it, and to carry us on in necessary duties: when the lower affections of fear and sorrow do cleanse, and restrain, and prepare the way, and the higher affections of love and delight adhere to God, and desire and hope do make out after him, and set the soul on just endeavours; when fear and grief have less to do, and are delivering up the heart still more and more to the possession of holy delight and love: and when those affections which are rather profound than very sensible immediately towards God himself, are sensible towards his word, his servants, his graces, and his ways, and against all sin; then are the affections, and so the man in a confirmed state.

4. When ourselves, our time, and all that we have, are taken to be God's and not our own, and are entirely and unreservedly resigned to him, and used for him: when we study our duty, and trust him for our reward: when we live as those that have much more to do for heaven than for earth, and with God than with man or any creature: when our consciences are absolutely subjected to the authority and laws of God, and bow not to competitors: when we are habitually disposed as his servants to be constantly employed in his works, and make it our calling and business in the world; as judging that we have nothing to do on earth, but with God, or for God: when we keep not up any secret desires and hopes of a worldly felicity, nor purvey for the pleasure of the flesh under the cloak of faith and piety, but subdue the flesh as our most dangerous enemy, and can easily deny its appetite and concupiscence: when we guard all our senses, and keep our passions, thoughts and tongues, in obedience to the holy law: when we do not inordinately set up ourselves in our esteem or desire, above or against our neighbour and his welfare; but love him as ourselves, and seek his good, and resist his hurt as heartily as our own;

and love the godly with a love of complacency, and the ungodly with a love of benevolence, though they be our enemies: when we are faithful in all our relations, and have judgment to discern our duty, that we run not into extremes; and skill, and readiness, and pleasure in performing it, and patience under all our sufferings; this is the life of a confirmed Christian, (in various degrees, as their strength is various).

II. And now I shall proceed to persuade such to value and seek this confirmation, lest with dull, unprepared minds my following Directions should be lost; and then I shall give you the Directions themselves, which are the part that is principally intended. And first for the Motives.

1. Consider that your first entrance into Christianity is an engagement to proceed; your receiving Christ obligeth you to walk and grow up in him. A fourfold obligation your very Christianity layeth upon you, to grow stronger, and to persevere. (1.) The first is from the very nature of it; even from the office of Christ, and the use and ends to which we do receive him. You receive Christ as a Physician of your diseased souls; and doth not this engage you to go on to use his medicines till you are cured? What do men choose a physician for, but to heal them? It were but a foolish patient that would say, 'Though my disease be deadly, yet now I have chosen the best physician, I have no more to do; I doubt not of recovery.' You took Christ for a Saviour, which engageth you to use his saving means, and submit to his saving works. You took him for your Teacher and Master, and gave up yourselves to be his disciples, and what sense was in all this, if you did not mean to proceed in learning of him? It is a silly conceit for any man to think that he is a good scholar, merely because he hath chosen a good master or tutor, without any further learning of him. When Christ sent out his apostles, it was for these two works; first, to disciple nations, and baptize them; and then to go on in teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he commandeth them; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Christ is the way to the Father; but to what purpose did you come into this way, if you meant not to travel on in it?

(2.) Moreover, when you became Christians, you entered a solemn covenant with Christ; and bound yourselves by a vow, to be faithful to him to the death: and this vow is upon

you. "It is better not to vow, than to vow and not perform;" Eccles. v. 5. In taking him to be the Captain of your salvation, and listing yourselves under him, and taking this oath of fidelity to him, you did engage yourselves to fight as faithful soldiers, under his conduct and command to your lives' end. And as it is a foolish soldier that thinks that he hath no more to do but list himself and take colours, and need not fight; so it is a foolish and ungodly covenanter that thinks he hath nothing to do but to promise, and may be excused from performance, because that promising was enough, when the promise was purposely to bind him to perform.

(3.) Moreover, when you became Christians, you put yourselves under the laws of Christ; and these laws require you to go further till you are confirmed; so that you must go on, or renounce your obedience to Christ.

(4.) Lastly, when you became Christians, you received such exceeding mercies, as do oblige you to go much higher in your affections, and much further in your obedience to God. A man that is newly snatched as from the jaws of hell, and hath received the free forgiveness of his sins, and is put into such a state of blessedness as we are, must needs feel abundance of obligations upon him, to proceed to stronger resolutions and affections, and not to stop in those low beginnings. So that if you lay these four things together, you will perceive that the very purpose of your receiving Christ was that you might walk in him, and be confirmed and built up.

2. Consider also, that conversion is not sound if you are not heartily desirous to increase. Grace is not true, if there be not a desire after more; yea, if you desire not perfection itself. An infant is not born to continue an infant, for that were to be a monster; but to grow up unto manhood. As the kingdom of Christ in the world is likened by him to a little leaven, and to a grain of mustard-seed, in the beginning, which afterward makes a wonderful increase; so his kingdom in the soul is of the same nature too. If you are contented with that measure of holiness that you have, you have none at all, but a shadow and conceit of it. Let those men think of this that stint themselves in holiness, and plead for a moderation in it, as if it were intemperance or fury to love God or fear him, or seek him or obey him, any more than

they do ; or as if we were in danger of excess in these. If ever these men had feelingly, and by experience known what holiness is, they would never have been possessed with such conceits as these.

3. Consider what abundance of labour hath been lost, and what hopes have been frustrated, for want of proceeding to a rooted confirmation. I say not that such were truly sanctified ; but I say, they were in a very hopeful way, and went far, and by going farther might have attained to salvation. The heart of many a minister hath been glad to see their hearers humbled, and bewailing sin, and changing their minds and lives, and becoming forward professors of godliness ; when a few years' time hath turned all this joy into sorrow ; and one of our hopeful, seeming converts doth grow cold, and lose his former forwardness ; another falls to desperate sensuality, and turns drunkard, or fornicator, or gamester ; another turns worldling, and drowneth all his seeming zeal in the love of riches, and the cares of this life ; and another, (if not many to one,) is deluded by some deceiver, and infected with some deadly errors, and casts off duty, and sets himself, like a hired instrument of hell, to divide the church, oppose the Gospel, and reproach, and slander, and rail at the ministers and professors of it, and to weaken the hands of the builders, and strengthen the ungodly, and serve the secret enemies of the truth. Those that once comforted our hearts in the hopes of their conversion, do break our hearts by their apostacy and subversion, and become greater hindrances to the work of Christ, and greater plagues to the church of God, than those that never professed to be religious. Those that were wont to join with us in holy worship, and went up with us to the house of God as our companions, do afterwards despise both worshippers and worship. Whereas if these men had been rooted and confirmed, you should never have seen them fall into this misery. O how many prayers, and confessions, and duties do these men lose ! How many years have some of them seemed to be religious, and after all have proved apostate miscreants ; and the world, and the flesh, and pride, and error swallow up all. See then what need you have to be rooted, confirmed, and built up in Christ.

4. Consider also, how much of the work of your salvation is yet to do, when you are converted. You have hap-

pily begun, but you have not finished. You have hit of the right way, but you have your journey yet to go. You have chosen the best commander, and fellow-soldiers, but you have many a battle yet to fight. If you are Christians indeed, you know yourselves that you have many a corruption to resist and conquer, and many a temptation yet to overcome, and many a necessary work to do. And there is a necessity of these afterworks as well as of the first. For these are the use and end of your conversion, that you may "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts;" Tit. ii. 11, 12. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;" Eph. ii. 10. And how can infants go through all these works? Which of you would desire an infant or cripple to be your servant? But though God be in this more merciful than man, yet he may well expect that you should not be still infants. What work are you like to make him, in this decrepid and weak condition? O pitiful blindness! that any man that knows that he hath a soul to save, should think an infant's strength proportionable to those works and difficulties that stand between him and everlasting life! In the matters of this life, you feel the need and worth of strength; you will not think an infant fit to plough or sow, or reap or mow, or travel or play the soldier, and yet will you rest satisfied with an infant-strength, to do those great and matchless works, which your salvation lieth on?

5. Moreover, the weak, unconfirmed souls are usually full of trouble, and live without that assurance of God's love, and that spiritual peace and comfort, which others do possess. One would think no other argument should be necessary to make men weary of their spiritual weaknesses and diseases, than the pain and trouble that always attendeth them. It is more pain to a sick man to travel a mile, than to a sound man to go ten. To the lame or feeble, every step hath pain, and all that they do is grievous to them; when far more would be a recreation to one that is in health. O therefore delight not in your own languishings! Choose not to live in pain and sorrow! But strive after confirmation and growth in grace, that overgrowing your infirmities you may overcome your sad complaints and groans, and may be acquainted with the comfortable life of the confirmed. O

how roundly and cheerfully would you go through your work! How easy, and sweet, and profitable would it prove to you, if once you were strong, confirmed Christians! Alas! the souls of those that are not confirmed, lie open to every temptation of the malicious enemy of their peace; and how small a matter will disquiet and unsettle them! Every passage of Scripture which they understand not, and which seems to make against them, will disturb them. A minister cannot preach so plainly or so cautiously, but somewhat which they understand not will be matter of their disquiet. Providences will trouble them, because they understand them not. Afflictions will be bitter to the mind as well as the body, and will immoderately perplex them, because they understand them not, or have not strength to bear them and improve them. The sweeter mercies of prosperity will much lose their sweetness, for want of holy wisdom and strength to digest them. And what man would choose such a weak and languishing state as this, before a confirmed, healthful state? Will you run up and down for physic when you are sick? And will you no more regard the health and stability, and spiritual peace and vigour of your souls?

6. Moreover, it is the strong confirmed Christian that hath the true use and benefit of all God's ordinances. Meat is digested by the healthful stomach, and it is seen upon them; and we use to say, it is not lost; it is sweet to them, and doth them good, and they are strengthened more by it; and so is the confirmed Christian by God's ordinances. But to the weak, unconfirmed soul, how much of the means of grace is even as lost! How little sweetness do they find in means, and how little good can they say they get by them! I deny not but some good they get, and that they must use them still; for though the sick have little relish of his meat, yet he cannot live long without it; and though it breed not strength or health, yet it maintaineth that languishing life; but this is all, or almost all. What a sad thing is this to yourselves and unto us, when ministers that are as the nurses of the church, or stewards of the household, to give them all their meat in due season, must see that all that ever they can do for you, will do no more than keep you alive! Yea, how often are you quarrelling with your food, and you do not like it: or you cannot get it down, something still ails it for matter or manner; or else if

the minister displease you, your feeble stomachs do loath the food, because you like not the cook that dresseth it, or because his hands are not so clean as you desire. "The full soul loathed an honeycomb, but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet;" Prov. xxvii. 7. Or if you get it down, you can hardly keep it, but are ready to cast it up to our faces. And thus a great deal of our labour is lost with you, holy doctrine lost, and sacraments and other ordinances lost, because you have not strength to digest them. Labour therefore to be stablished and built up.

7. I beseech you, look upon the face of the world, and see whether it have not need of the strongest help. Whereas the weak and sick are burdensome to others, rather than fit to help the distressed. It is a multitude among us, and abroad in the world, that are ignorant and ungodly, and in the depth of misery; and if there be but a few to help them, those few should not be babes. Abundance of this multitude are obstinate in their sin, blind and wilful, captivated by the devil, and have sold themselves to do evil: and shall such miserable souls as these, have none but children or sick folks to help them? I tell you, sirs, their diseases prove too hard for the most skilful physicians; it will put the wisest man in England to it, to persuade one obstinate enemy of godliness to the hearty love of a holy life; or to cure one old superstitious person of his self-conceitedness; or one covetous person of his love of the world; or one old drunkard or glutton of his sensuality. How then will silly, ignorant Christians be able to persuade them? I know it is not the ability of the instrument, but the will of God that is the principal cause; but yet God useth to work by instruments according to their fitness for the work. What a case is that hospital in where all are sick, and no healthful persons among them to help them! Poor weak Christians! you are not able much to help one another; how much less to help the dead ungodly world! Woe to the world if it had no better helpers! And woe to yourselves if you had not the help of stronger than yourselves (seeing it is God's way to work by means). Alas, a child or sick person is so unfit to labour for the family, and to work for others, that they are the burdens of the family, and must be provided for by others; they are so unmeet to help others in their weakness, that they must be carried, or attended and waited on

themselves. What a life is this to be the burdens of the church, when you might be the pillars of the church; to be so blind and lame, when you might be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.

I speak not this to extenuate God's mercies to you; nor to undervalue the great felicity of the saints, even the poorest and weakest of them. I know that Christ is tender of the weakest that are sincere, and will not forsake them. But though you are so far above the dead world, even in the bed of your groaning and languishing, yet, O how far are you below the confirmed, healthful Christian? You are happy in being alive, but you are unhappy in being so diseased and weak. You are happy in being of the family, and fellow-citizens with the saints; but you are unhappy in being so useless, and unprofitable, and burdensome; for indeed you live but as the poor of the parish, not only on the alms of Christ, for so we do all, but on the alms of your brethren's assistance and support; and I know that in worldly matters that you will rather labour with your hands, that you may have to give to them that need, than be troublesome to others, and live upon charity; Eph. iv. 28. I know that the time is not yet come, that there shall not be a beggar in Israel; I mean one that needs not our continual relief: "the poor we shall have always with us;" even the poor in grace to exercise our charity; and I know that the strong must bear with their infirmities, and exercise compassion on them. But yet you should remember the words of Christ, "It is more honourable to give than to receive;" and therefore be persuaded to bestir yourselves for spiritual health, and strength, and riches, that the multitudes of needy, miserable souls may have some help from you; and that when they come to your doors, you may not turn them away with so cold an answer, 'Alas, we have nothing for ourselves.' Were you but strong confirmed Christians, what blessings might you be to all about you; what a stay to the places where you live! "Your lips would feed many as a tree of life. The ear that heard you would bless you, and the eye that saw you would bear you witness;" Job xxix. 11. You would be to poor souls, as bountiful rich men are to their bodies, the support and relief of many that are needy. You would "not eat your morsels alone, nor would you see any perish for lack of clothing, but the loins of the poor would

bleſs you ;” Job xxxi. 17—20. O pity the poor world, that needeth more than children’s help, and grow up into confirmation. O pity the poor church that abounds with weaklings, that is peſtered with childish ſelf-conceited quarrellers, and needeth more than children’s help ; and grow up to a confirmation. O pity yourſelves, and live not ſtill in ſo childish, ſickly, and beggarly a condition, when the way of riches and health is before you ; but up and be doing till you have attained confirmation.

8. Yea, this is not all ; you do not only deny the church your aſſiſtance, but moſt of the troubles and diviſions of of the church, are from ſuch unſettled weaklings as you. In all ages almoſt theſe have made the church more work than the heathen perſecutors did with fire and ſword. Theſe novices, as Paul calleth them, that is, young beginners in religion, are they that moſt commonly are “ puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil ;” 1 Tim. iii. 6. Theſe are they that are eaſieſt deceived by ſeducers, as being not able to make good the truth, nor to confute the plauſible reaſonings of the adverſaries ; and withal, they have not that rooted love to the truth and ways of God, which ſhould hold them faſt ; and they quickly yield like cowardly ſoldiers, that are able to make but ſmall reſiſtance. And as Paul ſpeaks, they are “ like children toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ;” Eph. iv. 14. If you will ſtill continue children, what better can we expect of you, but thus to be toſſed and carried about. Thus you gratify ſatan and ſeducers, when you little think on it : and thus you harden the ungodly in their way ; and thus you grieve the hearts of the godly, and eſpecially of the faithful guides of the flocks. Alas ! that ſo many of the children of the church ſhould become the ſcourges and troublers of the church ; and ſhould ſet their teeth ſo deep in the breaſts that were drawn out for their nourishment ! If you were never drawn to do any thing to the reproach of the church, yet what a grief muſt it be to us, to ſee ſo many of yourſelves miſcarry ! ‘ Ah !’ thinks a poor miniſter, ‘ what hopes had I once of theſe profeſſors ; and are they come to this ?’ O mark ſirs, the apoſtle’s warning, Heb. xiii. 9. “ Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange

doctrines." And his way of prevention is, that the heart be established with grace.

9. Consider also, that it is a dishonour to Christ, that so many of his family should be such weaklings; so mutable, and unsettled, and unprofitable as you are! I do not mean that it is any real dishonour to him; for if all the world should forsake him, they would dishonour themselves, and not him, with any competent judge: as it would dishonour the beholders more than the sun, if all the world should say that it is darkness. But you are guilty of dishonouring him in the eyes of the misguided world. O what a reproach it is to godliness, that so many professors should be so ignorant and imprudent; and so many so giddy and inconstant; and so many that manifest so little of the glory of their holy profession! All the enemies of Christ without the church, are not capable of dishonouring him so much as you, that bear his name, and wear his livery! While your graces are weak, your corruptions will be strong; and all those corruptions will be the dishonour of your profession. Will it not break your hearts to hear the ungodly pointing at you as you pass by, to say, 'Yonder goes a covetous professor;' or, 'Yonder goes a proud, or a tippling, or a contentious professor?' If you have any love to God, and sense of his dishonour, methinks such sayings should touch you at the heart! While you are weak and unconfirmed, you will, like children, stumble at every stone, and catch many a fall; and yield to temptations, which the stronger easily resist: and then, being scandalous, all your faults by foolish men will be charged on your religion. If you do but speak an ill word of another, or rail, or deceive, or overreach in bargaining, or fall into any scandalous opinions or practice, your religion must bear all the blame with the world. Ever since I can remember, it hath been one of the principal hindrances of men's conversion, and strengtheners of the wicked in their way, that the godly were accounted a sort of peevish, unpeaceable, covetous, proud, self-seeking persons; which was a slander as to many, but too much occasioned by the scandalousness of some. And methinks you should be afraid of that woe from Christ, "Woe be to him by whom offence cometh." If you be children, you may have the woe of sharp castigations; and if you be hypocrites, you shall have the woe of everlasting sufferings. The world can judge no

further than they see. And when they see professors of holiness to be so like to common men, and in some things worse than many of them, what can you expect but that they despise religion, and judge of it by the professors of it, and say, 'If this be their religion, let them keep it to themselves, we are as well without it as they are with it.' And thus will the holy ways of God be vilified through you. If you will not excel others in the beauty of your conversations, that in this glass the world may see the beauty of your religion, you must expect that they should take it but for a common thing, which bringeth forth but common fruits, to their discerning. You should be such that God may boast of, and the church may boast of, to the face of the accuser; then would you be an honour to the church, when God may say of you as he did of Job: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil;" Job i. 8. If we could say so of you to the malignant enemies, 'See what men the godly are, there is none such among you; men of holiness, wisdom, uprightness, sobriety, meekness, patience, peaceable, and harmless, living wholly to God, as strangers on earth, and citizens of heaven,' then you would be ornaments to your holy profession. Were you such Christians as the old Christians were (Acts iv.), we might boast of you then to the reproaching adversaries.

10. Moreover, till you are confirmed and built up, you may too easily be made the instruments of satan, to further his designs. The weakness of your understandings, and the strength of your passions, and especially the interest that carnal self hath remaining in you, may lay you open to temptations, and engage you in many a cause of satan, to take his part against the truth. And how sad a case is this, to any that have felt the love of Christ! Have you been warmed with his wondrous love, and washed with his blood, and saved by his matchless mercy? And may it not even break your hearts to think, that after all this, you should be drawn by satan to wound your Lord, to abuse his honour, to resist his cause, to hurt his church, and to confirm his enemies, and gratify the devil? I tell you with shame and grief of heart, that abundance of weak, unsettled professors, that we hope have upright meanings in the main, have been

more powerful instruments for satan to do his work by, for the hindering of the Gospel, the vilifying of the ministry, the dividing of the church, and the hindering of reformation, than most of the notoriously profane have been! What excellent hopes had we once in England, of the flourishing of piety and happy union among the churches and servants of Christ. And who hath not only frustrated these hopes, but almost broke them all to pieces? Have any had more to do in it, than weak, unstable professors of religiousness? What sad confusion are most parts of England in at this day, by reason of the breaking of the churches into sects and shreds, and the contentions and reproaches of Christians against Christians, and the odious abuse of holy truth and ordinances! And who is it that doth this, so much as unstable professors of piety? What greater reproach almost could have befallen us, than for the adversary to stand by, and see men pulling at each others throats; and hating, and persecuting, and reproaching one another; and that our own hands should pull down the house of God, and tear in pieces the miserable churches, while men are striving who shall be the master of the reformation. O what a sport is this to the devil, when he can set his professed enemies by the ears, and make them fall upon one another. When, if he have any notable work to do against the church and cause of Christ, he can call out unstable Christians to do it! If he would have godliness be scandalized, who hath he to do it but professors of godliness? Some of them to give the scandal, and others to aggravate and divulge it. Would he have a church divided? How quickly doth he find a bone of contention. And who should do it but the unstable members of it? Would he have the truth opposed, and error and darkness to be promoted? Who must do it but professors of the truth? Persuade some of them that truth is error, and error is truth, and the work will be done. They will furiously march out against their Master, and think they do him service while they are fighting against him, and scorning, and shaming, if not killing his servants. Would he have public divisions maintained among all the churches of the world? It is but possessing the weaker, unstable pastors and people, with a perverse zeal for mere words and notions, as if the life of the church did therein consist; and they will be the devil's instruments at a beck, and carry it

perhaps by the major vote; and all that will not word it as they, shall be called heretics, and the church shall have new articles added to their faith, under pretence of preserving and expounding the old ones. And thus when satan hath a work to do, if heathens and infidels cannot do it, it is no more but call out Christians to do it. If drunkards and malignant enemies cannot do it, it is but calling out some unstable professors of godliness to do it, and possessing the more injudicious part of the pastors with some carnal ends, or blind consuming zeal.

O Christians! in the name of God, as you would avoid these devilish employments, labour for confirming, strengthening grace, and rest not in your childish weakness, and instability. If you are delivered from satan, and have truly renounced him, and tasted the great salvation of Christ, methinks you should even tremble to consider what a thing it would be, if after all this, you should prove, through your weakness, so serviceable to the devil, and so injurious to your dearest Lord? What! must those abuse him whom he hath redeemed from damnation? Must those hands be employed to demolish his kingdom, that were washed by him, and should have built it up? As if you were like Judas, that even now hath his hand with his Master in the dish, and presently lifts it up against him!

11. Moreover, while you are weaklings and unconfirmed, you will exceedingly encourage the ungodly in their false hopes, by being so like them as you are. When they see that you excel them so little, and in many things are as bad or worse than they, it strongly persuadeth them that their state is as good as yours, and that they may be saved as well as others, seeing the difference seemeth to be so small. They know that heaven and hell are much unlike, and vastly distant; and, therefore, they will hardly believe that they must be thrust into hell, when men that seem so little to differ from them must go to heaven. You would not believe how it hardeneth them in their sin, when they see professors do as bad! And how it setteth them in presumption and impenitence to perceive your faults! When a minister hath laboured to make the sins of the ungodly odious to him, and to break his heart with the terrors of the Lord, O how it quieteth him, and healeth all again, to see the like sins, or others as bad, in the professors of religion!

'If these,' saith he, 'may be saved, for all such and such sins, what cause have I to fear?' O wretched, unprofitable, scandalous professor! When we have studied and preached for men's conversion many a year, you go and undo all that we have done, by the scandal, or levity, or imprudence of an hour! When we have almost persuaded men to be Christians, you unpersuade them, and turn them back again, and do more harm by the weakness and scandal of your lives, than many of us can do good by life and doctrine. When we have brought sinners even to the door of life, you prove their enemies, and take them out of our hands again, and bring them back to their old captivity, doth it not pierce your very hearts to think on it, that ever one soul, much more so many, should be shut out of glory, and burn in everlasting misery, and you should have a hand in it? Consider of this, and methinks you should desire confirming grace.

12. And methinks it should be very grievous to you, to be so like to the ungodly yourselves, and that satan should still have so much interest in you. Holiness is God's image; and doth it not grieve you that you are so little like him! By his grace he keeps possession of you; and doth it not grieve you that God hath no more possession of you; but that satan and sin should so defraud him of his own! Will he condescend to dwell in so low a worm, so oft defiled with the dung of his iniquities; and doth it not wound you to think, that even there he should be so straitened, and thrust into corners, by a hellish enemy, as if that simple habitation were too much for him, and that dirty dwelling were too good for him! And as if you grudged him so much of the leavings of satan, that had taken up the beginning of your days in sin!

Your corruption is the very image of the devil, and doth it not affright you to think that you should be so like him! You are charged not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed or metamorphosed "by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable, that perfect will of God;" Rom. xii. 2. And yet will you stop in a state so like to those that perish? He that hath the least measure of saving grace, is likeliest to the children of the devil of any man in the world, that is not one of them. Seek, therefore, to increase.

13. And I beseech you consider, that your excellency, and the glory and lustre of your graces, is one of God's appointed means for the honour of his Son, and Gospel, and church, and for the conviction and conversion of the unbelieving world. And, therefore, if you use not these means, you rob God and the church of that which is their due, and deprive sinners of one of the means of their salvation. You are commanded to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven;" Mat. v. 16. Christians, be awakened in the name of God, to consider what you have to do with your graces! You have the living God to please and honour by them! As the excellency of the work doth honour the workman, so must your graces and lives honour God. You have the souls of the weak to confirm by your lives, and the souls of the ungodly to win by your lives. You should all be preachers, and even preach as you go up and down in the world, as a candle lighteth which way ever it goeth. As we are sent to save sinners, as ambassadors of Christ, by public proclamation of his will; so are you sent to save them as his servants and our helpers, and must preach by your lives and familiar exhortations, as we must do by authoritative instruction. A good life is a good sermon; yea, those may be won by your sermons, that will not come to ours; or will not obey the doctrine which they hear. Even to women, that must keep silence in the church, doth Peter command this way of preaching; "That if any of them have husbands that obey not the word, they may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives;" 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. Thousands can understand the meaning of a good life, that cannot understand the meaning of a good sermon! By this way you may preach to men of all languages, though your tongues had never learnt but one. For a holy, harmless, humble life, doth speak in all the languages of the world, to men that have eyes to read it. This is the universal character and language, in which all sorts may perceive you speak the wondrous works of the Holy Ghost. I charge you, therefore, Christians, deprive not God of the honour you owe him, nor the church, or souls of wicked men, of this excellent, powerful help which you owe them, by continuing in your weakness, and unsettled minds, and spotted lives; but grow up to that measure that may be

fit for such a work. As you durst not silence the preachers of the Gospel, so do not dare to silence yourselves from preaching by your holy exemplary lives. And alas, do you think that feeble, giddy, scandalous professors, are like to do any great matters by their lives? Would you wish the poor world to write after such a crooked and blotted copy? Will it win men's hearts to a love of holiness, to talk with a Christian that can scarce speak a word of sense for his religion? Or to see a professor as greedy for a little gain as the veriest worldling that hath no other hope? Or to hear them rail, or lie, or slander? Or to see them turn up and down like a weathercock, according as the wind of temptation sits: and to follow every new opinion that is but put off with a plausible fervency? Do you think that men are like to be won by such lives as these?

14. Do you consider what great things you must make account to suffer for Christ? You must "forsake all that you have;" Luke xiv. 33. You must not save your lives if he bid you lose them; Matt. xvi. 25. You "must suffer with him, if you will be glorified with him;" Rom. viii. 17. You may be called to "confess Christ before the kings or judges" of the earth; and then, "if you deny him, he will deny you," and if you be "ashamed of him he will be ashamed of you," (unless you be brought to a better state); Luke ix. 26. Mark viii. 38. You may be called to "the fiery trial," and "to suffer also the spoiling of your goods;" and in a word, the loss of all. And do you think that you shall not find use for the strongest graces then? Have you not need to be confirmed, rooted Christians, that must expect such storms? Are infants meet for such encounters? Have you not seen how many that seemed strong, have been overthrown in a time of trial? And yet will you stop in a weak estate? Perhaps you will say, 'We cannot stand by our own strength, and, therefore, Christ may uphold the weakest, when the strongest may fall.' To which I answer, it is true; but it is God's common way to work by means, and to imitate nature in his works of grace; and, therefore, he useth to root and strengthen those that he will have to stand and conquer; yea, and to arm them as well as strengthen them, and then to teach them to use their arms. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power

of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand;" Ephes. vi. 10—13. You must look "when you are illuminated, to endure a great fight of afflictions; to be made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and to be companions of them that are so used; and, therefore, you have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you may receive the promise;" Heb. x. 32, 33. 36. If you will endure, in the time of persecution, the word must take deep root in your hearts; Matt. xiii. 5. 20, 21. and you must be founded on a rock, if you look to stand in time of storms; Matt. vii. 24, 25.

In the mean time, it is a fearful thing to see in what a wavering condition you seem to stand, like a tree that shakes, as if it were even falling, or like a cowardly army, that are ready to run before they fight; and like cowardly soldiers, you are still looking behind you, and a small matter troubleth, and perplexeth, and staggereth you, as if you were ready to repent of your repentings. And must God have such servants as these, that upon every rumour, or word, or trouble, are wayering or looking back, and ready to forsake him?

15. Consider also, that the same reasons that moved you at first to be Christians, should now move you to be confirmed, thriving Christians. For they are of force as well for this, as for that. You would not have missed your part in Christ for all the world, if indeed you have the least degree of grace. And if the beginning be good and necessary, the increase is neither bad or needless. If a little grace be desirable, sure more is more desirable. If it was then but a reasonable thing that you should forsake all for Christ and follow him, it is sure as reasonable that you should follow him to the end, till you reach that blessedness which was the end for which at first you followed him. What! Christian, hast thou found God a hard master, a barren wilderness to thee? or his service an unprofitable thing? Say so, and I dare say thou art a bastard (to use the apostle's phrase, Heb. xii. 8.), and not a Christian. Some trial thou hast

made of him. What evil hast thou found in him? or what wrong hath he ever done thee, that thou shouldst now begin to make a stand, as if thou wert in doubt, whether it be best to go further? If ever Christ were needful, he is needful still. And if ever heaven and holiness were good, they are good still. And, therefore, go on till thou hast obtained more, and forget not the reasons that first persuaded with thee.

16. Nay, more than so, you have the addition of much experience, which should be an exceeding help to quicken your affections. When you first repented and came in to Christ, you had never had any experience in yourselves of his saving, special grace before; but you came in upon the bare hearing and believing of it. But now you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and you have received at his hands the pardon of sin, the Spirit of adoption, the hope of glory, which before you had not! You have had many a prayer answered, and many a deliverance granted; and will you make a stand when all these experiences do call you forward? Should not new motives and helps thus added to the old, be the means of adding to your zeal and holiness? Surely more wages and encouragement, doth bespeak more work and diligence. And, therefore, see that you increase.

17. And most, or many of you have cause to consider how long you have been in the family and school of Christ. If you are but newly entered, I may well exhort you to increase, but I cannot reprove you for not increasing. But, alas! what a multitude of dwarfs hath Christ, that are like infants at twenty, or forty, or threescore years of age. What! be so many years in his school, and yet be in the lowest form. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, that by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil;" Heb. v. 12—14. O poor weak, diseased Christian! hast thou been so many years beholding the face of God by faith, and yet art thou no more in love with him than at the first? Hast thou been so long in making trial of his goodness? And dost thou see it, and savour it no more than in the beginning? Hast

thou been so long under his cure, and art thou no more healed than the first year or day? Hast thou been hearing and talking of heaven so long, and yet art thou no more heavenly nor ready for heaven? Hast thou heard and talked so much against the world and the flesh, and yet is the world as high in thee as at first, and the flesh as strong as in the beginning of thy profession? O what a sin and shame is this! And what a wrong to God and thee!

Yea, consider here also, what means thou hast had, as well as what time! O who hath gone beyond thee for power, and plenty, and purity of ordinances! Or at least how few! Surely few parts of all the earth are like to England, for the showers of heaven, and the riches of the precious ordinances of God. You have sermons till you can scarce desire more! And that so plain, that men can scarce tell how to speak plainer; and so earnest, as if the servants of Christ would take no nay; even almost as if they must perish if you perished. You have as frequent, as plain, as powerful books. You have the warnings and examples of the godly about you. And what yet would you have more? And should a people thus fed be dwarfs continually? Is ignorance, and dullness, and earthliness, and selfishness excusable after all these means? Surely, sirs, it is but just that God should expect you all to be giants! Even heavenly, grown, confirmed Christians. Whatever others do, it should be so with you.

18. And methinks it should somewhat move you to consider how others have thriven in less time, and by smaller means by far than you have had! And how some of your neighbours can yet thrive by the same means that you so little thrive by. Job, that was so magnified by God himself, had not such means as you. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, had none of them all such means as you! "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them;" Matt. xiii. 17. Though John the Baptist was greater than any of the prophets, yet the least of you that are in the Gospel kingdom, are greater than he in respect of means. As the times of the Gospel have far clearer light, and give out greater measures of grace, so the true genuine children of the Gos-

pel should (taking them one with another) be far more confirmed, strong, and heavenly, than those that were under the darker and scantier administrations of the promise.

And do you not see and hear how far you are outstripped by many of your poor neighbours, that are as low in natural parts, and as low in the world, and the esteem of men as you. How many (in this place I dare boldly speak it) do shine before you in knowledge, and meekness, and patience, and a blameless, upright life : in fervent prayers, and a heavenly conversation ! Men that have had as much need to look after the world as you, and no longer time to get these qualifications ; and no other means but what you have had, or might have had, as well as they. And now they shine as stars in the church on earth, while you are like sparks, if not like clods. I know that God is the free disposer of his graces ; but yet he so seldom faileth any (even in degrees) that be not wanting to themselves, that I may well ask you, why you might not have reached to some more eminency, as well as these about you, if you had but been as careful and industrious as they.

19. Consider also, that your holiness is your personal perfection, and that of the same kind you must have in glory, though not of the same degree. And, therefore, if you be not desirous of its increase, it seems you are out of love with your souls, and with heaven itself. And when you cease to grow in holiness, you cease to go on any further to salvation. If you would, indeed, yourselves, be perfect and blessed, you must be perfected in this holiness, which must make you capable of the perfect fruition of the most holy God, and capable of his perfect love and praise. There is no heaven without a perfection in holiness. If, therefore, you let fall your desires of this, it seems you let fall your desires of salvation. Up then, and be doing, and grow as men that are growing up to glory ; and if you believe that you are in your progress to heaven, being nearer your salvation than when you first believed, see then that you make a progress in heavenly-mindedness, and that you be riper for salvation than when you first believed. How ill doth it become men to make any stand in the way to heaven, especially when they have been in the way so long, that we might have expected before this they should have been, as it were, almost within sight of it.

20. Consider also, that little grace, little glory; and the greater measure of holiness, the greater measure will you have of happiness. I know that the glory of the lowest saint in heaven will be exceedingly great; but doubtless the greatest measure is unspeakably the most desirable. And as it will not stand with the truth of grace for a man to be satisfied with a low degree of grace, though he plead the happiness of the lowest Christian, and his own unworthiness of the least degree; so, at least, it ill beseems an heir of glory to desire but the lowest degree of glory, though he plead the happiness of the lowest saint in heaven, and his own unworthiness of the lowest place. For he that will be so content with the smallest glory, as not to have hearty desires of more, is accordingly content to have in himself the smallest measure of the knowledge and love of God, and to be loved in the smallest measure by him; and to have the least enjoyment of him; and to bear the smallest part in his praises, and in pleasing and glorifying him for ever. For all these things are our happiness itself. And how well this agreeth with a gracious frame of mind, I need not any further tell you.

But because some make question of it, whether the degree of glory will be answerable to the degree of holiness, I shall prove it in a few words.

(1.) It is the very drift of the parable of the talents in Matt. xxv. He that had gotten most by improvement, was made ruler proportionably over most cities. Not he that had been at the greatest bodily labour in religion, nor every one that had passed the greatest sufferings; but he that had got most holiness to himself, and honour to God by the improvement of his talents, and so had doubled them.

(2.) The degrees of holiness hereafter will be divers, as are the degrees of holiness here; for as men sow, they will reap; and there is no promise in Scripture, that men that die with the smallest holiness shall be made equal to them that died with the greatest holiness. And that the greatest holiness hereafter, must have the greatest happiness, is past denial. For, [1.] Holiness in heaven is an essential part of the felicity itself. It is the perfection of the soul. [2.] The use of it is for perfect fruition, and perfect exercise of love and praise; which are the other parts of glory. And God will not give men powers, capacities, and dispositions in hea-

ven which shall be in vain; as he giveth hungering, and thirsting, and love, so will he give proportionable satisfaction, and not tantalize his servants in their blessedness, and leave a part of hell in heaven. [3.] And holiness is pleasing to God in its own nature; and, therefore, the greatest holiness will most greatly please him; and he that most pleaseth God, hath the greatest glory. These things are plain.

(3.) Moreover, we have great reason to conceive of the state of the glorified, in some congruency with the rest of the workmanship of God. But in all the rest there is a difference or imparity; therefore we have reason to think it is so here. On earth there are princes and subjects in the commonwealth; and pastors and people in the churches, and several degrees among the people as to gifts and comforts. Among the devils there are degrees; and among the angels themselves there are principalities and powers, and thrones and dominions. And why then should we imagine that the heavenly Jerusalem shall not be so too?

(4.) And Christ plainly intimateth that there is a place, "on his right hand, and on his left, to give," in that kingdom, though, as the Son of Man, he had not the principal disposal of it. (And then the kingdom must be delivered to the Father, and God be all in all; and, therefore, the Mediator as such have somewhat less to do, than now.) And when Christ telleth us of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and of many from the east and west sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he intimateth to us, that every place in heaven is not so high as Abraham's bosom, nor a sitting with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So that I take it as a plain revealed truth, that divers degrees of holiness will have divers degrees of glory hereafter.

The chief argument to the contrary is fetched from the parable of the labourers, that coming in at several hours, received every one a penny. But this is misunderstood. For here is not a word in it contrary to our assertion. The parable only saith that, 'Glory shall not be proportioned to the time, but they that come later shall have never the less for that,' which is nothing to our question about the degrees of holiness. For many that are first in time may be least and last in holiness; and many that are last in time, may in that little time come to be best and greatest in holiness, and consequently in glory. The parable in Matt. xxv. shews that

God will give different degrees of glory, according to the difference in improvement of our talents. And the other parable shews that he will not give out his glory according to men's time and standing in the church, seeing a weaker Christian may be of longer standing, and a stronger of a later coming in. And what shew of discord is there between these? 2. And yet it is doubtful in the judgment of good expositors, whether the parable of the penny do speak of heaven at all or not; and whether it speak not only of the vocation of the Gentiles, and taking them into the Gospel church in equality with the believing Jews: though the Jews being God's ancient people, had been longer in the vineyard, and the Gentiles were called but at the eleventh hour, yet God will make the Gentiles equal in the grace of vocation, because in this he hath not engaged himself, but may do with his own as he list. Whichever of these two is the thing intended in the text, or possibly both, it is certain that this general is the sum of the parable, That the first may be last, and the last first; that is, that God will not give men the greatest reward that were first called. But he never said that he would not reward them most, that had done him the truest service, and were highest in holiness.

Object. But the reason is, 'May I not do as I will with my own.' True, but you must remember what it is a reason of; even of the cause in question, and may not by you be extended to other causes without a warrant. You never read that he equally pardoneth the believer and the unbeliever, or saveth the regenerate and the unregenerate, and then gives this reason of it, 'May I not do as I will with my own.' For this can be no reason for any thing which he hath revealed that he will do. Prove first that he will not do it, and then bring your reasons why; but not before. So that it extendeth not to the case of different glory upon different degrees of holiness; for this he hath revealed that he will do.

So much (and perhaps too much) to satisfy the doubtful. Now I desire to return to the dull and languishing Christian, and beseech him to remember what a difference there will be between one saint and another in glory! And O who would not aspire after the highest measure of holiness, in hope of a high degree of glory? Christian, hadst thou not infinitely rather love God with the greatest love than with a

less, and be beloved again with the greatest of his love? I mean, by partaking of the greatest effects of it, and the fullest sense of his everlasting favour. Remember this, and sure it will persuade thee to gird up thy loins, and run as for the incorruptible crown, and press on to the mark for the price of the high calling, and not to sit down with weak beginnings, especially when the way is so sweet as well as the end; and the greatest holiness hath here also the greatest spiritual reward; and is attended with the greatest peace and joy (in the ordinary course of God's dispensations). And when all the knocks, and falls, and cries of Christians in this life, proceed from the childish weakness of their spirits: and almost all the woes and calamities that attend us, our shames, our pains, our contentions and divisions, and the lamentable difficulty (that seems an impossibility) of healing them, or preventing more, all is from the corruptions that are the companions of our weakness. And could we but grow up to a manhood of understanding, humility, meekness, self-denial, and the love of God in Christ, and of one another, we might then have some hope of the cure of all. Alas! that men that are so sensible of the difference between a weak body and a strong, a sick and a sound, a child and a man, an idiot and a man of wisdom, though all of them have human nature, should yet be so little sensible of the great difference between a weak Christian and a strong, a sick and a sound (comparatively sound), a childish and a manly, wise, confirmed Christian! Did you well know the difference, you would shew us that you make a greater matter of it.

And now, Christian reader, I entreat thee soberly to consider of these twenty motives, whether they do not shew thee reason enough to move thee to look after higher things, and not to stay in an infancy of holiness. It is a blessed mercy I confess, that God hath given thee a true conversion, and the smallest measure of the heavenly life. I do not move thee to undervalue it. Nay, I am blaming thee for undervaluing it. For if thou didst not undervalue it, thou wouldst earnestly desire more. Thou hast cause to bless God to all eternity, and to all eternity thou shalt bless him, for making thee a new creature, even a living member of his Son. And I know that thy condition is unspeakably better than the greatest prince's or emperor's upon the earth, that is void of

holiness. I know that thou hast still ground of exceeding consolation. I am not taking thy comforts from thee. I know God despiseth not the day of small things: and that Christ will not "quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed," nor cast off the poorest infants of his family, or lose any one of the lambs of his flock. But yet for all this I must tell thee, that there is a great deal of difference in excellency, and strength, and comfort, and happiness, between one sanctified person and another. And if thou be so apt to be over-covetous of worldly riches, where God forbiddeth it, and limiteth thy desires, and where there is no such necessity or excellency to entice thee, why shouldst thou not cherish that holy covetousness which God expressly commandeth thee? "Covet earnestly the best gifts;" and which he hath promised a blessing to. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" Matt. v. 6. This is not spoken of them that have no righteousness, but of them that have it, and fain would have more. For 1. There is no such promise made to any that are short of saving faith. It is not any common grace that God makes this promise to, but a special grace. And 2. It is evident that no man can thus hunger and thirst after righteousness without righteousness; for even this hungering and thirsting is a degree of true sanctification. You would not take up with a cottage or smoky cabin if you could have a palace; nor with dry bread if you could lawfully have plenty; nor with a torn or threadbare coat, if you could have better; nor with a poor, laborious, toilsome life, in disgrace, and the reproach of men, if you could have honour, and ease, and abundance. And yet will you take up with so poor a stock of holiness, and so dark a mind, and small a measure of heavenly light, and so cold a love to God and glory, and so barren and common a kind of life? God hath commanded you, "That having food and raiment, you should therewith be content;" but he never commanded you that being once converted and made an infant in grace, you should therewith be content. So content you must be as not to murmur; but not so content as not to desire more.

You can see the difference, I doubt not, in others, between a little grace and more: O that you would but see this for yourselves! If you have a froward wife, or husband,

or child, that hath a harsh and passionate nature, and hath so much grace only as to lament this when they are calmed, and to strive against it, but not to forbear the often exercise of it; though such a nature may be pardoned to the penitent, yet it may prove such a thorn in your own side, and such a smoke or continual dropping in your house, as will make you weary of it. I have oft known men that had wives of so much folly, and passion, and unruliness of tongue, that yet they hoped had some saving grace, that made them weary of their lives, and wish that they had met with a gentle nature. And methinks you should know that corruption in yourselves is much more dangerous and hurtful to you than any that can be in wife or husband; and should be much more offensive, and wearisome, and grievous to you. It is a desperate sign of a bad heart, that can bear with corruption in themselves, and cannot bear with it in wife or husband, or those that do them wrong by their corruptions. If weakness of grace do leave your nearest friends thus liable to wrong and abuse you, and this trouble you; consider that your own weakness leaves you liable to far greater and offer offences against God, and this should trouble you much more.

Let me give you another instance: if you have a pastor that is truly godly, and yet is so weak that he can scarce speak with any understanding or life the message that he should deliver, and withal is indiscreet, and as scandalous as will stand with grace; what good is this man like to do for all his godliness? At least you will soon see a lamentable difference between such an one and a judicious, convincing, holy, heavenly, powerful, and unspotted man. O what a blessing is one to the place, and the other may be a grievous judgment, and you would be ready to run away from his ministry. Why, sirs, if there be so great a difference between pastor and pastor, where both have grace, methinks you should see what a difference there is also between people and people, even where all have grace. For truly poor ministers find this to their sorrow in their people, as well as you can find it in them. Some ministers have a staid, confirmed, judicious, humble, meek, self-denying, teachable, peaceable, and experienced people: and these walk comfortably, and guide them peaceably, and labour with them cheerfully; and O what beauty and glory is upon

such assemblies, and what order, and growth, and comfort is among them! But, alas! how many ministers have a flock (even of those that we hope are godly) that grieve them by their levity, or weary them by their unteachable ignorance or self-conceitedness, or hinder their labours by errors and quarrels, and perverse opposition to the truths which they do not understand? So that there is a great difference between people and people that are godly.

Brethren, it is far from the desire of my heart, to cast any unjust dishonour upon saints, much less to dishonour the graces of God in them. No, I take it rather for an honour to that immortal spark, that it can live among its enemies and not be conquered, and in the waters of corruption, and not be quenched. But yet I must take up a just complaint, that few of us answer the cost of our redemption and the provisions of God; or are near such a people as our receivings or professions require we should be. It is one of the most grievous thoughts that ever came to my heart, to observe how the lives of the greatest part of professors do tend to dishonour the power and worth of grace in the eyes of the world, and that the ungodly should see that grace doth make no greater a difference, and do no more upon us than it doth. Yea, it is a sore temptation oftentimes to believers, to see that grace doth no more in the most; but that so many are still a shame to their profession.

I must confess that I once thought more highly of professors as to the measure of their grace, than experience now will suffer me to think. Little did I think that they had been so unstable, so light, so ignorant, so giddy, as to follow almost any that do but whistle them. What a dreadful sight it is to see, how quickly the most odious heresies do infect and destroy even multitudes of them, and that in a moment, as soon as they appear! The grossest mists of the bottomless pit are presently admired as the light of God.

If a church-divider do but arise, how quickly doth he get disciples.

If a Papist have but opportunity, he will lightly catch some as oft as he doth cast his net. If he cannot prevail barefaced; it is but putting on the visor of some other sect.

Even the odious heresies of the Quakers themselves, and their railings, which an honest pagan would abhor, do presently find entertainment with professors; and let the matter

or manner be never so senseless, yet is it accepted if it be but zealously put off. O who would have thought that our people that seemed godly should be so greedy of the devil's baits as to catch at any thing, yea, and to devour the bare hooks! O who would have thought that so many that seemed lovers of God, would so readily believe every deceiver that speaks against him, if he can but do it with a pious pretence.

Yea, if Seekers themselves do but cast in their objections, how many of our people are presently at a loss, and their faith is muddied, and they are to seek for a ministry, and to seek for a church, and to seek for ordinances, and to seek for a Scripture, even for the Gospel itself; and therefore it is like they are to seek for a Christ, or to seek for a religion, if not to seek for God, and for a heaven.

O sad day! that ever these things should come to pass, and that we are forced to utter them, having no possibility of concealing them from the world. Were these men confirmed and stablished in the faith? Were these men rooted and built up in Christ? Alas, sirs, if any deceivers come among us, how few of our people are able to withstand them, and defend the truth of God against them! But they are caught up by the devil's falconer, as the poor chickens by the kite, except those that fly under the wings of a judicious, settled minister.

If an Anabaptist assault their baptism, how few of them can defend it. And, silly souls, when they find themselves nonplused, they suspect not their own unfurnished understandings, or inexperienced, unsettled hearts, but suspect the truth of God, and suspect their teachers, be they never so far beyond them in knowledge and holiness; as if their teachers had misled them, whenever these unprofitable infants are thus stalled.

If a Papist be to plead his cause with them, how few have we that can answer them!

If an infidel should oppose the Scripture, or Christ himself, how few among us are able to defend them, and so- lidly give proof either of the truth of Scripture, or of the faith that they do profess!

And this is not all (though it is a heart-breaking case) but even in their practice, alas! what remissness and what corruptions do appear! How few in secret do keep any

constant watch upon their hearts, and fear and abhor the approach of an evil thought! Nay, how few are they that do not leave their fancy almost common, and ordinarily even feed on covetous, proud, malicious, or lustful thoughts, and make no great matter of it, but live in it from day to day! How few do keep up life and constancy in secret prayer or meditation! How few are the families where the cause, and worship, and government of Christ are kept up in life and honour, and where all is not dissolved into a little weary, disordered, heartless performance!

Look into our congregations, and judge but by their very looks, and carriage, and gestures, how many even of those that we think the best, do so much as seem to be earnest and serious in prayer and praise, when the church is upon that work! Though it be the highest and noblest part of worship, and should be done with all the heart and might, and with a participation of a kind of angelical reverence, devotion and spirituality; and if it were so, we should see it by some of the signs of reverence and affection: yet, alas! when we think the best of them should be striving with God, or rapt up in his praises, they do but hear us pray as they hear us preach, and think they have done fair to give us the hearing. They sit on their seats in prayer, or use some crooked, leaning gesture, perhaps looking up and down about them, perhaps half asleep; but few of them with eyes, and hands, and hearts lifted up to heaven, do behave themselves as if they believed that they had so nearly to do with God. I know reverent gestures may easily be counterfeited; but that shews that they are good, when hypocrites think them a fit cover for hypocrisy, for they use not to borrow credit from evil, but from some good to be a cover to the evil: and it leaveth the neglects of the godly more inexcusable, when they will not go so far herein as hypocrites themselves, nor by their behaviour in a public ordinance, so much as seem to be seriously employed with God.

And if we try the graces or obedience of professors, alas, how small shall we find them in the most! How little are most acquainted with the life of faith! How little do they admire the Redeemer and his blessed work! How unacquainted are they with the daily use and high improvement of a Saviour, for access to God, and support and corroboration of the soul, and for conveyance of daily supplies of

grace, and help against our spiritual enemies ! How few are they that can rejoice in tribulation, persecution, and bodily distresses, because of the hopes laid up in heaven ; and that can live upon a promise, and comfortably wait on God for the accomplishment ! How few that live as men that are content with God alone, and can cheerfully leave their flesh, and credit, and worldly estate to his disposal, and be content to want or suffer when he sees it good for them ! What repinings and troubles possess our minds if the flesh be not provided for, and if God do but cross us in these worldly things ; as if we had made our bargain with him for the flesh, and for this world, and had not taken him alone for our portion ? How few can use prosperity in riches, and health and reputation, with a mortified, weaned, heavenly mind ! Nay, how few are there that do not live much to the pleasure of the flesh, and pamper it as indulgently under the appearance of temperance and religion, as others do in grosser ways ! Do but try the godly themselves by plain and faithful reproof of their corruptions, and see how many of them you will find, that will not excuse them and take part with the enemy, and be offended with you for your close reproof. If any of them be overtaken with a scandalous fault, and the pastors of the church shall call them to open confession, and expression of repentance, though you would little think a penitent man should once stick at this, and refuse to do any thing that he can do, to repair the honour of God and his profession, and to save the souls of others whom he hath endangered, yet how many will you find, that will add a wilful obstinacy to their scandal, and will deliberately refuse so great, and clear, and necessary a duty : so great is the interest of self and flesh in them, and consequently so little of Christ, that they will live in impenitency in the eye of the church ; and venture on the high displeasure of God, come on it what will, and resist the advice of their best, and wisest, and most impartial friends, rather than they will so far deny themselves as to make such a free and faithful confession. They are many of them so much for holy discipline, that they are ready to fall out with church and ministers, and to be gone to a purer society, because it is not exercised : but on whom ? On others only, and not upon them. When they need discipline themselves, how impatient are they of it, and how do they abhor it, and

what a stir do they make before they will submit; even more sometimes than a drunkard or a swearer; so small is their repentance and detestation of their sin; whereby they shew that their zeal for discipline and reformation, is much out of pride, that others may be brought to stoop, or be cast out from them; and not out of a sincere desire to have the refining and humbling benefit of it themselves.

And if any among them be either faulty or reported so to be, who is forwarder than many professors of godliness, to backbite them, and speak of their faults when they cannot hear, nor answer for themselves, nor receive any benefit by it; and if another that hates backbiting, do but reprove them, they will slander him also for a defender of men's sin! But when they should go in Christ's way, and tell men of their faults, and draw them to repentance, and if they hear not, take two or three, and speak to them again, how hardly can you draw them to the performance of this duty, what shifts and frivolous excuses have they then! Nay, they will reproach the church or minister for not casting such out, or not keeping them from communion, before they have done, or will be persuaded to do these duties that must go before.

Alas, how little hearty love is there to Christ in his members, even in them that are confident they love the brethren! How few will do or suffer much for them, or relieve them in their want, as suffering with them! How small a matter, a word, a seeming wrong or disrespect, will turn their love into estrangedness or bitterness; if they be tried by an ill word, or a wrong, how touchy, and froward, and impatient do they appear; and it is well if they prove not downright malicious, or return not reviling for reviling.

Alas, how much pride prevaileth with many that seem to go far in the way of piety! How wise are they in their own conceits! How able to judge of controversies, and how much wiser than their teachers, before they can give a good account of the catechism or fundamental truths! How well do they think of themselves and their own parts and performances; how ill do they bear disesteem or undervaluing; and they must needs be noted for somebody in the world!

How worldly, and closehanded, and eager of gain, are many that say they despise the world, and take it for their enemy; if any duty be cross to their profit or credit with men, how obstinate are they against it; and such interest

hath the flesh in them, that they will hardly believe that it is their duty.

How censorious are they of others, especially that differ from them in lesser things ; and how unapt to judge themselves. O how few are the Christians that are eminent in humility, meekness, and self-denial ; that are content to be accounted nothing, so that Christ may be all, and his honour may be secured ; that live as men devoted to God, and honour him with their substance, and freely expend, yea, study for advantages, to improve all their riches and interest to his service. How few are they that live as in heaven upon earth, with the world under their feet, and their hearts above with God their happiness ; that feel themselves to live in the workings and warmth of love to God, and make him their delight, and are content with his approbation whoever disapproveth them ; that are still groaning, or reaching and seeking after him, and long to be with him, to be rid of sin, and see his blessed face, and live in his perfect love and praises ; that love and long for the appearance of Jesus Christ, and can heartily say, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." How few are they that stand in a day of trial ; if they are tried but with a foul word ; if tried but with any thing that toucheth their commodity ; if tried but with the emptiest reasonings of deceivers ; much more if they be tried with the honours and greatness of the world, how few of them stand in trial, and do not fail and forget themselves, as if they were not the men that they seemed to be before ! What then would they prove if they were tried by the flames ?

Mistake me not in all this sad complaint ; as I intend not the dishonour of godliness by this, but of ungodliness, (for it is not because men are godly that they have these faults, but because they are not godly more.) So here is no encouragement to the unsanctified to think themselves as good as the more religious, because they are charged with so many faults. Nor do I affirm all these things to be consistent with true grace that I have here expressed ; but only this, that professors that seem godly to others, are thus too many of them guilty ; and those that have true grace may have any of these faults in a mortified degree, though not in a reigning, predominant measure.

But methinks sirs, you should by this time be convinced

and sensible, how much we dishonour God by our infirmities ; and what a lamentable case it is that the church should consist of so many infants ; and so many should be so little serviceable to God or the common good, but rather be troublers of all about them. Alas, that we should reach no higher, that yet no greater things should be attained ! O what an honour would you be to your profession, and what a blessing to the church, if you did but answer the cost and pains of God and man, and answer the high things that you have been acquainted with and profess. O that we could but boast of you as God did of Job, and could say to satan or any of his instruments, ' Here be Christians rooted and stablished in the faith ; try whether you can shake them or make them stagger, and do your worst. Here is a man eminent in meekness, and humility, and patience, and self-denial ; discompose and disturb his mind if you can ; draw him to pride, or immoderate passion, or censoriousness, or uncharitableness if you can. Here are a people that are in unity, and knit together in faith and love ; of one heart, and one soul, and one lip ; do your worst to divide them, or break them into parties, or draw them into several minds and ways, or exasperate them against each other. Here are a people established in mortification, and that have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts ; do your worst to draw them to intemperance in eating, or drinking, or recreations, or any of the delights of the flesh ; or to puff them up by greatness or prosperity, and make them forget themselves or God. Try them with riches, or beauty, or vain-glory, or other sensual delights, and see whether they will turn aside, and be ever the less in communion with God, and enticed to forget the joy that is set before them, or will not rather despise your baits, and run away from alluring objects as their greatest dangers. Daunt them if you can by threatenings ; try them by persecution, by fire and sword, and see whether they are not past your shaking, even rooted, confirmed, and built up in Christ.'

O what a glory would you be to your profession, if you could attain to this degree ; could we but truly thus boast of you, we might say our people are Christians of the right strain. But when we must come about you like men in a swoon, and can hardly perceive whether you are alive or dead, and can scarce discern whether you have any grace or

none, what a grief is this to our hearts ; what a perplexity to us in our administrations, not knowing whether comfort or terror be your due : and what a languishing, uncomfortable life is this to yourselves, in comparison of what you might attain to !

Rouse up yourselves, Christians, and look after higher and greater things ; and think it not enough that you are barely alive. It is an exceeding righteousness that you must have if you will be saved, even exceeding all that the unsanctified do attain ; for, “ Except your righteousness exceed even the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven ;” Matt. v. 20. But it is yet a more exceeding righteousness, that you must have if you will be confirmed, built up and abound, and would honour your profession, and cheerfully, successfully, and constantly go on in the journey, the race, the warfare that you have begun : you must then exceed yourselves, and exceed all the feeble, unstable, wavering, infant Christians that are about you : and to persuade you yet further to look after this, I shall here annex a few Motives more.

1. Consider Christian, that it is a God of exceeding, infinite greatness and goodness that thou hast to do with, and therefore it is not small and low matters that are suitable to his service. O if thou hadst but a glimpse of his glory, thou wouldst say that it is not common things that are meet for such a dreadful majesty. Hadst thou but a fuller taste of his goodness, thy heart would say, this pittance of love and service is unworthy of him. You will not offer the basest things to a king, much less to the highest King of kings. “ If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil ? offer it now to thy governor ; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts ?” Mal. i. 8. “ But ye have profaned it (his great name) in that ye say, the table of the Lord is polluted, and the fruit thereof, his meat is contemptible : ye have said also, what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts, and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick ; thus ye brought an offering. Should I accept this at your hand saith the Lord ? But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing ; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is

dreadful among the heathen;" verse 12—14. If you better knew the majesty of God, you would know that the best is too little for him, and trifling is not tolerable in his service. When Nadab and Abihu ventured with false fire to his altar, and he smote them dead, he silenced Aaron with this reason of his judgment, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people will I be glorified;" Lev. x. 1—3. That is, 'I will have nothing common offered to me, but be served with my own holy, peculiar service.' When the Bethshemites were smitten dead, fifty thousand threescore and ten men of them, they found that God would not be dallied with, and cried out, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" 1 Sam. vi. 20.

2. Consider also, it was an exceeding great price that was paid for your redemption; for "you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ;" 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. It was an exceeding great love that was manifested by God the Father, and by Christ in his work of redemption; such as even poseth angels and men to study it and comprehend it; 1 Pet. i. 12. Eph. iii. 18, 19. And should all this be answered but with trifling from you? Should such a matchless miracle of love be answered with no greater love? Especially when you were purposely "redeemed from all iniquity, that you might be sanctified to Christ a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" Tit. ii. 14. It being therefore so great a price that you are bought with, remember that you are none of your own, but must glorify him that bought you, in body and spirit; 1 Cor. vi. 20.

3. Consider also, that it is not a small, but an exceeding glory, that is promised you in the Gospel, and which you live in hope to possess for ever; and therefore it should be an exceeding love that you should have to it, and an exceeding care that you should have of it. Make light of heaven, and make light of all. Truly it is an unsuitable, unreasonable thing, to have one low thought, or one careless word, or one cold prayer or other performance, about such a matter as eternal glory. Shall such a thing as heaven be coldly or carelessly minded and sought after? Shall the endless fruition of God in glory, be looked at with sleepy, heartless wishes? I tell you sirs, if you will have such high

hopes, you must have high and strong endeavours. A slow pace becomes not him that travelleth to such a home as this. If you are resolved for heaven, behave yourselves accordingly. A gracious, reverent, godly frame of spirit, producing an acceptable service of God, is fit for them that look to receive the kingdom that cannot be moved; Heb. xii. 28. The believing thoughts of the end of all our labours, must needs convince us that we should be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;" 1 Cor. xv. 58. O hearken thou sleepy, slothful Christian! Doth not God call, and conscience call, 'Awake, and up and be doing, man, for it is for heaven!' Hearken thou negligent, lazy Christians; do not God and conscience call out to thee, 'O man, make haste and mend thy pace, it is for heaven!' Hearken thou cowardly faint-hearted Christian; do not God and conscience call out to thee, 'Arm man, and see thou stand thy ground; do not give back, nor look behind thee, but fall on, and fight in the strength of Christ; for it is for the crown of endless glory.' O what a heart hath that man, that will not be heartened with such calls as these. Methinks the very name of God and heaven should awaken you, and make you stir, if there be any stirring power within you. Remissness in worldly matters hath an excuse, for they are but trifles; but slackness in the matters of salvation, is made inexcusable by the greatness of those matters. O let the noble greatness of your hopes appear in the resolvedness, exactness, and diligence of your lives.

4. Consider also, that it is not only low and smaller mercies that you receive from God, but mercies innumerable, and inestimable, and exceeding great. And, therefore, it is not cold affections, and dull endeavours, that you should return to God for all these mercies. Mercy brought you into the world; and mercy hath nourished you and bred you up; and mercy hath defended and maintained you, and plentifully provided for you. Your bodies live upon it: your souls were recovered by it: it gave you your being: it rescued you from misery: it saveth you from sin, and satan, and yourselves. All that you have at the present, you hold by it: all that you can hope for the future must be from it. It is most sweet in quality. What is sweeter to miserable souls than mercy? It is exceeding great in quantity!

“The mercy of the Lord is in the heavens, and his faithfulness reacheth to the clouds. His righteousness is like the great mountains; his judgments are the great deep;” Psal. xxxvi. 5, 6. “O how great is his goodness which he hath laid up for them that fear him; which he hath for them that trust in him before the sons of men;” Psal. xxxi. 19. “His mercy is great unto the heavens, and his truth unto the clouds;” Psal. lvii. 10. And O what an insensible heart hath he that doth not understand the voice of all this wondrous mercy. Doubtless it speaketh the plainest language in the world; commanding great returns from us of love, and praise, and obedience to the bountiful bestower of them. With David we must say, “Blessed be the Lord, for he hath shewed me marvellous kindness in a strong city: O love the Lord all ye his saints, for the Lord preserveth all the faithful;” Psal. xxxi. 21, 23. “Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore, for great is thy mercy towards me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell:” Psal. lxxxvi. 11—13. Unspeakable mercies must needs be felt in deep impressions, and be so savoury with the gracious soul, that methinks it should work us to the highest resolutions. Unthankfulness is a crime that heathens did detest: and it is exceedingly great unthankfulness, if we have not exceeding great love and obedience, under such exceeding great and many mercies as we possess.

5. Consider, that they are exceeding great helps and means that you possess, to further your holiness and obedience to God: and, therefore, your holiness and obedience should also be exceeding great. You have all the book of nature to instruct you. Every creature may teach you God, and calls loud upon you to persuade your hearts yet nearer to him. Every work of disposing Providence is an instructor and persuader of you. Every leaf and line of Scripture is a guide and spur to you. You have ministers able and willing to help you: you have the help of the communion of saints: the help of the examples of the good: and the warnings of the judgments of God upon the wicked. The helps of sermons; the helps of sacraments; the helps of prayer, and holy meditation and conference. Mercies to encourage you; afflictions to excite you. What more would you have?

And yet will you be infants, and do no more with all your helps? But this I touched upon before.

6. It is an exceeding great necessity that is upon you. And, therefore, your resolutions should be exceeding high, and your diligence exceeding great. For all you are converted, your salvation lieth yet upon your stability and perseverance. "Christ hath reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight; if you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you have heard;" Col. i. 22, 23. God will not be an acceptor of persons! You must stick to his terms if you will partake of his salvation. He will not make two words with you. He hath told you what he expecteth of you; and that he will have. Death will not be bribed, nor put by. Judgment is coming on. There is no shifting out of the hands of God. And under such pressing necessities as these, what Christians should we be! How stable, and abundant in faith and righteousness!

7. It is a great account that you have to make, and, therefore, a great preparation that should be made. When you shall be brought before the living God, and all your times, and thoughts, and ways, must be called over, and you see what follows, and are waiting for the final doom, then there will be no dull thoughts in your hearts, all will be then lively, and quite above this careless frame. Then even the wicked will have strong desires, 'O that we had taken another course! that we had but prevented this dreadful doom, whatever it had cost us!' And should not believers now be awakened to great and careful preparations, for such a day as this?

8. For trifles here are great endeavours used. To climb up into honour and riches in the world; to satisfy the flesh; to lay up a treasure on earth, and labour for the meat that perisheth. O what endeavours then should be used, for the heavenly, everlasting treasure!

9. Consider also, how forward and diligent should those men be, that are sure they can never go too high, nor be too diligent, when they have done their best. Nay, that are certain, that the best do come so abundantly short, that they must after sit down and lament that they were no better. O there is not the holiest saint on earth, but will confess with

lamentation, how little his love to God is in comparison of what it should be; how short all falls below our duty, below the glorious majesty of God; below the precious love of Christ; below the worth of precious souls; below the weight of endless glory; below the mercies that should warm our hearts; below the great necessity that is on us; and consequently below their own desires. Look, therefore, after greater things, while you may attain them.

10. Lastly, consider what abundance of great engagements are on you, that are sincere believers, more than upon others.

(1.) You are more nearly related to Christ than any others are. And, therefore, you should be more tender of offending him, and more eminent in love and service to him. You are his household-servants; and will you not labour for him and stick to him? You are his friends; and should a friend abuse him? should not a friend be faithful? You are his dear, adopted children, and his spouse; and should not you be faithful to him to the death? Should not all the love and service that you have be his? Isa. i. 2, 3. Mal. i. 10. Gal. v. 4.

(2.) You have bound yourselves to him by more serious frequent vows and covenants than other men have done. How many persons, and places, and necessities of yours, can witness against you, if you be not firm and forward for the Lord. As Joshua said to Israel, "Behold this stone, it shall be a witness unto you, lest you deny your God;" Josh. xxiv. 27. So I may say, the places where you have kneeled, and prayed, and promised, will be witnesses against you, if you be not firm to God. The churches that you have assembled in, the places you have walked in, in your solitary meditations; the persons that have heard your promises and professions; the world about you that hath seen your forwardness, will all witness against you if you be not firm.

(3.) It is you that have the life and kernel of mercies; others have but the crumbs that fall from your tables. Others have common mercies, but you have the great and special mercies that accompany salvation. "All things are yours," and should not you be Christ's? 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. Of you it is that God is so exceeding tender, that he chargeth your enemies not to touch you, and tells them that touch you, that they "touch the apple of his eye;" Zech.

ii. 8. And should not you abound in love and holiness? and should you not be as tender of his favour, and his law, and honour, as of the apple of your eye? Should not he that toucheth the name, and law, and honour of God, by profaning them by sin, be as one that toucheth the apple of your eye?

(4.) You have a Spirit, and heavenly life within you, which the rest of the world are unacquainted with. And can you think it is not something extraordinary, that God must needs expect from you? Will you not "walk in the Spirit," which is given you, and mortify the flesh by it? Gal. v. 16, 17, 24. Is there not more expected from the living than the dead? Surely he that hath made you new creatures, and made you partakers of the Divine Nature, doth expect somewhat divine in your affections and devotions, and that you be somewhat more than men.

(5.) Moreover, it is you above others, for whom the word and messengers of God are sent! We must speak to all: but it is you that God's special eye is upon; it is your salvation that he intends to accomplish by us. There were many widows in the days of Elias, and many lepers in the days of Elisha; Luke iv. 26, 27. But it was but to one of them that the prophet was sent! We make the ungodly multitude even rage against us, and ministers are hated for magnifying the grace of God to you, and declaring his special love to you above others. When Christ himself had spoken to you the forecited the words, it is said in the next verses, 28, 29. that "all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." This was the entertainment of Christ himself, when he did but declare how few it is that God will save, and for whose sakes he specially sends his messengers. And must we incur all this for magnifying you, and will you dishonour yourselves? Is all our study and labour for you, and our lives for you, and all things for you, and will not you be wholly, and to the utmost of your strength for God? Are you called out of all the world for salvation, and will you not answer this admirable, differencing grace, by an admirable difference from those that must

perish, and by an admirable excellency in meekness, humility, self-denial, and heavenliness, above other men?

(6.) Moreover, you know more, and have a greater experience to assist you than others have; and, therefore, you should excel them accordingly. Others have but heard of the odiousness of sin, but you have seen and felt it. Others have heard of God's displeasure, but you have tasted it to the breaking or bruising of your hearts! You have been warned at the very quick, as if Christ had spoken to your very flesh and bones, "Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." And as Ezra said (chap. ix. 13.), "After all that is come upon us, should we again break thy commandments; wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hast consumed us?" So, if after all your spiritual experiences, after so many tastes of the bitterness of sin, and groans, and prayers, and cries against it, you shall yet live as like to the wicked as you dare, and be familiar with that which hath cost you so dear! How do you think that God must take this at your hands? You have tasted of the sweetness of the love of Christ, and wondered at the unspeakable riches of his grace! You have tasted the sweetness of the hopes of glory, and of the powers of the world to come! You have perceived the necessity and excellency of holiness, by inward experience! And if, after all this, you will drabble on the earth, and live below your own experiences, contenting yourselves with an infancy of love, and life, and fruitfulness, how much do you then transgress against the rules of reason, and of equity!

(7.) Moreover, all the world expecteth much more from you, than from any others. God expecteth more from you, for he hath given you more, and meaneth to do more for you. Must you be in the eternal joys of heaven, when all your unsanctified neighbours are in torments, and yet will you not more endeavour to excel them? Is it not unreasonable to expect to be set eternally at so vast a distance from the ungodly world, even as far as heaven is from hell, and yet to be content to differ here but a little from them in holiness? The Lord knows that poor, forsaken, impenitent sinners will do no better, but rage, and be confident, till they are past remedy; he looks for no better from them than to neglect him, and slight his Son, and word, and ways; and

to go on in worldliness and fleshly living ; to be filthy still, and careless, and presumptuous, and self-conceited still. But it is higher matters that he expects from you ; and good reason, he hath done more for you, and prepared you for better things ! The ministers of Christ do look for little better from many of their poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbours, but even to rub out their days in security, and self-deceit, and to be barren after all their labours, if not to hate us for seeking to have saved them. But it is you that their eyes are most upon, and you that their hearts are most upon. Their comfort, and the fruit of their lives, lies much in your hands : saith Paul, “ Brethren, we were comforted over you in all our afflictions and distress, by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord ! For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God. Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith ;” 1 Thess. iii. 7—9. You see here, that your pastors’ lives are in your hands. If you stand fast, they live. For the end of life is more than life ; and your salvation is the end of our lives. If the impenitent world reproach us, and abuse and persecute us, we suffer it joyfully, as long as our work goeth on with you. But when you are at a stand, when you are barren, and scandalous, and passionate, and dishonour your profession, and put us in fears, lest we have bestowed all our labour on you in vain ; this breaks our hearts above any worldly crosses whatsoever. O when the people that we should rejoice and glory in should prove unruly, self-conceited, peevish, proud, every one running his own way, falling into divisions, contentions, or scandals, this is the killing of the comforts of your ministers. When the ungodly shall hit us in the teeth with your scandals and divisions, and say, ‘ These are the godly people that you boasted of, see now what is become of them,’ this is the smoke to our eyes, and the gall and vinegar that is given us by the adversary. And though still we know that our reward is with the Lord, yet can we not choose but be wounded for your sakes, and for the sake of the cause and the name of God.

Yea, the world itself expecteth more from you than others. When men talk of great matters, and profess as every Christian doth, to look for the greatest matters of

eternity, and to live for no lower things than everlasting fellowship with God and angels, no wonder then if the world do look for extraordinary matters from you. If you tell them of reaching heaven, they will look to see you winged like angels, and not to creep on earth like worms. If you say that you are more than men, they look you should shew it, by doing more than men can do; even by denying yourselves, and forgiving injuries, and loving your enemies, and blessing those that curse you, and contemning this world, and having your conversation in heaven. O sirs, believe it, it is not small or common things that will satisfy the expectations of God or men, of ministers, or of the world themselves, concerning you.

(8.) Yea, moreover God himself doth make his boast of you, and call out the world to observe your excellency; he sets you up as the light of the world, to be beheld by others. He calls you in his word, "his peculiar treasure above all people;" Exod. xix. 5. Deut. xiv. 3. Psal. cxxxv. 4. "A peculiar people, purified, and zealous of good works;" Tit. ii. 14. He called you "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Ye are as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9. You are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible;" (1 Pet. i. 23.) and "are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." God hath "delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom you have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins;" Col. i. 12—14. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" Rom. viii. 16, 17. "All things shall work together for your good. He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things;" ver. 28. 32. Nothing but the illuminated soul can discern "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power;" Ephes. i. 18, 19. "When we were dead in sins, he hath

quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ." He hath "brought us nigh that were far off," so that "by one Spirit we have access to the Father by Christ; and are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God;" Ephes. ii. 5—7. 13. 17—19: "We are members of the body of Christ, we are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;" Heb. xii. 22—24.

Brethren, shall the Lord speak all this, and more than this in the Scripture, of your glory, and will you not prove yourselves glorious, and study to make good this precious word? Doth he say, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;" (Prov. xii. 26.), and will you not study to shew yourselves more excellent indeed? Shall all these high things be spoken of you, and will you live so far below them all? What a heinous wrong is this to God. He sticks not in boasting of you, to call you his jewels (Mal. iii. 17.), and tells the world he will make them one day discern the "difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not;" ver. 18. He tells the world, that his coming in judgment will be "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in them that believe;" 2 Thess. i. 10. It is openly professed by the apostle John, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness;" 1 John v. 19. He challengeth any "to condemn you, or lay anything to your charge, professing that it is he that justifieth you;" casting the saints into admiration by his love. "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. He challengeth tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, or nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate you, if they can, from the love of God. He challengeth death and life, angels, principalities, and powers, things present, and things to come, height and depth, or any other creature, to

separate you, if they are able, from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord; Rom. viii. 35. 37—39. Shall the Lord of heaven thus make his boast of you to all the world, and will you not make good his boasting? Yea, I must tell you, he will see that it be made good to a word! And if you be not careful of it yourselves, and it be not made good in you, then you are not the people that God thus boasteth of. He tells the greatest persecutors to their faces, that the meek, the humble, little ones of his flock, “have their angels beholding the face of God in heaven;” (Matt. xviii. 10.) and that at the great and dreadful day of judgment, they shall be set at his right hand as his sheep, with a “Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom,” when others are set at his left hand as goats, with a “Go ye cursed, into everlasting fire;” Matt. xxv. He tells the world, that he that receiveth a converted man, that is become as a little child, receiveth Christ himself; and that “whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, that believe in him, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea;” Matt. xviii. 3—6. Mark ix. 42. Luke xvii. 2.

O sirs, must God be thus wonderfully tender of you, and will you not now be very tender of his interest and your duty? Shall he thus difference you from all the rest of the world, and will you not study to declare the difference? The ungodly even gnash the teeth at ministers, and Scriptures, and Christ himself, for making such a difference between them and you; and will you not let them see that it is not without cause? I entreat you, I require you, in the name of God, see that you answer these high commendations, and shew us that God hath not boasted of you beyond your worth?

(9.) Consider this as the highest motive of all; God doth not only magnify you and boast of you, but also he hath made you the living images of his blessed self, his Son Jesus Christ, his Spirit and his holy word; and so he hath exposed himself, his Son, his Spirit, and his word, to be censured by the world, according to your lives.

The express image of the Father's person is the Son; Heb. i. 3. The Son is declared to the world by the Holy Ghost: the Holy Ghost hath indited the Scriptures, which therefore bear the image of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This holy word, both law and promise, is written in your hearts, and put into your inner parts by the same Spirit; 2 Cor. iii. 3. Heb. viii. 10. x. 16. So that as God hath imprinted his holy nature in the Scripture, so hath he made this word the seal, to imprint again his image on your hearts. And you know that common eyes can better discern the image in the wax, than on the seal: though I know that the hardness of the wax, or something lying between, or the imperfect application, may cause an imperfection in the image on the wax, when yet the image on the seal is perfect: and therefore the world hath no just cause to censure God, or Christ, or the Spirit, or the word to be imperfect, because that you are so; but yet they will do it, and their temptation is great. O sirs! how would your prince take it of you, or how would your poorest friend take it of you, if you should hang forth a deformed picture of them to the view of all that shall pass by; and should represent them as blind, or leprous, or lame, wanting a leg, or an arm, or an eye? Would they not say that you unworthily exposed them to scorn? So if you will take on you to be the living images of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, and the word; and yet will be blind, and worldly, and passionate, and proud, and unruly, and obstinate, or lazy, and negligent, and little differing from those that bear the image of the devil; what do you but proclaim that the image of God, and of satan, and the world do little differ; and that God is thus unrighteous and unholy as you are!

(10.) Lastly consider, That the faithful servants of Christ are few; and therefore if those few dishonour him, and prove not fast to him; what do you, but provoke him to forsake all the world, and make an end of all the sons of men? It is but a little flock to whom he will give the kingdom; Luke xii. 32. It is but a few from whom God expecteth any great matter; and shall those few prove deceitful to him? It must be you or none that must honour the Gospel. You or none that must be exemplary to the world; and shall it be none at all? Shall all the workmanship of God abuse him? Shall he have no honour from any inferior creature? How can you then expect that he should preserve the world? For will he be at so much care to keep up a world to dishonour and abuse him? If the turning of men's hearts prevent it not, he would come and smite the earth with a curse,

Mal. iv. 6. For the "land that beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;" Heb. vi. 7, 8. "If therefore Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah sin;" Hosea iv. 15. If the vessels of wrath prepared to destruction will be blind, and sensual, and filthy still, yet let pollution be far from the sanctified. "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified;" 1 Cor. vi. 11. O let the Lord be magnified in his saints: blot not out his image: receive not his impressions defectively and by the halves. Let the name of the most Holy One be written in your very foreheads. O that you would be so tender of the honour of the Lord, and shine forth so brightly in holiness and righteousness, that he that runs might read whose servants you are, and know the image and superscription of God, upon the face of your conversations! That as clearly as light is seen in and from the sun, and the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God is seen in the frame of the creation, and of Scripture; so might the same shine forth in you, that you might be "holy as God is holy;" (1 Pet. i. 16.) and "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect;" (Matt. v. 48.) that they that would know God may see him in his saints, where his image is, or should be so lively and discernable. And they that cannot read and understand the Scripture, or the works of creation, or disposing providence, may read and understand the holy and heavenly representations of your lives.

Men are apt to look after images of the Godhead, because they are carnal and far from God. O you that are appointed to bear his image, see that you so represent him to the eyes of the world, as may be to his glory, and not to his dishonour, and take not the name of God in vain.

It is so desirable for God, and for the church, and for your own peace and happiness, that Christians should grow up to a ripeness in grace, and be rooted, built up, confirmed, and abound according to my text, that it hath drawn out from me all these words of exhortation thereunto; though one would think, that to men of such holy principles and experience, it should be more than needs; but if all will but serve to awaken the weak to a diligent progress, I shall be glad, and have my end. The great matter that I intended, when I began this discourse, is yet behind; and that is, the giving you such Directions as may tend to your confirmation

and perseverance; which I shall now proceed to: but I entreat every reader that hath any spark of grace in his soul, that he will resolve to put these Directions in practice, and turn them not off with a bare perusal or approbation. Let me reap but thus much fruit of all my foregoing exhortations, and I shall not think my labour lost.

Twenty Directions for Confirmation in a State of Grace.

Direct. I. 'Be sure that the foundation be well laid, both in your heads and hearts; or else you can never attain to confirmation, nor be savingly built up.'

To this end you must know what the foundation is, and how it must be soundly laid. The foundation hath two parts or respects, according to the faculties of the soul where it must be laid. The first is, the truth of the doctrine and matter, and the second is, the goodness of it. As true, the foundation is laid in our understandings; as good, it is laid in the will. Concerning both these, we must therefore first consider of the matter of the foundation, and then of the manner how that must be received or laid. And the foundation is that matter or object of our faith, and hope, and love, which is essential to a Christian; that is, to the Christian saving faith, hope, and love. This hath been always contained in our baptism, because baptizing us is making us visible Christians, or the solemn entrance into the state of Christianity. As therefore we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil; so the doing of this unfeignedly, without equivocation, according to the Scripture sense of the words, is the essence of Christianity, or the right laying of the foundation. So that the foundation-principle, or fundamental matter, is, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The secondary foundation, or fundamental doctrine, is, those Scripture propositions that express our faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When we name the three persons as the object of the Christian faith, we express names of relation, which contain both the persons, nature and offices or undertaken works; without either of which, God were not God, and Christ were not Christ, and the Holy Ghost were not in the sense of our articles of faith the Holy

Ghost. As we must therefore believe that there is one only God; so we must believe that God the Father is the first in the Holy Trinity of Persons; that the whole Godhead is perfect and infinite in being, and power, and wisdom, and goodness, (in which all his attributes are comprehended; but yet a distinct understanding of them all is not of absolute necessity to salvation). That this God is the Creator, Preserver, and Disposer of all things, and the Owner and Ruler of mankind, most just and merciful: that as he is the beginning of all, so he is the ultimate end, and the chief good of man, which before all things else must be loved and sought. This is to be believed concerning the Godhead, and the Father in person. Concerning the Son, we must moreover believe, that he is the same God with the Father, the second person in Trinity, incarnate and so became man, by a personal union of the Godhead and manhood: that he was without original or actual sin, having a sinless nature, and a sinless life: that he fulfilled all righteousness, and was put to death as a sacrifice for our sins; and gave himself a ransom for us; and being buried, he rose again from the dead, and afterwards ascended into heaven, where he is Lord of all, and intercedeth for believers; that he will come again and raise the dead, and judge the world, the righteous to everlasting life, and the wicked to everlasting punishment: that this is the only Redeemer, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" neither is there access to the Father but by him, nor salvation in any other. Concerning the Holy Ghost, we must believe that he is the same one God, the third person in Trinity, sent by the Father and the Son to inspire the prophets and apostles; and that the doctrine inspired and miraculously attested by him is true: that he is the Sanctifier of those that shall be saved, renewing them after the image of God, in holiness and righteousness, giving them true repentance, faith, hope, love, and sincere obedience; causing them to overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil; thus gathering a holy church on earth to Christ, who have by his blood the pardon of all their sins, and shall have everlasting blessedness with God.

This is the essence of the Christian faith, as to the matter of it. As to the manner of receiving it by the understanding, 1. It must be received as certain truth of God's revelation, upon the credit of his word, by a lively, effectual be-

lief; piercing so deep as is necessary for its prevalency with the will. 2. And it must be entirely received, and not only a part of it: though all men have not so exactly formed distinct apprehensions of every member of this belief, as some have, yet all true Christians have a true apprehension of them. We feel by daily experience, that with the wisest some matters are truly understood by us, which yet are not so distinctly and clearly understood, as to be ready for an expression. I have oft, in matters that I am but studying, a light that gives me a general, imperfect, but true conception, which I cannot yet express; but when another hath helped me to form my conception, I can quickly and truly say, that was it that I had an unformed apprehension of before, and it that I meant but could not utter; not so much for want of words, as for want of a full and distinct conception.

2. The matter of our Christianity to be received by the will, is as followeth: As we must consent to all the aforementioned truths, by the belief of the understanding, so the pure Godhead must be received as the fountain, and our end. The Father as our Owner, Ruler and Benefactor, on the title of creation and redemption, and as our everlasting happiness. The Son as our only Saviour by redemption, bringing us pardon, reconciliation, holiness and glory, and delivering us from sin and satan, and the wrath and curse of God, and from hell. The Holy Ghost as our Guide and Sanctifier. All which containeth our renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil, and carnal self that is the point of their unity and heart of the old man. This is the good that must be embraced, or accepted by the will.

And secondly, as to the manner of receiving it, it must be done unfeignedly, resolvedly, unreservedly, or absolutely, and habitually, by an inward covenanting of the heart, as I have formerly explained it. And this is the essence of Christianity; this is true believing in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: this is the foundation, and this is the right laying of it.

And now the thing that I am persuading you to is, to see that this foundation be surely laid, in head and heart.

And, 1. That it may be surely laid in the head, you must labour, (1.) To understand these articles. And, (2.) To see the evidence of their verity, that you may firmly believe

them. And, (3.) To consider of the worth and necessity of the matter revealed in them, that your judgments may most highly esteem it. This is the sure laying the foundation in the head.

To these ends you should first learn some catechism, and be well acquainted with the principles of religion ; and also be much in reading or hearing the holy Scripture, and inquiring of your teachers, and others that can help you ; and see that you take your work before you, and step not higher till this be done. And then all other following truths, and duties, and promised benefits, must all be so learned as to be built upon this foundation, and joined to it, as receiving their life and strength from hence, and never looked upon as separated from this ; nor as more excellent and necessary.

For want of learning well, and believing soundly these principles, essentials, or fundamentals of Christianity, some of our people can go no further, but stand all their days in their ignorance, at a nonplus : some of them go on in a blind profession, deceiving themselves by building upon the sand, and hold true doctrine by a false, unsound belief of it : and when the floods and storms do beat upon their building it falls, and great is the fall thereof. With some of them it falls upon the first assault of any seducer that hath interest in them, or advantage on them ; and abundance swallow up errors, because they never well understood, or firmly believed fundamental truths. With others of them, the building falls not until death, because they lived not under any shaking temptations. But it being but a perseverance in an unsound profession, will nevertheless be ineffectual to their salvation.

2. When you have thus laid the foundation in your understanding, be sure above all that it be firmly laid in your heart or will. Take heed lest you should prove false and unsteadfast in the holy covenant ; and lest you should take in the word but into the surface of the soul, and not give it depth of earth and rooting ; and lest you should come to Christ but as a servant upon trial, and make not an absolute resignation of yourselves to him : of which I warned you in the former Directions.

O this is it that makes our people fall so fast in a day of trial ; some shrink in adversity ; and some are enticed away by prosperity. Greatness and honour deceiveth one, and riches run away with another, and fleshly pleasure poisons a

third, and his conscience, religion, salvation, and all, he sacrificeth to his belly, and swalloweth it down his throat; and all the love, and goodness of God, the blood of Christ, the workings of the Spirit, the precepts and promises, and threatenings of the word, and the joy and torments which once they seemed to believe, all are forgotten, or have lost their force. And all because the foundation was not laid well at the first. But because this was the very business of the former Directions, I will dismiss it now.

Direct. II. 'Think not that all is done when once you are converted; but remember that the work of your Christianity then comes in, and must be as long as the time of your lives.'

Of this also I shall say but little, because it is the drift of all the moving considerations before-going. I doubt it is the undoing of many to imagine, that if once they are sanctified, they are so sure in the hands of Christ, that they have no more care to take, nor no more danger to be afraid of, and at last think that they have no more to do, as of necessity to salvation; and thus prove that indeed they were never sanctified. I confess, when a man is truly converted, the principal part of his danger is over; he is safe in the love and care of Christ, and none can take him out of his hands. But this is but part of the truth; the other part must be taken with it, or we deceive ourselves. There is still a great deal of work before us; and holiness is still the way to happiness; and much care and diligence is required at our hands. And it is no more certain that we shall be saved by Christ, than it is that we shall be kept in faith, and love, and holy obedience by him. It is as true that none can separate us from the love of God, and from a care to please him, and from a holy diligence in the work of our salvation, as that none can take us out of his hands, and bring us into a state of condemnation. He that is resolved to bring us to glory, is as much resolved to bring us to it by perseverance in holiness and diligent obedience; for he never decreeth one without the other; and he will never save us by any other way.

Indeed, when we are converted we have escaped many and grievous dangers; but yet there are many more before us, which we must by care and diligence escape. We are translated from death to life, but not from earth to heaven.

We have the life of grace, but yet we are short of the life of glory. And why have we the life of grace but to use it, and to live by it? Why came we into the vineyard but to work? And why came we into the army of Christ but to fight? Why came we into the race but to run for the prize? Or why turned we into the right way, but to travel in it? We never did God faithful service, till the day of our conversion, and then it is that we begin. And shall we be so sottish as to think we have done, when we have but begun? Now you begin to live that before were dead. Now you begin to wake that before were asleep. And, therefore, now you should begin to work that before did nothing, or rather a thousandfold worse than nothing. Work is the effect of life; it is the dead that lie still in darkness, and do nothing. If you had rather be alive than dead, you should rather delight in action than in idleness. It is now that you set to sea, and begin your voyage for the blessed land; many a storm, and wave, and tempest must you yet expect. Many a combat with temptations must you undergo; many a hearty prayer have you yet to pour forth. Many and many a duty to perform to God and man. Think not to have done your care and work, till you have done your lives. Whether you come in at the first hour or at the last, you must work till night if you will receive your wages. And think not this a grievous doctrine. It is your privilege, it is your joy, your earthly happiness, that you may be so employed; that you that till now have lived like swine, or moles, or earthly vermin, may now take wing and fly to God, and walk in heaven, and talk with saints, and be guarded by angels; is this a life to be accounted grievous? Now you begin to come to yourselves; to understand what you have to do in the world; to live like men, that you may live like angels! And, therefore, now you should begin accordingly to bestir you. I would not have you retain the same measure of fears of God's displeasure, nor the same apprehensions of your misery, nor the doubts and perplexities of mind, which you were under at your first conversion; for these were occasioned by the passage in your change, and the weakness of your grace in that beginning, and your former folly made them necessary for a time. But I would have you retain your fear of sinning, and be much more in the love of God, and in his service, than you were at first.

Temptations will haunt you to the last hour of your lives. If, therefore, you would not fall by these temptations, you must watch and pray to the last. Give not over watching, till satan give over tempting and watching advantages against you. The promise is still but on condition that you persevere and abide in Christ, and continue rooted and steadfast in the faith, and overcome and be faithful to the death, as you may see in John xv. throughout. John viii. 31. Rev. ii. iii. Col. i. 22, 23. "Work out, therefore, your salvation with fear and trembling;" Phil. ii. 12. If you have begun resolutely, proceed resolutely. It is the undoing of men's souls to think that all the danger is over, and lose their apprehensions of it, when they are yet but in the way; when their care and holy fears abate, their watch goes down; the soul is laid open as a common wilderness, and made a prey to every lust. And, therefore, still know, your work is not done, till your life be done.

Direct. III. 'Be sure that you understand wherein your establishment and growth consisteth, that you may not miscarry by seeking somewhat else instead of it; nor think you have it when you have it not, or that you want it, when you have it, and so be needlessly disquieted about it.'

For your assistance in this, I shall further shew you wherein your confirmation and growth consisteth in its several parts, both as it is subjected or exercised in your understandings, your wills, and affections, and your conversations.

1. As holiness is in the understanding, it is commonly in Scripture called, light and knowledge, as comprehending the several parts. And confirmation and growth of this must consist in these seven following parts.

1. It is ordinary with new converted Christians, to see the great essential truths of the Christian profession, with a great imperfection as to the evidences that discover them. Either they see but some of the solid evidence, overlooking much more than they see; or, more usually, they receive the truth itself upon some low insufficient evidence at first, and then proceed to a kind of mixture, taking it upon some evidences that are valid and sufficient, and joining some that are invalid with them. But you must grow beyond this infancy of understanding; when you see greater and sounder evidences for the truth than you did before; and when you

see more of these solid evidences, and leave not out so many as you did ; and when you lay smaller stress upon the smaller evidences, and none upon those that are invalid, and indeed no evidences, then are your understandings more confirmed in the truth, and this is a principal part of their growth. So we find the Samaritans of Sychar, " Many of them believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." (This was the first faith upon a weaker evidence.) " And many more believed, because of his own words, and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world ;" John iv. 39—42. Here is a notable confirmation and growth, by believing and knowing the same thing which they believed before ; it was before believed on weaker evidence, and now upon stronger. Thus Nathaniel, by Philip's persuasion, was drawn to Christ, but when he perceived his omniscience, that he knew the heart and things that were distant, and out of the reach of common knowledge, he is confirmed, and saith, " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." And yet Christ telleth him, that there were far greater evidences yet to be revealed, which might beget a more confirmed, stronger faith. " Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? Thou shalt see greater things than these ; verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man ;" John i. 45. 49—51. There is not one Christian of many thousands, that at first hath a full sight of the solid evidences of the Christian doctrine ; but must grow more and more in discerning those reasons for the truth which he believeth, which in the beginning he did not well discern. It is not the most confident belief that is always the strongest confirmed belief ; but there must be sound grounds and evidence to support that confidence, or else the confidence may soon be shaken ; and is not sound, even while it seems unshaken. And here young beginners must be forwarned of a most dangerous snare of the deceiver, because at first the truth itself is commonly received upon feeble and defective grounds or evidence. It is the custom of the devil and his deceiving instruments, to shew the young Christian the weakness of those grounds, and thence

to conclude that his case is naught. For it is too easy to persuade such that the cause hath no better grounds than they have seen. For having not seen any better, they can have no particular knowledge of them. And they are too apt to think over-highly of their knowledge, as if there were no more reasons for the truth than they themselves have reached to, and other men did see no more than they. And thus poor souls forsake the truth, which they should be built up and confirmed in; and take that for a reason against the truth, which is but a proof of their own infirmity. I meet with very few that turn to any heresy or sect, but this is the cause. They were at first of the right mind, but not upon sound and well-laid grounds; but held the truth upon insufficient reasons. And then comes some deceiver, and beats them out of their former grounds, and so having no better, they let go the truth, and conclude that they were all this while mistaken. Just as if, in my infancy, I should know my own father only by his clothes, and when I grow a little bigger, one should tell me that I was deceived, this is not my father, and to convince me should put his clothes upon another, or tell me that another may have such clothes, and hereupon I should be so foolish as to yield that I was mistaken; and that this man is not my father. As if the thing were false, because my reasons were insufficient. Or as if you should ask the right way in your travel, and one should tell you, that by such and such marks you may know your way; and think you have found those marks a mile or two short of the place where they are; but when you understand that those are not the marks that you were told of, you turn back again before you come at them, and conclude that you have missed the way. So is it with these poor deluded souls, that think all discoveries of their own imperfections, and every confutation of their own silly arguments, to be a confutation of the truths of God, which they did hold; when, alas, a strong, well-grounded Christian would make nothing of defending the cause which they give up against more strong and subtle enemies; or, at least, would hold it fast themselves. Well, this is the first part of your growth in knowledge, when you can see more or better evidences, for the great truths of Christianity, than you saw before.

2. Moreover, you must grow to a clearer apprehension

of the very same reasons and evidences of the truth, which you saw before. For when a weak Christian hath the best arguments and grounds in the world, yet he hath so dim a sight of them, that makes them find the slighter entertainment in his affections. The best reason in the world can work but little on him that hath but a little understanding of it. There are various degrees of knowledge, not only of one and the same truth, because of the diversity of evidence, but of one and the same evidence and reason of that truth. I can well remember myself, that I have many a year had a common argument for some weighty truth, and I have made use of it, and thought it good, but yet had but little apprehension of the force of it: and many years after, a sudden light hath given me (in my studies) so clear an apprehension of the force of that same argument, which I knew so long, as that it hath exceedingly confirmed and satisfied me, more than ever I was before. I beseech you, Christians, consider of this weighty truth; it is not the knowledge of the truth, that will serve your turns, without a true and solid knowledge of that truth; nor is it the hearing or understanding of the best grounds and reasons, or proofs in the world, that will serve the turn, unless you have a deep and solid apprehension of those proofs and reasons. A man that hath the best arguments may forsake the truth, because he hath not a good understanding of those arguments. As a man that hath the best weapons in the world may be killed for want of strength and skill to use them. I tell you, if you knew every truth in the Bible, you may grow much in knowledge of the very same truths which you know.

3. Moreover, a young, ungrounded Christian, when he seeth all the fundamental truths, and seeth good evidence and reasons for them, perhaps may be yet ignorant of the right order and place of every truth. It is a rare thing to have young professors to understand the necessary truths methodically. And this is a very great defect. For a great part of the usefulness and excellency of particular truths consisteth in the respect they have to one another. This, therefore, will be a considerable part of your confirmation and growth in your understandings, to see the body of Christian doctrine, as it were, at one view, as the several parts of it are united in one perfect frame; and to know what aspect one point hath upon another, and which are their

due places. There is a great difference between the sight of the several parts of a clock or watch, as they are disjointed, and scattered about, and the seeing them conjoined, and in use and motion. To see here a pin, and there a wheel, and not know how to set them all together, nor ever see them in their due places, will give but little satisfaction. It is the frame and design of holy doctrine that must be known, and every part should be discerned as it hath its particular use to that design, and as it is connected with the other parts. By this means only can the true nature of theology, together with the harmony and perfection of truth, be clearly understood. And every single truth also, will be much better perceived by him that seeth its place and order, than by any other. For one truth exceedingly illustrates and leads in another into our understanding. Nay, more than so, your own hearts and lives will not be well ordered, if the method or order of the truths received should be mistaken. For the truths of God are the very instruments of your sanctification, which is nothing but their effects upon your understandings and wills, as they are set home by the Holy Ghost. Truths are the seal, and your souls are the wax, and holiness is the impression made. If you receive but some truths, you will have but some part of the due impression. Nay, indeed, they are so coherent, and make up the sense by their necessary conjunction, that you cannot receive any one of them sincerely, without receiving any one that is of the essence of the Christian belief. And if you receive them disorderly, the image of them on your souls will be as disorderly; as if your bodily members were monstrously displaced. Study, therefore, to grow in the more methodical knowledge of the same truths which you have received. And though you are not yet ripe enough to discern the whole body of theology in due method, yet see so much as you have attained to know, in the right order and placing of every part. As in anatomy, it is hard for the wisest physician to discern the course of every branch of veins and arteries, but yet they may easily discern the place and order of the principal parts, and greater vessels. So it is in divinity, where no man hath a perfect view of the whole, till he come to the state of perfection with God; but every true Christian hath the knowledge of all the essentials, and may know the order and places of them all.

4. Another part of your confirmation and growth in understanding, is, in discerning the same truths more practically than you did before, and perceiving the usefulness of every truth, for the doing of its work in your hearts and lives. It was never the will of God that bare speculation should be the end of his revelations, or of our belief. Divinity is an effective, practical science, therefore must truths be known and believed, that the good may be received, and a holy change may be made by them, on the heart and life. Even the doctrine of the Trinity itself is practical, and the fountain of that which is more easily discerned to be practical. There is not one article of our faith, but hath a special work to do upon our hearts and lives; and, therefore, a special fitness for that work. Now the understandings of young Christians do discern many truths, when they see but little of the work to be done by them, and the special usefulness of those truths to those works. This, therefore, must be your daily inquiry, and in this you must grow. As if you come into a workman's shop, and see a hundred tools about you, it is a small matter to discern the shape and fashion of them, and what metal they are made of; but you will further ask, what is this tool to do, and what is that to do. If ever you will learn the trade, you must know the use of every tool. So must you, if you will be skilful Christians, be acquainted with the use of the truths which you have received; and know that this truth is to do this work, and that truth is to do that work, upon the soul and life. A husbandman may know as many herbs, and flowers, and fruits as a physician, and be able to tell them all by name, and say, this is such a herb, and that is such an one; and to perceive the shape and beauty of them. But he knows little or nothing that they are good for, unless to feed his cattle. Whereas, the physician can tell you, that this herb is good against this disease, and that herb against another disease, and can make use of those same herbs to save men's lives, which other men tread under foot as useless. A countryman may see the names that are written on the apothecaries' boxes, but it is the physician that knows the medicinal use of the drugs. So, many men that are unsanctified, may know the outside of holy doctrine, that little know what use is to be made of it. And the weak Christian knows less of this than the grown, confirmed Christian doth. Learn, there-

fore, every day, more and more, to know what every truth is good for, that this is for the exercise and strengthening of such a grace, and this is good against such or such disease of the soul. Every leaf in the Bible hath a healing virtue in it. They are the leaves of the tree of life. Every sentence is good for something. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Not a word is without its usefulness.

5. Moreover, you must grow, not only in knowing the usefulness of truths, but also in knowing how to use them, that you may have the benefit of that worth that is in them. Many a man knows what use a workman's tools are for, that yet knows not how himself to use them. And many a one knows the use and virtue of herbs and drugs, that knows not how to make a medicine of them, and compound and apply them. There is much skill to be used in knowing the seasons of application, and the measure, and what is fit for one, and what for another, that we may make that necessary variance, which diversity of conditions do require. As it is a work of skill in the pastors of the church, to "divide the word of God aright, and speak a word in season to the weary, and give the children their meat in due season;" (2 Tim. ii. 15. Isa. l. iv. Matt. xxiv. 45.) so is it also a work of skill, to do this for yourselves, to know what Scripture it is that doth concern you; and when, and in what measure to apply it, and in what order, and with what advantages or correctives to use it, as may be most for your own good. You may grow in this skill as long as you live; even in understanding how to use the same truths which you have long known. O what excellent Christians should we be, if we had but this holy skill, and hearts to use it. We have the whole armour of God to put on and use, but all the matter is how to use it. The same sword of the Spirit in the hand of a strong and skilful Christian, may do very much, which in the hand of a young, unskilful Christian, will do very little, and next to nothing. A young, raw physician may know the same medicines as an able experienced physician doth; but the great difference lieth in the skill to use them. This

is it that must make you rich in grace, when you increase in the skilful use of truths.

6. Moreover, your understandings may be much advanced, by knowing the same truths more experimentally than you did before. I mean such truths as are capable of experimental knowledge. Experience giveth us a far more satisfactory manner of knowledge, than others have that have no such experience. To know by hearsay, is like the knowing of a country in a map; and to know by experience, is like the knowing of the same country by sight. An experienced navigator, or soldier, or physician, or governor, hath another manner of knowledge than the most learned can have without experience; even a knowledge that confirmeth a man, and makes him confident. Thus may you daily increase in knowledge, about the same points that you knew long ago. When you have "tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious," (Psal. xxxiv. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 3.) you will know him more experimentally than you did before: when you have tasted the sweetness of the promise, and of pardon of sin, and peace with God, and the hopes of glory, you will have a more experimental knowledge of the riches of grace than you had before. And when you have lived awhile in communion with Christ and the saints, and walked awhile with God in a heavenly conversation, and maintained your integrity, and kept yourselves unspotted of the world, you will then know the nature and worth of holiness by a knowledge more experimental and satisfactory than before. And this is confirmation and growth in knowledge.

7. Moreover, you must labour to grow in higher estimation of the same truths which you knew before. And this will be a consequent of the forementioned acts. A child that findeth a jewel may set by it, for the shining beauty; when yet he may value it many thousand pounds below its worth. You see so much wisdom and goodness in God, the first hour of your new life, as causeth you to prefer him before the world; and you see so much of the necessity of a Saviour, so much love and mercy in Jesus Christ, as draweth up your hearts to him; and you see so much certainty and glorious excellency of the life to come, that makes you value it even more than your lives. But yet there is in all these such an unsearchable treasure, that you can never va-

lue them near their worth ; for all that thou hast seen of God, and Christ, and glory, there is a thousand times more excellency in them yet to be discerned. For all the beauty thou hast seen in holiness, it is a thousandfold more beautiful than ever thou didst apprehend it ; for all the evil thou hast seen in sin, it is a thousandfold worse than ever thou didst perceive it to be. So that if you should live a thousand years, you might still be growing in your estimation of those things which you knew the first day of your true conversion. For the deeper you dig into this precious mine, the greater riches will still appear to you. There is an ocean of excellency in one article of your belief, and you will never find the banks or bottom, till you come to heaven, and then you will find that it had neither banks nor bottom.

And thus I have shewed you what confirmation and growth is needful for your understandings, even about the very same truths, which at first you knew. And now I shall add,

8. You must also labour to understand more truths for number than at first you understood, and to reach to as much of the revealed will of God as you can, and not to stop in the mere essentials. For all divine revelations are precious, and of great use ; and none must be neglected. And the knowledge of many other truths, is of some necessity to our clear understanding of the essentials ; and also to our holding them fast, and practising them. " Secret things belong to God, but things revealed, to us and to our children ;" Deut. xxix. 29.

But here I must give you this further advice : 1. That you proceed in due order, from the fundamental points, to those that lie next them ; and do not overpass the points of next necessity and weight, and go to higher and less needful matters, before your are ready for them. 2. And also see that you receive all following truths that are taught you, as flowing from the foundation, and conjoined with it. Disorderly proceedings have unspeakably wronged the souls of many thousands, when they are presently upon controversies, and smaller matters, before they understand abundance of more necessary things that must be first understood. This course doth make them lose their labour, and worse, it deceiveth the understanding instead of informing it ; and thereupon it perverts the will itself, and turns men to a heretical, proud, or perverse frame of spirit ; and then it must

needs mislead their practices, and cause them, like deluded men, to be zealous in doing mischief, while they think they are doing good. In common matters you can see, that you must learn and do things in their due order, or else you will but make fools of yourselves. Will you go to the top of the stairs or ladder, without beginning at the lower steps? Will you sow your ground before you manure or plough it? or can you reap before you sow it? Will you ride your colt before you break him? Will you rear a house before you frame it? Or will you teach your children Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, before they learn English? or to read the hardest books before they learn the easiest? or can they read before they learn to spell, or know their letters? No more can you learn the difficult controversies in divinity (as about the exposition of obscure prophecies, or doctrinal doubts), till you have taken up before you those many, great, and necessary truths that lie between. It would make a wise man pity them, and be ashamed to hear them, when young, raw, self-conceited professors, will fall into confident expositions of Daniel, the Revelations, or the Canticles, or such like, or into disputes about free-will, or predestination; or about the many controversies of the times, when, alas, they are ignorant of a hundred truths (about the covenants, justification, and the like) which must be known before they can reach the rest!

By this much that I have said already, you may understand, that, though we should reach as far as we can in knowing all necessary, revealed truths, yet the principal part of your growth in knowledge, when once you are converted, consisteth not in knowing more than you knew before, as to the number of truths, but in knowing better the very same fundamental truths, which you knew at first. This is the principal thing that I would here teach you. Abundance are deluded, by not understanding this; you see here you have seven several things in which you must daily grow in knowledge about the same truths which you first received. 1. You must see better and sounder reasons and evidences for the fundamental truths than you saw at first: or more such evidences than you did then perceive. 2. You must grow to a clearer sight or apprehension of those same evidences. 3. You must see truths more methodically, all, as it were, at one view, and all in their due proportion

and place, as the members of a well-composed body ; and how they grow together, and what strength one truth affords to another. 4. You must see every truth more practically than before, and know what use it is of, for your hearts and lives, and what you must do with it. 5. You must learn more skill in the using of these truths, when you know what they are good for ; and must be better able to manage them on yourselves and others. 6. You must know more experimentally than you did at first. 7. You must grow into a higher esteem of truths. All this you have to do besides your growing in the number of truths. And I must tell you, that as it was these essentials of Christianity that were the instrumental causes of your first conversion, and more needful and useful to you then, than ten thousand others ; so it is the very same points that you must always live upon, and the confirmation and growth of your souls in these, will be more useful to you than the adding of ten thousand more truths, which yet you know not. And, therefore, take this advice, as you love your peace and growth ; neglect not to know more, but bestow many and many hours in labouring to know better the great truths which you have received, for one hour that you bestow in seeking to know more truths which you know not ; believe it, this is the safe and thriving way. You know already that God is all-sufficient, and infinitely wise, and good, and powerful. And you know not, perhaps, the nature of free-will, or of God's decrees of election and reprobation, or a hundred the like points. True knowledge of any of the revealed things of God, is very desirable ; but yet, I must tell you, that you are forty times more defective here in your knowledge of that of God which you do know, than of the other which you know not ; that is, the want of more degrees of this necessary knowledge, is more dangerous to your souls than the total want of the less necessary knowledge. And the addition of more degrees to the more-needful parts of knowledge, will strengthen and enrich you more than the knowing of less necessary things, which you knew not before at all. You know Christ crucified already, but perhaps you know not certain controversies about church-government, or the definitions and distinctions of many matters in divinity. It will be a greater growth now to your knowledge, to know a little more of

Christ crucified, whom you know already, than to know these lesser matters, which you know not yet at all. If you had already a hundred pounds in gold, and not a penny of silver, it will more enrich you to have another purse full of gold, than a purse full of silver. Trading in the richest commodities, is likelier to raise men to greater estates, than trading for matters of a smaller rate. They that go to the Indies for gold and pearl, may be rich if they get but little in quantity; when he may be poor that brings home ships laden with the greatest store of poor commodity. That man that hath a double measure of the knowledge of God in Christ, and the clearest, and deepest, and most effectual apprehensions of the riches of grace and the glory to come, and yet never heard of the most of the questions in Scotus, or Ockam, or Aquinas's sums is far richer in knowledge, and a much wiser man, than he that hath those controversies at his finger's ends, and yet hath but half his clearness and solidity of the knowledge of God and Christ, of grace and glory. There is enough in some one of the articles of your faith, in one of God's attributes, in one of Christ's benefits, in one of the Spirit's graces, to hold you study all your lives, and afford you still an increase of knowledge. To know God the Father, Son, and Spirit, and their relations to you, and operations for you, and your duties to them, and the way of communion with them, is that knowledge in which you must still be growing, till it be perfected by the celestial, beatifical vision. Those be not the wisest men that can answer most questions; but those that have the fullest intellectual reception of the infinite wisdom. You will confess that he is a wiser man, that hath wisdom to get and rule a kingdom, than he that hath wit enough to talk of a hundred trivial matters, which the other is ignorant of. That is the wisest physician that can do most to save men's lives; and not he that can best read a lecture of anatomy, or is readiest in the terms of his art. Knowledge is to be esteemed according to the use of it, and the dignity of its object, and not according to the number and subtlety of notions. And, therefore, I beseech you all, that are young and weak in the faith, take much more pains to grow in the fuller acquaintance with that same faith which you have received, than to be acquainted with smaller controversial truths which you never knew. Men use to call these higher

points, because they are more difficult; but certainly the articles of your faith are much higher in point of excellency though they are lower in the due order of learning them, as foundation is the lowest part of the building, and is first laid, but is that which must bear up all the rest.

And here you must observe, how gracelessly and unlike to Christians those men speak, that say, 'They care not for reading such a book, or hearing such or such a minister, because he tells them no more than they know already.' And on that account some of them stay from church, because they hear nothing but what they know already. It is a certain sign that they do not know already the blessed nature of God, and the riches of Christ, which they say they know. For if they did, they could not hear or think too much of them. They would long to know more, and, therefore, to hear more of the same things. It is a sign the minister takes the course that tends to your edification and enriching in knowledge, when he is most upon the great and most necessary truths. All saints do make it their study to comprehend the height, and breadth, and length, and depth, and know the love of God in Christ; but when they have done, they confess that it "passeth knowledge;" Ephes. iii. 17—19. It is a graceless, wicked soul, in a state of damnation, that conceits he knows so much of God and Jesus Christ, and the essentials of Christianity, that he cares not for hearing these things any more, but had rather have novelties, and let these alone; and feeleth not need of knowing much more, and more of the same truths; and of using and living upon these vital principles which he knows. You have eaten bread, and drank beer a hundred times; but perhaps you never did eat of sturgeon or whale, of a bear or a leopard, of chesnuts or pignuts, or many strange and dangerous fruits in all your life; and yet I hope you will never seek after these, because they are novelties, and give over eating bread because you have eaten of it already. Nor will you churlishly refuse to go to a feast, because there is no meat but what you have eaten of before. We have not a new God to preach to you, nor a new Christ, nor a new Spirit, nor a new Gospel, nor a new church, nor a new faith, nor a new baptismal covenant, nor a new heaven, or hope, or happiness to propound; Gal. i. 9, 10. Ephes. iv. 3—5. Your growth in methods, and definitions, and distinctions, and in

additional points of knowledge, is principally to be valued as it cleareth your understandings in the foresaid great essential points, and brings you up to God himself. Some wretches think they have quickly learned past the essential articles of the faith, and ere long they are past the higher points; and shortly they are past the Scripture itself, and throw it by, as a scholar that hath learnt one book, and must be entered into another. They understand not, that the ministry and Spirit are but to teach them the word of the Gospel; but they think they must outgrow the word and ministry, and the Spirit must teach them some other doctrine, or Gospel, which the written word doth not contain. I pray mark the apostle's warning: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;" Heb. xiii. 9. And "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness;" Ephes. iv. 14.

11. Having shewed you wherein your growth consisteth in the understanding, I shall be short in the rest, and next I must tell you wherein it consisteth in the will.

And that is, 1. When upon good understanding and deep consideration, you are more fixedly, habitually, absolutely, and practically resolved for God and glory than before. So that you are grown more beyond all shaking doubtfulness, or wavering of mind, and beyond all unevenness, mutability, and inconstancy. When a man is thus satisfied, that none but God hath title to him, or can make him happy, and that none but Christ can reconcile him to God, and that it were a madness to make any other choice, and thereupon is settled and firm as Mount Zion, and can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee;" Psal. lxxiii. 25. When you are firmly resolved that, let God do with you what he will, and come of it what will, you will never choose another Master, or Saviour, or rule, or happiness, or way, or body, than you are in; and will never forsake the path of holiness; this is the fixed stability of the will, and the more of this, the more you grow.

2. And when you have the lowest esteem of the creatures, and greatest, and most resolved averseness to all that would draw you from God, and can meet the greatest worldly or

fleshly allurements with a holy contempt; this shews a settled, confirmed will.

3. And also, when you are speedy in holy resolutions, and see nothing in a temptation, how great soever, that can make you demur upon it, or make a stop in a Christian course; but go on to duty, as if the tempter had said nothing to you, and the flesh and the world had no interest in you; and you do not so much as stand to think on it, whether you should yield to sin or not, as abhorring to call such a matter into question; this shews a confirmed, fixed will; and the more of this, the more of holiness.

III. The strength and growth of holy affections, consisteth principally in these particulars: 1. When the affections are lively, and not dull; so that we make out after God and heaven with vigour and alacrity. 2. When they are ready at hand, and not to seek, and need not a great deal ado to quicken them, or call them in. 3. When they are more pure and unmixed, having least of the creature and most of God in them. 4. But principally (and the surest point to try them by) when they contain in them, or accompany the foresaid confirmation and resolvedness of the will; for it is more the willingness that is in or with our affections, than the heat of them, that we must judge them by. 5. And lastly, when they follow the best guidance of the understanding, when they are hottest about the greatest matters, and not about the smaller or more doubtful things; when they are obedient, and yielding to faith and holy reason, and not too ready to hearken to sense, and be moved about fleshly, sensible things. In these things lieth the growth of your affections.

IV. And then lastly, for your conversations, your stability, and growth consisteth, 1. In the readiness of your obedience. 2. In the fulness and universal exactness of it. 3. In the resolved conquest of all temptations that would pervert you. 4. In the diligent use of all those means, that may further confirm and strengthen you. 5. In the evenness of it, that it be constant, and not mixed with scandals, and stops in the way, or stepping out into by-paths. 6. In your fruitfulness and profitableness to others, according to the proportion of your talents; that you study to do good, and do it with all the care, and wisdom, and diligence you can. 7. In the spirituality of it, that God be the principal,

and the end of all, and that all be animated from the believing consideration of his attributes, and the views of everlasting blessedness. So that you have such lively, fixed intentions of God, that you can perceive that you do all, even common things, for the purpose of his pleasure, will, and glory; and that the love of God doth carry you about from duty to duty, and constrain you to it. 8. And lastly, in the measure of your present attainments of the end and fruits of your obedience. For a taste of these ends are here to be attained. When your inward graces are more confirmed and increased, and your talents are doubled, and when you bring God a great deal of honour in the world, so that by his graces shining in your works, your Father is glorified; and when yourselves are readier to go to God, and meet your Redeemer, and long more for his appearing; in all these consisteth the stability, growth, and excellency of your conversations.

And now, by all that I have said, you may see wherein your stability, strength, and growth doth not consist. 1. It doth not most, or much consist in speculations, or less useful truths. 2. It doth not consist in the mere heat of affections; for zeal may be misguided, and do hurt, and may prove sometimes but a mere natural or distempered, sinful passion. 3. It consisteth not in mere fears, or purposes, that you are frightened into against your will. 4. Nor does it consist of the common gifts of grace or nature. 5. Nor yet in turning into groundless singularities, and unusual strains. But in a word, it consisteth in holy love, kindled by effectual faith. When a firmly believing soul is fullest of love to God, and Christ, and holiness, this is the most confirmed state of the soul; and in this your chiefest growth consisteth.

My next advice to all young Christians, for their confirmation and growth in grace, is this:

Direct. IV. 'Grow downwards in humility; be low and small in your own eyes, and affect not to be high or great in the eyes of others; and still keep a deep apprehension of the greatness and danger of the sin of pride; but especially of that called spiritual pride.'

It is the tree that hath the shallowest, weakest rooting that most shaketh, and is soonest overthrown: the deeper roots, the higher growth, for the most part. The building

that hath not a deep foundation, is soonest shaken and overthrown. Christ is our foundation; and humiliation digs deep and lets him into the heart. Pride is commonly thought to be the devil's first or chiefest sin. Sure I am, it is the proud that fall into his condemnation; 1 Tim. iii. 6. The pride of our first parents, affecting to be as gods in knowledge, was the inlet of all our sin and misery; and the tempter still followeth the way that he hath found to be so successful. It is pride, that like a storm or tempest, doth set all the world in the rage, and contention, and differences, and confusion, that we see them in. It is pride that hath filled the church with divisions; and it is pride that causeth the apostacy of most that fall away. And the more men have of it, the less do they usually discern it in themselves; I am sure the less do they hate it and lament it. And though one would think, that young beginners and weak Christians that have little to be proud of should be out of the danger of this temptation, yet experience tells us, that it is they that fall by it, more than the wiser and stronger Christians that have more to glory in: for the more men increase in wisdom, the more do they know their own unworthiness, their emptiness, and ignorance, and manifold sins: and the more do they know of the holiness and jealousy of God; and the more do they know of the evil of sin, and see what abundance of knowledge and grace they yet want; so that the more holy wisdom and experience, the less pride. But folly is the parent and nurse of pride. Children will be proud of toys and things of no value. There are two or three things that make young Christians in greater danger of spiritual pride than others. 1. Because they come so lately out of darkness, and so great a change is made upon their souls, that it makes them the more sensible of it; and therefore the readier to have high thoughts of themselves. Though one would think that the remembrance of former folly, and late dejectedness should keep them low, yet with too many that is quickly gone, and they know not how to receive a comforting message, but they make it an occasion of lifting up. 2. The ignorance of these novices or young Christians is such, that they little know what abundance of things they are yet ignorant of. Little do they know what knowledge they yet want; they think there is little more to be reached to than is in their sight, and therefore suppose themselves

somebody in the school of Christ, because they have learned the first lesson. 3. And by reason of this ignorance, they know not how to value the higher attainments and understandings of others, but look on the wisest as little wiser than themselves, because they are unacquainted with the matter of their wisdom, and therefore overlook it as if it were none, and consequently think too highly of themselves. 4. And withal, they have not that experience of their own hearts, that should make them jealous of them, as ancient Christians have.

The humble soul is still in an empty, craving temper ; he hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness, and therefore shall be satisfied ; Matt. v. 6. No man setteth so high a price on Christ and grace, and all the means of grace. Even the crumbs are welcome to him, which the proud despise. "The full soul loathes the honeycomb ; but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet ;" Prov. xxvii. 7. Therefore such beggars are most welcome to God : he hath respect to the humble, contrite soul ; Isa. lvii. 15. lxvi. 2. Psal. li. 17. "The hungry he filleth with good, but the rich he sendeth empty away ;" Luke i. 53. "He giveth more grace to the humble, when the proud are abhorred by him ;" 1 Pet. v. 5. The church of Laodicea, that said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," was "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ;" Rev. iii. 17. As many that are proud of their honour and birth, run out of all, by living above their estates, when meaner persons grow rich, because they are still gathering, and make much of every little : so proud professors of religion are in a consumption of the grace they have, while the humble increase, by making much of every little help, which is slighted and neglected by the proud, and by shunning all those spending courses, which the proud are plunged in. Be sure to keep mean thoughts of yourselves, of your knowledge, and parts, and grace, and duties, and be content to be mean in the esteem of others, if you would not be worse than mean in the esteem of God.

Direct. V. 'Exercise yourselves daily in a life of faith upon Jesus Christ, as your Saviour, your Teacher, your Mediator, and your King ; as your example, your wisdom, your righteousness, and your hope.'

All other studies and knowledge must be merely subservient to the study and knowledge of Christ ; 1 Cor. ii. 2.

That vain kind of philosophy which St. Paul so much cautioneth Christians against, is so far yet from being accounted vain, that by many called Christians, it is preferred before Christianity itself; and to shew that it is vain while they overvalue it, they can show no solid worth or virtue which they have got by it; but only a tumified mind, and an idle tongue, like a tinkling cymbal; 1 Cor. xiii. 1. xii. 31. ii. 4. 14—16. i. 18—21. 23, 24. 27. Col. ii. 8, 9. We are complete in Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ver. 10. No study in the world will so much lead you up to God, and acquaint you with him especially in his love and goodness, as the study of Christ, his person, his office, his doctrine, his example, his kingdom, and his benefits. As the deity is your ultimate end, to which all things else are but helps and means; so Christ is that great and principal means, by whom all other means are animated. Remember that you are in continual need of him, for direction, intercession, pardon, sanctification, for support and comfort, and for peace with God. Let no thoughts therefore be so sweet and frequent in your hearts, nor any discourse so ready in your mouths (next to the excellencies of the eternal Godhead) as this of the design of man's redemption. Let Christ be to your souls, as the air, the earth, the sun, and your food are to your bodies, without which your life would presently fail. As you had never come home to the Father but by him, so without him you cannot a moment continue in the Father's love, nor be accepted in one duty, nor be protected from one danger, nor be supplied in any want: for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell; Col. i. 18, 19. "And by him it is, that being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" Rom. v. 1, 2. "And it is in him the head, that we must grow up in all things, from whom the whole body doth receive its increase;" Ephes. iv. 15, 16. You grow no more in grace, than you grow in the true knowledge and daily use of Jesus Christ. But of this I will say no more, because I have said so much in my "Directions for a Sound Conversion."

Direct. VI. 'Let the knowledge and love of God, and your obedience to him, be the works of your religion; and the everlasting fruition of him in heaven, be the continual

end and ruling motive of your hearts and lives, that your very conversation may be with God in heaven.'

You are so far **HOLY** as you are **DIVINE** and **HEAVENLY**. A Christian indeed in casting up his accounts, being certain that this world doth make no man happy, hath been led by Christ to seek a happiness with God above. If you live not for this everlasting happiness, if you trade not for this, if this be not your treasure, your hope and home, the chief matter of your desires, love and joy, and if all things be not pressed to serve it, and despised when they stand against it, you live not indeed a Christian life. **GOD** and **HEAVEN**, or **GOD** in **HEAVEN**, is the life and soul, the beginning and the end, the sum, the all of true religion. And therefore it is that we are directed to lift up our heads and hearts, and begin our prayers with, "Our Father which art in heaven," and end them with ascribing to him, "the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever." It is not the creatures, but God the Creator, that is the Father, the Guide, and the Felicity of souls, and therefore the ultimate End and object of all religious actions and affections. Dwell still upon God, and dwell in heaven, if you would understand the nature and design of Christianity. Take God for all, that is, for God; study after the knowledge of him in all his works; study him in his word; study him in Christ; and never study him, barely to know him, but to know him that you may love him. Take yourselves as dead, when you live not in the love of God; keep still upon your hearts, a lively sense of the infinite difference between him and the creature. Look on all the world as a shadow, and on God as the substance; take the very worst that man can do, to be in comparison of the punishments of God, but as a flea-biting to the sorest death; and take all the dreaming pleasures of the world, to be less in comparison with the joys of heaven, than one lick of honey is to a thousand years' possession of all the felicities on earth. Think not all the pleasures, honours, or riches of the world, to be worthy to be named in comparison of heaven; nor the greatest of men, to be worthy to be once thought on, in comparison of God. As one straw or feather won or lost, would neither much rejoice or trouble you, if all the city or land were yours; so live as men whose eyes are open, and who discern a greater disproportion between the portion of a worldling and a saint.

Let God be your King, your Father, your Master, your Friend, your Wealth, your Joy, your All. Let not a day go over your heads, in which your hearts have no converse with God in heaven. When any trouble overtaketh you on earth, look up to heaven, and remember, that it is there that rest and joy are prepared for believers. When you are under any want, or cross, or sorrow, fetch not your comfort from any hopes of deliverance here on earth, but from the place of your final, full deliverance. If you feel any strangeness and backwardness on your minds to heavenly contemplations, do not make light of them, but presently by faith get up to Christ, who must make your thoughts of heaven familiar, and seek remedy before your estrangedness increase. The soul is in a sad condition, when it cannot fetch comfort and encouragement from heaven; for then it must have none, or worse than none. When the thoughts of heaven will not sweeten all your crosses, and relieve your minds against all the incumbrances of earth, your souls are not in a healthful state; it is time then to search out the cause, and seek a cure, before it come to worse.

There are three great causes of this dark and dangerous state of soul, which make the thoughts of heaven ineffectual and uncomfortable to us, which therefore must be overcome with the daily care and diligence of your whole lives.

1. Unbelief, which maketh you look towards the life to come with doubting and uncertainty; and this is the most common, radical, powerful and pernicious impediment to a heavenly life.
2. The second is, the love of present things, which being the vanity of a poor, low, fleshly mind, the reviving of reason may do much to overcome it; but it is the sound belief of the life to come that must indeed prevail.
3. The third is, the inordinate fear of death, which hath so great advantage in the constitution of our nature, that it is commonly the last enemy which we overcome, (as death itself is the last enemy which Christ overcometh for us). Bend all your strength, and spend your days in striving against these three great impediments of a heavenly conversation; and remember, that so far as you suffer your hearts to retire from heaven, so far they retire from a life of Christianity and peace.

Direct. VII. *In the work of mortification, let SELF-

DENIAL be the first and last of all your study, care and diligence.'

Understand how much of the fallen, depraved state of man consisteth in the sin of **SELFISHNESS**: how he is sunk into himself, in his fall from the love of God, and of his neighbour; of the public or private good of others: and how this inordinate self-love is now the grand enemy of all true love to God or man; and the root and heart of covetousness, pride, voluptuousness and all iniquity. Let it be your work, therefore, all your days, to mortify it, and watch against it. When you feel yourselves partial in your own cause, and apt to be drawing from others to yourselves, in point of reputation, precedency or gain, and apt to make too great a matter of every word that is spoken against you, or every little wrong that is done you, observe then the pernicious root of selfishness, from whence all this mischief doth proceed. Read more of this in my "Treatise of Self-denial."

Direct. VIII. 'Take your corrupted, fleshly desires, for the greatest enemy of your souls, and let it be every day your constant work to mortify the flesh, and to keep a watch upon your lusts and appetite, and every sense.'

Remember that our senses were not made to govern themselves, but to be governed by right reason; and that God made them at the first to be the ordinary passage of his love and mercy to our hearts, by the means of the creatures which represent or manifest him unto us: but now in the depraved state of man, the senses have cast off the government of reason, and are become the ruling power, and so man is become like the beasts that perish. Remember then, that to be sensual, is to be brutish; and though grace doth not destroy the appetite and sense, yet it subjecteth it to God and reason. Therefore let your appetite be pleased in nothing, but by the allowance of right reason; and think not that you have reason to take any meats, or drink, or sport, merely because your flesh desireth it; but consider, whether it will do you good or hurt, and how it conduceth to your ultimate end. It is a base and sinful state to be in servitude to your appetite and sense; when by using to please it, you have so increased its desires, that now you know not how to deny it, and displease it; when you have taught it to be like a hungry dog or swine, that will never be quiet till his hunger be satisfied; whereas a well-govern-

ed appetite and sense is easily quieted with a rational denial. Rom. viii. 1. 6—8. 13. xiii. 13, 14. 1 Pet. ii. 11. 1 John ii. 16.

Direct. IX. 'Take heed lest you fall in love with the world, or any thing therein, and lest your thoughts of any place or condition which you either possess or hope for, do grow too sweet and pleasing to you.'

For there is no one perisheth, but for loving some creature more than God; and complacency is the formal act of love. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world, for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" 1 John ii. 15. Value all earthly things as they conduce to your Master's service, or to your salvation; and not as they tend to the pleasing of the flesh. It is the commonest and most dangerous folly in the world, to be eager to have our houses, and lands, and provisions, and every thing about us in the most pleasing and amiable state; when as this is the acknowledged way to hell, and the only poison of the soul. Are you not in more danger of over-loving a pleasing and prosperous condition, than a bitter and vexatious state? And of over-loving riches, honour, and sensual fulness and delights, rather than poverty, reproach and mortification? And do you not know that if ever you be damned, it will be for loving the world too much, and God too little? Is it for nothing that Christ describeth a saint to you as a Lazarus in poverty and sores, and a damned wretch as one that was "clothed in purple and silk, and fared sumptuously every day?" Luke xvi. Did not Christ know what he did when he put the rich man upon this trial, to part with all his worldly riches, and follow Christ for a treasure in heaven? Luke xviii. 22, 23. All things must be esteemed as loss and dung for the knowledge of Christ, and the hopes of heaven if ever you will be saved; Phil. iii. 6—8. You must so live by faith, and not by sight, as not to look at the temporal things which are seen, but at the things eternal which are unseen; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. v. 7, 8. And one that is running in a race for his life, would not so much as turn his head to look back on any one that called to him to stay, or to look aside to any one that would speak with him in his way; thus must we forget the things that are behind, as counting them not worthy a thought, or remembrance, or a look; Phil. iii. 13, 14. If you feel this poi-

son seize upon your hearts, and your condition in the world (or at least your hopes) begin to grow too sweet and pleasing to you, presently make haste to Christ your Physician, and take his antidote, and cast up the poison as you love your souls. You must know no other pleasure in your outward mercies, but as God appeareth in and by them, and as they tend to profit you, and further you in God's service, or to promote your own or others' good, but not as they are provision for the flesh; Rom. xiii. 13, 14. See my book "Of Crucifying the World."

Direct. X. 'Cast not yourselves wilfully upon temptations, but avoid them as far as lawfully you can; and if you are cast upon them unwillingly, resist them resolutely, as knowing that they come to entice you into sin and hell, from God and your everlasting happiness; and therefore be well acquainted with the particular temptations of every company, calling, relation, business, time, place and condition of life; and go always furnished with particular antidotes against them all.'

Strong grace will do no more against strong temptations, than weak grace against weak ones. Temptation is the way to sin, and sin is the way to hell. If you saw the dangerousness of your station, when you cast yourself upon temptations, you would tremble and fly as for your lives. I take that man as almost gone already, who chooseth temptations, or avoideth them not when he may. Especially be acquainted with the diseases and greatest dangers of your soul; and there keep up a constant watch. Are you liable to a gluttonous pleasing of your appetite? avoid the temptation; set not that before you which may be your snare; let a little, and that of the least tempting kind of food, be your ordinary provision. Sit not at the glutton's table (who fareth deliciously every day) if you would escape the glutton's sin and misery. Or if the provision be of other men's disposal, at least rise quickly and begone. Are you inclined to please your appetite in drinking? avoid such strong drink as may tempt your appetite; and avoid the place and company that draweth you to it. Are you inclined to fleshly lust? avoid the presence of such of the other sex as are a temptation to you: look not on them, and talk not of them: but above all, take heed of nearness, and familiarity, and privacy with them, and of all opportunity of sin. When the devil hath

brought the bait to your hand, and telleth you, Now you may sin without any molestation or discovery, you are then in a very dangerous case. Some that think they would not be guilty of the sin, will yet tempt themselves, and delight to have it in their power, and to have the opportunity of sinning, and to come as near it as they dare; and these are gone before they well perceive their danger. So if you are inclined to pride and ambition, avoid the society of those that tempt you to it: come not among superiors and gallants, or such as kindle your ambition. A retired life, in company of mean and humble persons, is fittest for one that hath your disease. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate; Rom. xii. 16.

But if you cannot avoid the temptation, be sure yet to avoid the sin; take it as if you saw and heard the devil himself persuading you to sin, and damn your souls. Abhor the motion, and give not the devil a patient hearing, when you know what he cometh about. Resolution escapeth many a danger, which those are ruined by, who stand disputing and dallying with the tempter. Especially look about you, when the tempter employeth great men, or learned men, or godly men, or nearest friends to be his instruments. And if their subtlety puzzle you, go to the stronger and more experienced Christians for advice and help. "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation;" Matt. vi. 13. xxvi. 41. It is a dreadful thing to think what persons temptations have overthrown! Luke xviii. 13. Heb. vi. 6. How wise, and learned, and excellent men have been outwitted by satan, and sinned like fools, when they have let go their watch. If we be as resolved as Peter, temptations may quickly change our resolutions, if God leave us to ourselves, and we grow presumptuous or secure; and then our very reason will lose its power; and false representations will make things appear to us quite contrary to what indeed they are; and those reasonings will seem probable to us, which at another time we should easily see through as mere deceit. Temptation as it prevaileth, doth damp and cast asleep our graces, and charm and bewitch all the faculties of the soul; 1 Tim. vi. 9.

Direct. XI. 'If it be possible, make choice of such a pastor for the help and guidance of your souls, as is judicious, experienced, humble, holy, heavenly, faithful, diligent, live-

ly, and peaceable, that liveth not in separation from the generality of the sober, godly ministers and Christians where he liveth.'

1. Think not of being sufficient for yourselves, without the help of those whom Christ hath appointed to be watchmen for your souls; Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24. As you cannot live without the teaching and the grace of Christ; so Christ doth vouchsafe you his teaching and his grace, by the ministry of his own officers, whom he hath appointed to that end and use. It is marvellous to observe, how Christ chose rather to convert men by the preaching and miracles of his apostles than by his own: and how he would not fully convert Paul without the ministry of Ananias, though he spoke to him from heaven himself, and reasoned the case with him against his persecution. And how he would not fully convert Cornelius and his household, without the ministry of Peter, though he sent an angel to direct him to a teacher. Nor would he convert the Ethiopian eunuch without the ministry of Philip; nor the jailor without the ministry of Paul and Silas, though he wrought a miracle to prepare for his conversion; Acts xvi. x. And "Paul must plant, and Apollos must water, before God will give the increase;" 1 Cor. iii. 6. And though all true Christians are taught of God, and must call no man on earth the master of their faith but Christ, (1 Thess. iv. 9. John vi. 45. Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.) yet have they their teachers, fathers and instructors under Christ, who are helpers of their joy, though they have not dominion over their faith, and are overseers, though not lords and owners of the flock, and are ministers of Christ by whom he teacheth, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and ambassadors by whom he beseecheth sinners to be reconciled to God, having committed to them the word of reconciliation; Eph. iv. 11—14. 1 Cor. iv. 1. 15. Acts xx. 28. 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Pet. v. 1—4. 2 Cor. v. 18—20. These are labourers together with God upon his husbandry and building; some being master-builders, and others superstructors; 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10. Christ knew the necessity that the infants of his family had of such nurses, and he knew what numbers of such weak ones there would be in comparison of the strong; or else he had never appointed the strong to such an office; and having appointed it, he will keep up the honour of his officers, and will send you his alms, your food,

your physic, your pardon, your privileges, by their hands. If you be drawn by seducers to forsake or neglect the ministry of Christ's officers, you forsake or neglect your helps and mercies, you refuse his grace, you are like infants that scorn their nurses' help, and like subjects who reject all the officers of the king, and like the chickens that forsake the hen; you forsake the school and church of Christ, and may expect to be quickly caught up by the devil, as stragglers that have no defence or guide.

2. Yet is there great difference between one minister or pastor and another, as much as between physicians, lawyers, or men of any other function. And there being no case in the world that you are so much concerned to be careful in, as the instructing, and conduct, and safety of your souls, you have exceeding great reason to take heed whom you choose to commit the care and conduct of your souls to. It is not enough to say, that he is a true ordained minister, and that his administrations are not nullities, any more than to say of an ignorant physician or cowardly captain, that he hath a valid licence or commission; when for all that, if you trust him, it may cost you your lives. Nor is it a wise man's answer to say, 'That God giveth his grace by the worst, as soon as by the best, and by the weakest, as soon as by the strongest, and therefore I need not be so careful in my choice.' For though God have not confined the working of his Spirit to the most excellent means, yet ordinarily, he worketh according to the means he useth; and this both Scripture, reason and daily experience fully prove. God worketh rationally on man as man; that is, as a rational free agent, by moral operation, and not by a mere physical injection of his grace. When we see the man that is made wise unto salvation by mere infusion of wisdom, without a teacher or the study of the word of God, or when we see God work by his word as by a charm, that a few words shall convert a man, though the speaker or hearer understood them not, then we may hearken to this conceit; and then we may think that a heretic may as well teach you the truth as the orthodox, or a schismatic teach you unity and peace as well as a catholic peaceable pastor, or a man that is ignorant of the mysteries of regeneration and holy communion with God, may best teach you that which he knoweth not

himself, and an enemy to piety and charity, may teach you to be pious and charitable, as well as any other. But I need not say much more of this, for all parties would never so strive to have such ministers as they like, and to put out such as they dislike, if they thought not that the difference between ministers and ministers was very great.

See therefore that the guide whom you choose for your souls, be, 1. Judicious ; for an injudicious man may pervert the Scripture, and lead you into error, and heresy, and sin, before you are aware ; as an unskilful coachman may soon overturn you, or an unskilful waterman may drown you. Yea, though he be a zealous, fervent preacher, yet if he be injudicious, he may ignorantly give you poison in your food, as the experience of this age hath lamentably proved.

2. See if possible, that he be an experienced man, that knoweth by experience on himself, not only what it is to be regenerate, and sanctified, and made a new creature, but also how all the combat between the Spirit and the flesh is to be managed, and what are the methods and stratagems of the tempter, and what are the chief helps and defences of the soul, and how they are all to be used ; for it is not harder to be a judicious physician, or lawyer, or soldier, without experience, than a judicious pastor ; and therefore the Holy Ghost commandeth that he be not a novice, or raw, inexperienced Christian ; 1 Tim. iii. 6.

3. See that he be humble ; for if he be puffed up with pride, he falleth into the condemnation of the devil ; 1 Tim. iii. 6. And then he will either scorn the labour of the ministry as a drudgery (to preach in season and out of season, to beseech, and exhort, and stoop to the poorest of the flock) ; or else he will "speak perverse things to draw away disciples after him ;" (Acts xx. 30.) or he will, as Diotrephes, reject the brethren, as loving himself to have the preeminence ; (2 John ix. 10.) and will oversee the church by constraint, for filthy lucre, as being a lord over God's heritage ; (1 Pet. v. 2, 3.) See Dr. Hammond on the text.

4. See that he be holy in his life ; for though this be not essential to his office, yet the unholy are inexperienced, yea, and have a secret enmity in their hearts against that holiness which they should daily preach ; and will usually be shewing it in their close, disgracing, discouraging speeches, against that serious piety which they should promote : and

they will neglect most of the personal care of their flock ; and will unpreach by their lives the good which they preach by their tongues, and harden and embolden the people in their sins, and make them believe that they believe not what they preach themselves. Choose not an enemy of holiness to lead you in the way of holiness (a way that he never went himself), nor an enemy of Christ to conduct you in the Christian warfare, when he is a servant of the devil, the world, and flesh, against whom you fight.

5. See that he be of a heavenly mind, or else his doctrine will be unsavoury and dry, and he will be preaching some speculations or barren controversies, instead of heavenly, edifying truth.

6. See that he be faithful and diligent in his ministry, as one that knoweth the worth of souls, and will not sell them or betray them to the devil for filthy lucre or his fleshly ends ; nor make merchandize of them, as desiring rather theirs than them, and preferring their fleece before the safety of the flock ; but one that imitateth the pattern, Acts xx. and in "meekness instructeth those that are opposers ;" 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. 2 Pet. ii. 3. 1 Cor. iv. 2. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. 1 Pet. v. 3, 4. 2 Cor. xii. 14.

7. See that he be a lively, serious preacher ; for all will be little enough to keep up a lively seriousness in such dull and frozen hearts as ours : a cold preacher with cold hearts, is like to make cold work. He that speaks senselessly and sleepily about such matters as heaven and hell, doth by the manner of his speech contradict the matter. When hard-heartedness, and security, and deadness, and lethargic drowsiness is the common and dangerous disease of souls, let him that loveth his soul and would not perish by his disease, make use of a physician and remedy that is suited to the cure, and not of one to rock him asleep, or give him an opiate to increase his malady.

8. See also that he be one that is of a truly catholic spirit, not addicted to a sect, nor to divisions in the church, nor one that liveth in a separation or distance from the generality of the godly, sober ministers ; for you take him not for your guide, as separated from the catholic church, but as united to it, and a member of it ; as valuing the judgment of all the church above the judgment of any one pastor, and knowing that you are yourselves to be kept in the unity of

the church, and not seduced into a sect; and that the pastors are to be the bonds and ligaments of the body, that by their help it may grow up in love and unity, and not the dividers of the body; Eph. iv. 13—16. As captains and inferior officers in an army, that are to conduct each soldier in unity with the army, and not to separate, and make every troop or regiment an army by itself, that they may be the petty generals. In a word, read some good visitation sermons, which tell you what a minister must be, and choose, if possible, to live under such a minister; I say, if possible; for I know to many it is not possible. Wives, and children, and servants, (while they are bound) cannot leave their husbands, parents or masters; and strong Christians who are called to do good to others, must prefer that before such advantages to themselves; and many other impediments may deny men such a blessing. But yet I say, undervalue not such a mercy, and neglect it not, where lawfully it may be had, and prefer nothing before it (as a just impediment) which is not really more worth. And remember that divines do commonly resolve the case of the infidel nations of the world, that they are inexcusable in their infidelity, because when they hear that other nations profess to know the way to heaven, they do not in so great a case go over sea and land to inquire after the doctrine which we profess. And if the Tartarians, Indians, and other nations are bound to send to Christian nations for preachers of the Gospel, I only leave you proportionably to measure your case by theirs (allowing for the disproportion); and to consider how far you should deny your worldly profit in removing your habitations, for such helps as your own necessities require.

Direct. XII. 'Make choice of such Christians for your familiar friends, and the companions of your lives, as are holy, humble, heavenly, serious, mortified, charitable, peaceable, judicious, experienced and fixed in the ways of God; and not of ungodly persons, or proud, self-conceited, censorious, dividing, injudicious, inexperienced, sensual, worldly, opinionative, superficial, lukewarm or unsettled professors.'

The reasons of this Direction you may perceive in what I said under the last. Your company is a matter of exceeding great concernment to you, as one of the greatest helps or hindrances, comforts or discomforts of all your lives, es-

pecially those that you dwell with, and those that you choose for your familiars and bosom friends ; and, therefore, (so far as God's providence doth not forbid you, and make it impossible) choose such as are here described ; or at least, one such for your bosom friend, if you can have acquaintance with no more. It is of unspeakable importance to your salvation, with whom you are associated for most familiar converse. A good companion will teach you what you know not, or remember you of that which you forget, or stir you up when you are dull, or warm you when you are cold, and watch over you and warn you of your danger, and save you from the poison of ill companions. O what a help and delight it is to have a holy, judicious, faithful friend to open your heart to, and to walk with him in the ways of life ! And how exceeding hard it is to escape sin and hell, and get well to heaven, in company and familiarity of the servants of the devil, who are posting unto hell ! Let not your companions be worse than yourselves, lest they make you worse ; but as much wiser and better as you can procure. See Eccles. iv. 9. 12. Psalm xvi. 2. cxix. 63. Prov. xiii. 20.

Direct. XIII. 'Subdue your passions, and abhor all uncharitable principles and practices, and live in love ; maintaining peace in your families, and with your neighbours, but especially in the church of God.'

Love as you would be loved ; yea, love if you would be loved ; for there is no surer way to purchase love : and love because you are so freely loved by that God whose wrath you have so oft deserved : let the thankful feeling of his love in Christ, even turn you wholly into love to God and man : abhor every thought, and word, and deed, which is contrary to love, and tendeth to the hurt of others ; and hate the backbitings and bitter words of any, which tend to make another odious, and to destroy your love to any one that God commandeth you to love. Allow that moderate passion which is the fruit of love, and tendeth only to do good ; but resist that which inclineth you to hatred or to do evil. The more men wrong you, remember that you are the more watchfully to maintain your love, knowing that these temptations are sent by the devil on purpose to destroy and quench it, and fill your heart with uncharitableness and wrath. Give place to the wrath of others, and stand not resisting it by words or deeds ; Rom. xii. 18—20. "Recompense to

no man evil for evil," in word or action; ver. 17. Especially be most tender of the union of true Christians, and of the church's peace: when you hear the men of several sects representing one another as odious, understand that it is the language of the devil to draw you from love, into hatred and divisions; and when you must speak odiously of men's sin, speak charitably of their persons, and be as ready to speak of the good that is in them, as of the evil. Believe not that dividing, ungrounded doctrine, which telleth you that you cannot sufficiently disown the error of any party in doctrine, and worship, and discipline, without a separation or withdrawing from their communion; and which telleth you that you are guilty of the ministerial faults of every pastor that you join with, or of the faults of all that worship which you are present at (which would first separate you from every worshipping society and person upon earth, and then lead you to give over the worshipping of God yourselves). You must love Christians as Christians, though they have errors and faults repugnant to their Christianity. And you must join in worship with Christians as Christians, though their worship hath errors and faults repugnant to the right order and manner of worship; so be it you join not in that worship which is substantially evil, and such as God doth utterly disown; or that you commit no actual sin yourselves, or that you approve not of the errors and faults of the worshippers, and justify not their smallest sin; or that you prefer not defective, faulty worship before that which is more pure and agreeable to the will of God. For while all the worshippers are faulty and imperfect, all their worship will be so too: and if your actual sin when you pray or preach defectively yourselves, doth not signify that you approve your faultiness, much less will your presence prove that you allow of the faultiness of others. The business that you come upon is to join with a Christian congregation in the use of those ordinances which God hath appointed, supposing that the ministers and worshippers will all be sinfully defective, in method, order, words, or circumstances: and to bear with that which God doth bear with, and not to refuse that which is God's for the adherent faults of men, no more than you will refuse every dish of meat which is unhandsomely cooked, as long as there is no poison in it, and you prefer it

not before better; 1 Cor. i. 10. iii. 1—3. xi. 17, 18. 21. Rom. xv. 1, 2.

Direct. XIV. 'Keep up a constant government over your thoughts and tongues, especially against those particular sins which you are most strongly tempted to, and which you see other Christians most overtaken with.'

Keep your thoughts employed upon something that is good and profitable; either about some useful truths, or about some duty to God or man, of your general or particular calling; yea, about all these in their several seasons: learn how to watch your thoughts, and stop them at their first excursions; and how to quicken them and make them serviceable to every grace, and every duty. You can never improve your solitary hours, if you have not the government of your thoughts.

And as the thoughts must be governed, because they are the first and intimate actings of good or evil; so the tongue must be governed as the first expresser of the mind, and the first instrument of good or hurt to others. Especially take heed of these sins which the faultiness of most professors of religion doth warn you to avoid. 1. An ordinary course of vain jesting, and unprofitable talk. 2. Provoking, passionate, inconsiderate words, that tend to kindle wrath in others. 3. Backbiting, censuring, and speaking evil of others without any just call, when it is either upon uncertain reports, or uncharitable suspicion, or tendeth more to hurt than good. 4. A forward venting of our own conceits, and a confident pleading for our uncertain, unproved opinions in religion, and a contentious wrangling for them, as if the kingdom of God lay in them. And a forwardness in all company to be the speakers rather than the hearers, and to talk in a magisterial, teaching way, as if we took ourselves to be the wisest, and others to have need to learn of us. But especially take heed of speaking evil of those that have wronged you, or of those that differ from you in some tolerable opinions in religion: and hate that devilish, uncharitable vice, which maketh many ready to believe any thing, or say any thing, be it never so false, of those that are against their sect; yea, of whole parties of men that differ from them, when there is not one of a thousand of all the party that ever they were acquainted with, or ever could prove the thing by, of which they are accused. By the means of these bold, uncharita-

ble reports, the devil hath unspeakably gained against Christ; and the kingdom of malice hath won upon the kingdom of love: and most Christians are easier known to be factious, by hating and slandering one another, than they can be known to be Christ's disciples, by loving one another. And while every sect, without remorse, doth speak reproachfully and hatefully of the rest, they learn hereby to hate one another, and harden the infidel and ungodly world, in hating and speaking evil of them all; so that a Turk or heathen need no other witness of the odiousness of all Christians, than the venomous words which they speak against each other. And as foul words in quarrels prepare for blows, so these malicious invectives, upon differences in religion, prepare for the cruellest persecutions.

From my own observation, which with a grievous soul I have made in this generation, I hereby give warning to this and all succeeding ages, that if they have any regard to truth or charity, they take heed how they believe any factious, partial historian or divine, in any evil that he saith of the party which he is against: for (though there be good and credible persons of most parties, yet) you shall find that passion and partiality prevaieth against conscience, truth and charity, in most that are sick of this disease. And that the envious zeal which is described, James iii. doth make them think they do God service; first, in believing false reports, and then in venting them against those that their zeal or faction doth call the enemies of truth; so that there is little credit to be given to their reproaches, farther than some better evidence is brought to prove the thing. Nay, it would astonish a man to read the impudent lies which I have often read, obtruded upon the world with such confidence, that the reader will be tempted to think, 'Surely all this cannot be false.' Yea, about public words or actions, where you would think that the multitude of witnesses would deter them from speaking it, if it were not true; and yet all as false as tongue can speak. Therefore believe not pride, or faction, or malice in any evil that it saith, unless you have better evidence of the truth.

Most Christian is that advice of Dr. H. More, 'That all parties of Christians would mark all the good which is in other parties, and be more forward to speak of that than of the evil.' And this would promote the work of charity in

the church, and the interest of Christianity in the world: whereas the overlooking of all that is good, and aggravating all the evil (and falsely feigning more than is true) is the work of greatest service to the devil, and of greatest enmity to Christianity and love, that I know commonly practised in the world. Keep your tongues from all such hellish work as this.

Direct. XV. ' Let every state of life and relation that you are in, be sanctified unto God, and conscionably used. And to that end understand the advantages and duties of every condition and relation, and the sins, and hindrances, and dangers which you are most liable to.'

The duties of our relations are a great part of the work of a Christian's life. As magistrates and subjects, pastors and flocks, parents and children, husband and wife, masters and servants; as superiors in gifts or places, or inferiors or equals; as neighbours or companions; in our teaching and learning, ruling and obeying, buying and selling. Be conscionable in all these which are your own relations, if you will live as Christians, and be acceptable unto God. An ungodly, or oppressing magistrate; a murmuring, rebellious subject; an ungodly, negligent, or factious pastor; an unteachable, refractory, ungodly flock; a husband, parent, or master, without religion, love, or justice; a wife, a child, a servant, without love, and dutiful obedience, and faithful diligence; a proud, contemptuous superior; a malicious, censorious inferior; an unjust, uncharitable neighbour; a deceitful buyer or seller, borrower or lender, and a self-seeking friend, and seducing, unprofitable companion, are all as far from pleasing God by the rest of their works or profession of religion, as they are from being obedient to his will. They provoke him to abhor their prayers and profession, and to tell them that he will rather have obedience than sacrifice. If you are false to men, you are not true to God. It is he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, that is accepted of him. And the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Direct. XVI. ' Live as those that have all their powers, receivings, and opportunities to do good with in the world; and must be answerable how they have improved all. And as those that believe, that the more good they do, the more

they do receive, and the greater is the honour, the profit, and the pleasure of their lives.'

To do no harm, is an honour which is common to a stone, or a clod of clay, with the most innocent man. If this were all the excellency that you aim at, it were better that you had never been born; for then you would certainly have done no harm. Remember, that to do good is the highest imitation of God, supposing that it proceeded from holy love, and be done to the pleasing and glorifying of God, that the principle and the end be suitable to the work. Remember who hath told you, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts xx. 35.), and hath promised, that "he that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (supposing that he have no better to give); Matt. x. 41, 42. "Give to every man that asketh of thee (according to thy ability). Give, and it shall be given to you;" Luke vi. 30. 38. xii. 33. Take that day or hour as lost, in which you do no good (directly or preparatorily). And take that part of your estate as lost, with which (directly or remotely) you do no good. Remember how the judgment must pass on you at last, according to the improvement of your several talents; Matt. xxv. When your time is past, and your estates are gone, or your understandings, or your strength decayed, and your power and greatness is levelled with the poorest, it will be an unspeakable comfort to you, if you are able to say, 'We laid them out sincerely to our master's use;' and an unspeakable terror for you to say, 'They were lost and cast away on the service of the flesh.' If therefore, you are rulers, and are intrusted with power, study how to do all the good with your power that possibly you can. If you are ministers of Christ, lay out your time, and strength, and parts, in doing good to the souls of all about you; study how you may be most serviceable to the church and cause of Christ. If you are rich men, study how to do all the good with your riches that possibly you can do (not violating the order appointed you by God). In your

neighbourhoods, and in all your families and relations, study to do the greatest good you can. Take it thankfully as a great mercy to yourselves, when opportunity to do good is offered you. And content not yourselves to do a little, while you are able to do more. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit, reap everlasting life. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith;" Gal. vi. 7—10. "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver;" 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. "To do good, and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well-pleased;" Heb. xiii. 16. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath ordained, that we should walk in them;" Ephes. iii. 10. Let doing good be the business and employment of your lives; preferring still the public good, before the private good of any; and the good of men's souls before that of the body; but yet neglecting none, but doing the lesser, in order to the greater.

Object. 'But I am a poor obscure person, that have neither abilities of mind, or body, or estate; and what good can I do?'

Answ. There is no rational person that is not intrusted with one talent at the least (Matt. xxv.), and that is not in a capacity of doing good in the world, if they have but hearts, and be but willing. If you had neither money to give, nor tongues to speak for God, and to provoke others to do good, yet a holy, humble, heavenly, patient, blameless life, is a powerful means of doing good, by shewing the excellency of grace, and convincing the ungodly, and stopping the mouths of the enemies of piety, and honouring the ways of God in the world. Such a holy, harmless, exemplary life, is a continual, and a powerful sermon. And for giving, if there be first a "willing mind, it is accepted according to that a

man hath, and not according to that he hath not;" 2 Cor. viii. 12. If you are unfeignedly willing to give, if you had it, God taketh it as done. What you would have given, is set down on your account as given indeed. The widow's two mites were praised by Christ as a bountiful gift, and a cup of cold water is not unrewarded to the willing soul. No one, therefore, is excusable that liveth unprofitably in the world. But yet, men of power, and parts, and wealth, have the greatest reckoning to make. Their ten talents must have a proportionable improvement. It is a great deal of good that they must do. "For to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more;" Luke xii. 48.

Direct. XVII. 'Redeem your time, and highly value every minute; and spare for no labour in the work of your salvation. Dream not of an easy, idle, sluggish life, as sufficient to your high and glorious ends; and rest not in a customary and outside way of duty, without regard to the life, and the success.'

If any thing in all the world require all our power and time, it is that for which all our powers and time are given us; and which we are sure will a thousandfold recompense us for all. O what a sottish kind of stupidity is it, for a man to trifle in the way to eternity, that hath an endless life of joy or sorrow, depending on the preparations of so short a life. How little doth he know the worth of his soul, the joys of heaven, the terrors of hell, the malicious diligence of satan, or the difficulty of salvation, that can idle, and play away whole hours of time; and pray as if he prayed not, and seem to be religious when he is not in good earnest! And bestirreth not himself so much to escape hell-fire, and to obtain everlasting joys with Christ, as he would do to escape a temporal death or misery, or to obtain some dignity or riches in the world; 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. O, therefore, as ever you care what becometh of your souls, and as ever you will have comfort in the review of your present life, make not a jest of heaven and hell; trifle not in your race and warfare; dally not with God and conscience; play not, and dream not away your time. Know the worth of an hour's time, for the sake of your work, and of your souls, as it is commonly

known by dying men. But of this I have spoke already in my "Now or Never," and "A Saint or a Brute," and in the third part of the "Saint's Rest."

Direct. XVIII. 'Sit down and count what it may cost you to be Christians indeed, and to be saved. Reckon not on prosperity, or a cheap religion, but resolve to take up the cross, and follow Christ in suffering, and to be crucified to the world, and by many tribulations, to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Luke xiv. 26—28. 30. 33. Gal. vi. 14. Acts xiv. 22. 1 Thess. iii. 4. 2 Thess. i. 6—8. Mal. v. 10—12. 2 Tim. iii. 12.

All that will live godly in Christ, shall suffer persecution. It is not all that are baptized and called Christians, but all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. It is godliness, and not the bare name of Christianity, which the serpent's seed have so great an enmity to. I have elsewhere cited an excellent saying of Dr. Thomas Jackson's, to prove that this is to be expected under Christian, as well as heathen, governments, and that it is not through the goodness of the great ones of the world, but the cowardliness of our hearts, that the ministers of Christ are not ordinarily martyrs. Though God may possibly exempt you from any notable suffering for his cause, yet it is not wise or safe to expect such an exemption; for that will hinder your preparation for suffering. And a mind prepared to suffer, is essential to true Christianity. And no man that is not a martyr in resolution and disposition can be saved. If the fiery trial come upon you, let it not seem a strange, unexpected thing; 1 Pet. iv. 12—14. 17. When persecution ariseth because of the word, the unrooted, unsound, unsettled Christian, is presently offended, and falls away; Matt. xiii. 21. Mark iv. 17. Then they will fall to distinguishing and carnal reasoning, and prove any thing lawful which is necessary to their peace. "As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ;" Gal. vi. 12. Shrink not for sufferings. "Fear not them that can but kill the body;" Luke xii. 4. Never doth the Spirit of God, and glory so much rest upon believers, as in their greatest "sufferings for righteousness sake," (1 Pet. iv. 14.) and never have they cause of more "exceeding joy;" Matt. v. 11, 12. Prosperity doth not so well agree with a life of

faith, as sufferings and adversity. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the (temporal) things which are seen, but at the things (eternal) which are not seen;" 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Read Rom. viii. 33, to the end.

Direct. XIX. 'If you fall into any sin, rise speedily by a thorough repentance; and take heed both of delay, and of a palliative cure;' Luke xiii. 3, 5. xxii. 32.

Take heed of trusting to a general repentance, or a converted state, instead of a particular repentance and conversion from any known sin, especially which is more than the ordinary unavoidable infirmities of a saint. For it is not general repentance indeed, which reacheth not to every known particular. If temptation have cast you down, take heed of lying there, but presently get up again. What the apostle saith of wrath (Eph. iv. 26.), the same I may say of other falls, "Let not the sun go down upon them." But go out with Peter, and weep with him, if you have sinned with him. If your bones be out of joint, or broken, get them set presently, before they settle in their dislocation; and let the cure be thorough, and spare not for a little pain at first. Let as open confession as the case requireth, and as full restitution, signify the sincerity of your repentance. For a gentle handling of yourselves may undo you; and palliation is the hypocrite's cure. O take heed lest you presume to sleep one night in your unrepented sins; and take heed, lest delay encourage your tempter to offer you the bait again and again, and to say, 'Why not once more? Why may you not be as well pardoned for twice as for once; and for thrice as for twice?' &c. It is dangerous playing or sleeping at the brink of hell. Away from the temptation and occasion of your sin; stand not disputing, but resolve and begone; and "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you;" John v. 14. Stick not, man, at the shame, or loss, or suffering, which confession, restitution, or reformation may bring; but remember that you can never escape damnation at too dear a rate. This is Christ's meaning, when he speaketh of cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye, if it offend; that is, ensnare and tempt you unto sin; Matt. v. 29, 30. Not that you should do so indeed, for you have an easier way to avoid your sin; but that this is far the

lesser of the two evils, to lose a hand or eye, than to lose the soul, and, therefore, to be chosen if there were no other remedy. If the thief had no other way to forbear stealing, than to cut off his hand; or the fornicator to cure his lust, than to put out his eyes, it were a cheap remedy. A cheap and easy superficial repentance, may skin over the sore and deceive a hypocrite; but he that would be sure of pardon, and free from fear, must go to the bottom.

Direct. XX. 'Live as with death continually in your eye, and spend every day in serious preparation for it, that when it cometh, you may find your work dispatched; and may not then cry out in vain to God to try you once again.'

Promise not yourselves long life: think not of death as at many years' distance, but as hard at hand. Think what will then be needful to your peace and comfort, and order all your life accordingly, and prepare that now, which will be needful then. Live now while you have time, as you will resolve and promise God to live, when on your deathbed you are praying for a little time of trial more. It is a great work to die in joyful assurance and hope of everlasting life, and with a longing desire to depart and be with Christ as best of all; Phil. i. 21. 23. O then what a burden and terror it will be, to have an unbelieving, or a worldly heart, or a guilty conscience. Now therefore use all possible diligence to strengthen faith, to increase love, to be acquitted from guilt, to be above the world, to have the mind set free from the captivity of the flesh, to walk with God, and to obtain the deepest, most delectable apprehensions of his love in Christ, and of the heavenly blessedness which you expect. Do you feel any doubts of the state of immortality, or staggering at the promise of God through unbelief? Presently do all you can to conquer them, and get a clear resolution to your souls, and leave it not all to do at the time of sickness. Are the thoughts of God and heaven unpleasant or terrible to you? Presently search out the cause of all, and labour in the cure of it as for your lives. Is there any former or present sin, which is a burden or terror to your consciences? Presently seek out to Christ for a cure by faith and true repentance; and do that to disburden your consciences now, which you would do on a sick bed; and leave not so great and necessary a work, to so uncertain, and short, and unfit a time. Is there any thing in this world that is sweeter to

your thoughts than God and heaven; and which you cannot willingly let go? Mortify it without delay, considering of its vanity; compare it with heaven; crucify it by the cross of Christ; cease not till you account it loss and dung, for the excellent knowledge of Christ and life eternal; Phil. iii. 7—9. Let not death surprise you as a thing that you never seriously expected. Can you do no more in preparation for it, than you do? If not, why do you wish at death to be tried once again? And why are you troubled that you lived no better? But if you can, when think you should it be done? Is the time of uncertain, painful sickness better than this? O how doth sensuality besot the world! and inconsiderateness deprive them of the benefit of their reason! O sirs, if you know indeed that you must shortly die, live then as dying men should live: choose your condition in the world, and manage it as men should do that must shortly die. Use your power, and command, and honour, and use all your neighbours, and especially use the cause and servants of Christ, as men should do that must shortly die. Build and plant, and buy and sell, and use your riches, as those that must die, remembering that the fashion of all these things is passing away; 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Yea, pray and read, and hear and meditate, as those that must die. Seeing you are as sure of it as if it were this hour; in the name of God delay not your preparations. It is a terrible thing for an immortal soul to pass out of the body in a carnal, unregenerate, unprepared state, and to leave a world which they loved and were familiar with, and go to a world which they neither know nor love, and where they have neither heart nor treasure; Matt. vi. 19—21. The measure of faith which may help you to bear an easy cross, is not sufficient to fortify and encourage your souls, to enter upon so great a change. So also bear all your wants and crosses as men that must shortly die: fear the cruelties of men, but as seemeth those that are ready to die. He that can die well, can do any thing, or suffer any thing: and he that is unready to die, is unfit for a fruitful and comfortable life. What can rationally rejoice that man, who is sure to die, and is unready to die, and is yet unfurnished of dying comforts? Let nothing be now sweet to you, which will be bitter to your dying thoughts. Let nothing be much desired now, which will be unprofitable and uncomfortable then. Let

nothing seem very heavy or grievous now, which will be light and easy then. Let nothing now seem honourable, which will then seem despicable and vile. Consider of every thing as it will look at death, that when the day shall come which endeth all the joys of the ungodly, you may look up with joy, and say, ' Welcome heaven ; this is the day which I so long expected, which all my days were spent in preparation for, which shall end my fears, and begin my felicity, and put me into possession of all that I desired, and prayed, and laboured for, when my soul shall see its glorified Lord. For he hath said, John xii. 26. " If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Even so Lord Jesus, remember me now thou art in thy kingdom, and let me be with thee in paradise ; Luke xxiii. 42, 43. O thou that spakest those words so full of inexpressible comfort, to a sinful woman in the first speech after thy blessed resurrection ; John xx. 17. " Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Take up now this soul that is thine own, that it may see the glory given thee with the Father ; (John xvii. 24.) and instead of this life of temptation, trouble, darkness, distance, and sinful imperfection, I may delightfully behold, and love, and praise thy Father and my Father, and thy God and my God. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. Lord Jesus receive my spirit ;' Luke ii. 29. Acts vii. 59.

And now I have given you all these Directions, I shall only request you in the close, that you will set your very hearts to the daily, serious practice of them ; for there is no other way for a ripe, confirmed state of grace : and as ever you regard the glory of God, the honour of your religion, the welfare of the church and those about you, and the living and dying comforts of yourselves ; O do not sluggishly rest in an infant state of grace ! Did you but know how a weak and strong faith differ, and how a weak and a sound, confirmed Christian differ, as to the honour of God, and the good of others, and especially to themselves, both in life and death, it would quickly awaken you to a cheerful diligence, for so high and excellent an end. Did you but well

370 **DIRECTIONS TO THE CONVERTED, &c.**

understand the wrong that Christ and the Gospel have sustained in the world, yea, in England, by weak, diseased, dis-tempered Christians, your hearts would bleed, and with shame and grief, it would be your secret and open lamentation. Stir up then the grace that is given you, and use Christ's means, and do your best, and you will find that Christ is not an insufficient Physician, nor an uneffectual Saviour, or an empty Fountain; but that he is filled with all the fulness of God, and hath spirit and life to communicate to his members; (Zech. xii. 8.) and that there is no want which he cannot supply, and no corruption or temptation which his grace is not sufficient to overcome; John iv. 14. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Rom. vi. 4. 6. Col. iii. 1. 3, 4.

**END OF DIRECTIONS TO THE CONVERTED FOR THEIR ESTABLISH-
MENT, GROWTH AND PERSEVERANCE.**