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BY THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.,

SOMETIME FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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Late Master of Trinity-College, Cambridge.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE
WORKS
OF
DR. ISAAC BARROW,

Late Master of Trinity-College, Cambridge.

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

SERMON I.

OF DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

COLLOSS. iii. 17.

And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS.

■ “WHATSOEVER ye do in word or deed:” A duty we see the Apostle enjoins us of a large extent, and, therefore, surely of a great importance; indeed of a universal concern; such as must go along with, must run through all our words and all our actions. We are therefore much obliged, and much concerned, to attend thereto, and to practise it carefully. But first we must understand what it is; the doing whereof depends upon understanding the sense of that phrase, (doing in the name of JESUS,) being somewhat ambiguous, and capable of divers meanings; which both in common use, and in Holy Scripture, we find it to bear different, according to the variety of matters or occasions to which it is applied; most of which are comprehended, and (as it were) complicated in that general one, according to which we may be said to do that in another person’s name, which we do with any kind of reference or regard to him; such as our relations, or our obligations, to that person require, and the particular nature of the action doth admit. And according to this acceptation, I conceive it best to interpret ST. PAUL’S meaning here, supposing it to comprehend all the more restrained meanings of this phrase, truly applicable to the present matter; of which meanings I shall propound the chief; and, together, unfold and inculcate the several branches of this duty. Yet first of all rejecting one or two, which cannot well be applied to this purpose.

To do in another's name, doth sometimes denote the assuming another's person, or pretending to be the same with him, the very he. So, "Many shall come in my name," prophesied our SAVIOUR, "saying, I am CHRIST." To do thus in JESUS's name, is the part of an Antichrist. That sense, therefore, hath nothing to do here.

Again: To do in another's name, doth often imply, doing in another's name or stead, as a deputy or substitute; representing the person, or supplying the office of another. So did the Prophets "come and speak in GOD's name;" what they declared or enjoined being therefore said to be declared and enjoined by GOD himself: "I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking:" (*viz.*, by the Prophets whom he sent, and who are said to come and speak in his name.) And thus the Apostles spake in CHRIST's name: "We are ambassadors for CHRIST; we pray you in CHRIST's stead be ye reconciled." Thus also Princes govern, and Magistrates execute justice, in GOD's name; whence they are styled gods, as being his Lieutenants, administering that judgment which belongs originally to him. Now for this sense, neither is it so proper here; it agreeing only to some particular persons, and to some peculiar actions of them; insomuch, that others presuming to act according to that manner in JESUS's name, shall thereby become usurpers and deceivers. We (and to us all this precept is directed) shall heinously transgress our duty, doing any thing thus in his name without his letters of credence,—without being duly by him authorized thereto.

These senses the present matter doth not well admit; the rest that suit thereto I shall in order represent:—

1. To do in another's name sometimes, doth signify to do it out of affection or honour to another; for another's sake, because we love or esteem him. Thus it is said, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name," because ye are CHRIST's, (that is, out of respect to CHRIST, because of your relation to him,) "shall not lose his reward." And thus surely we ought to do every thing in JESUS's name; all our actions ought to proceed from a

principle of grateful love, and reverence towards our gracious Redeemer. "Let all your actions be done in charity," saith the Apostle; if in charity to our neighbour, then much more in love to Him, for whose sake we are especially bound to love our neighbour. Upon any undertaking, we should consider whether that we are going about be apt to please him, and conducive to his honour; if so, remembering what he hath done and suffered for us, what excellent blessings he hath purchased for us, what exceeding benefits he hath conferred upon us, we should, out of love and respect to him, readily perform it; but if otherwise, we should, from the same principles, decline it.

The duty is certain, and the reason thereof evident. For inducement to the practice thereof, observe ST. PAUL'S example, who thus represents himself, in the main employment of his life, acting: "The love of CHRIST constrains us; judging this, that he died for all, that they who live might not live to themselves, but to him that died and rose for them." The love of CHRIST, begot and maintained by a consideration of his great benefits conferred on him, was the spring that set ST. PAUL on work. Thus doing, we shall do in JESUS'S name; but if we act out of love to ourselves, to promote our own interests, to gratify our own desires, to procure credit or praise to ourselves, we act only in our own names, and for our own sakes; not in the name, or for the sake of JESUS.

2. To do in another's name, implies doing for the interest or advantage of another; upon another's behalf or account, as the servants or factors of another: for when the business is another's, and the benefit emergent belonging to another, he that prosecutes that business is commonly supposed to act in another's name. Thus our SAVIOUR is, in ST. JOHN'S Gospel, expressed to come, to speak, to act in GOD'S name, because he did GOD'S business, the work which GOD gave him to accomplish, and entirely sought the glory of GOD, as he there himself professes. And thus, in imitation of him, ought we also to do

all things in his name, remembering that “we are not our own,” but the servants of **JESUS**; servants to him not only by nature, as to our Maker and Preserver, but by purchase, as to our Redeemer, who bought us with the greatest price; and by compact also, we having freely undertaken his service, and expecting wages from him; that we have therefore no business properly our own, but that all our business is to serve him, and promote his glory; “whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of our **LORD**.” Whatever, I say, we do, we therefore should perform it as to **JESUS**; as his servants, from conscience of the duty we owe to him, with intention therein to serve him, in expectation of reward only from him. So doth **ST. PAUL**, in prosecution of this same precept, in this chapter enjoin us, that “whatever we do, we perform it heartily, as to the **LORD**, and not to men; knowing” (or considering) “that from the **LORD** we shall receive the recompense of the inheritance, for that we serve the **LORD CHRIST**.” In like manner elsewhere he teaches us to do what we do, “not as pleasers of men,” (not upon any inferior account,) “but as servants of **CHRIST**, knowing and considering that we have a Master in heaven.” But,

3. Doing in another’s name, imports frequently, doing by the appointment and command, or by the commission and authority, of another. “By what power, and in what name, have ye done these things?” say the High Priests to the Apostles; that is, Who did appoint or authorize you to do thus? Their answer was ready: “In the name of **JESUS** ;” who had sent, commissioned, and commanded them to preach and propagate that doctrine. And thus we are also bound to do all things in the name of **JESUS**, regulating all our actions by his law, conforming our whole lives to his will, acting not only out of good principles, (principles of love and conscience,) but according to right rules, the rules of his word and example, which he hath declared and prescribed to us: for what is done

beside his warrant and will, cannot be rightly esteemed done in his name; no unjust or impious action will he upon any terms countenance or patronise.

It is not prophesying in CHRIST's name, (or preaching about him,) nor frequent attendance upon those who do so; not speaking much or hearing much concerning him; it is not having great gifts or endowments conferred by CHRIST, not even so great as that of working miracles; it is not familiar converse with CHRIST, or making frequent addresses to him, that can sanctify all a man's actions, or so entitle them to the name of CHRIST, as to secure a person from being disavowed and rejected by CHRIST. It is only the conforming all our actions to his holy laws, that will be accepted and acknowledged by him.

This I could wish they would consider, who seem by such pretences to commend or excuse their actions, although plainly contrary to the laws of CHRIST; such as those of being meek and charitable towards all men; living peaceably ourselves, and endeavouring to promote peace among others; paying reverence and obedience to superiors; and the like laws of CHRIST, not only express and manifest, but even of the highest rank and consequence among them, being mainly conducing to that which our LORD especially tenders, the public welfare of mankind; the violation whereof cannot be justified by pretending any special regard whatever to CHRIST, or any performances done, whether truly or seemingly in his name. We do but deceive ourselves if we conceit, that because we think much, or speak much of JESUS, or have a zeal for something good, all our actions are done in his name: No, it only can warrant and sanctify actions truly good and agreeable to his law; it were an abuse and forgery to do it, like stamping the King's name or image on counterfeit metal, upon brass or tin, instead of gold or silver. Good intention and good principles are indeed, as it were, the soul of good actions; but their being just and lawful are the body of them, necessarily also concurring to their essence and integrity; they cannot subsist without it, but

must pass, as it were, for ghosts and shadows. We are therefore concerned in all our doings to have an especial regard to CHRIST'S law as their rule; that will render them capable of CHRIST'S name, and denominate them christian.

4. Hereto we may add, that what we do in imitation of JESUS, and in conformity to his practice, (that living rule,) we may be said peculiarly to do in his name. As a picture useth to bear his name whom it was made to represent, and whom it resembles; so if we set CHRIST'S example before us, and endeavour to transcribe it,—if our lives, in the principal lineaments of sanctity and goodness, resemble his holy life, they may well bear his name; but if our practice be unlike his, we cannot fix his name thereto without great presumption. To do thus in JESUS'S name, (with such a regard to him,) is a duty not only prescribed to us, not only as relating to some cases and actions, as when his charity, his patience, his humility, his meekness, are signally commended to our imitation, but generally: “He that saith he abideth in him, ought as he walked, so himself also to walk;” that is, whoever professes himself a Christian, ought to conform the whole tenor of his conversation to that of JESUS; to endeavour in every imitable perfection to resemble him. So that whenever we undertake any action, we should do well to look upon this pattern, thus, as it were, inquiring of ourselves,—What did my Master in this or the like case? Do I do the same thing? Do I act from the same principles? Do I proceed in the same manner as he did? Am I herein his follower? If so, in his name let me go on cheerfully; if not, let me forbear. Doing thus will not be only according to our duty, but an especial help of good practice.

5. To do in another's name doth sometimes import doing by power derived or virtue imparted by another; for a thing so done may be imputed, should be ascribed to that other: so, “through thee,” saith the Psalmist, “will we push down our enemies; in thy name will we throw down those that hate us.” (Through thee, and in thy

name, signifying the same thing.) So did the Apostles cast out devils, and perform their other miracles in JESUS's name; by his name it is sometimes expressed; that is, by a divine virtue imparted from him. To this I add another acceptation, scarce different, at least as to our purpose, from that according to which, doing in another's name, signifies doing it in trust, or confidence reposed upon another, with expectation of aid, or hope of good success from another. So, "We rest on thee," (said good King ASA,) "and in thy name we go against this multitude." In thy name; that is, hoping for assistance and success from thee. And thus it is said that DAVID "went out against GOLIAH in the name of the LORD of Hosts;" that is, confiding in GOD's help, as his only weapon and defence. Thus also did the holy Apostles work their miracles in JESUS's name: "By faith in his name," saith ST. PETER, "his name hath made this man strong;" that is, we did only trust in his divine power, and it was that power which restored that weak person to his strength.

And thus also is it our duty to do all things in our SAVIOUR's name, with faith and hope in him; wholly relying upon him for direction and assistance, expecting from him only a blessing and happy issue of our undertakings. What we do in confidence of our own wisdom or ability, or in affiance upon the help of any other person or thing, we do in our own name, or in the name of that thing or that person in whom we so confide; to ourselves or such auxiliaries we shall be ready to attribute the success, and to render the glory of the performance, "glorying in our own arm, and sacrificing to our net." But what we undertake, only depending upon our LORD for ability and success, may therefore bear his name, because our faith derives the power from him, which enables us happily to perform it; so that the performances may truly be attributed to him, and to him we shall be apt to ascribe it.

And thus, I say, we are certainly obliged to do every thing in his name, in his name alone, retaining a constant sense both of our own infirmity, and of the impotency of

all other created things, and consequently a total diffidence both in ourselves and in them ; but reposing all our trust in the direction and assistance of our all-wise and all-mighty LORD ; of JESUS, “to whom all power in heaven and earth is given ; who indeed had it originally by nature as GOD, but also farther hath acquired it by desert and purchase ; into whose hands all things are given, and all things put under his feet ; who hath obtained this power in design to use it for our good, and is thereby always ready to help us in our need, if we have recourse unto him, and rely upon him ; making him what ST. PAUL styles him, our hope, our only hope, renouncing all other confidences not subordinate to him.

To do so is a duty evidently grounded as well upon the reason of the thing, as upon the will and command of GOD ; to do otherwise is no less a palpable folly, than a manifest injury to GOD : for, in truth, neither have we, nor any other created thing, any power, other than such as he is pleased freely to dispense, and which is not continually, both for its being and its efficacy, subject to him, so that he may at his pleasure subtract it, or obstruct its effect : “No King is saved by the multitude of an host ; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength ; a horse is a vain thing for safety.” Whence it is plain that we cannot upon any created power ground a solid assurance of success in any undertaking ; it will be leaning upon a broken reed, which cannot support us, and will pierce our hands ; both a vain and mischievous confidence, that will abuse us, bringing both disappointment and guilt upon us ; the guilt of wronging our LORD many ways, by arrogating to ourselves or assigning to others what he only doth truly deserve, and what peculiarly of right belongs to him, withdrawing the same from him ; implying him unable or unwilling to assist us, and do us good ; neglecting to use that strength which he so dearly purchased and so graciously tenders ; so disappointing him, and defeating, as it were, his purposes of favour and mercy toward us.

On the other side, trusting only upon our SAVIOUR, we act wisely and justly; for in doing so we build our hopes upon most sure grounds; upon a wisdom that cannot be deceived, upon a strength that cannot be withstood, upon a goodness that hath no limits, upon a fidelity that can never fail. We act with a humility and sobriety of mind suitable to our condition, and to the reason of things; we thereby declare our good opinion of him as only able, and very willing to do us good; we render him his just honour and due; we comply with his earnest desires; we promote his gracious designs of mercy and kindness towards us. Hence is it that every where in Holy Scripture GOD so highly commends, so greatly encourages, this duty of trusting alone in him; that he so ill resents, and so strongly deters from, the breach or omission thereof. "Thus saith the LORD: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Thus in that place, thus in innumerable others, we are threatened not only with disappointment in our undertakings, but with severe punishment, if we betake ourselves to other succours, and neglect or distrust, and in so doing desert GOD; but are encouraged, not only with assurance of success, but of additional rewards, if entirely in our proceedings we depend upon GOD.

Thus we should do in all, even our ordinary affairs, which no less than the rest are subject to his power, and governed by his care: for you know how ST. JAMES doth reprehend it as arrogance to say, "The morrow we will go to this city, and stay there a year, and trade and gain;"

instead of saying, "If the LORD will we will live, and do this or that;" that is, to resolve upon, undertake, or prosecute any affair without submission to GOD'S will, and dependance on his providence. But especially we ought, in matters and actions more spiritual, to practise this duty; for to the performing of these we have of ourselves a peculiar impotence and unfitness; needing therefore a more spiritual assistance from our LORD, the success of them more particularly depends upon him, the glory of them in an especial manner is appropriate, and, as it were, consecrate to him.

If it be a folly and a crime to think we do any thing without GOD, it is much more so to think we can do any thing good without him; it is an arrogance, it is an idolatry, it is a sacrilege much more vain and wicked to do so. To imagine that we can, by the force of our own reason and resolution, achieve any of those most high and hard enterprises, to which, by the rules of virtue and piety we are engaged,—that we can, by our conduct and prowess, encounter and withstand, defeat and vanquish those so crafty, so mighty enemies of our salvation, (our own fleshly desires, the menaces and allurements of the world, the slights and powers of darkness,) is much a worse presumption than in other affairs of greatest difficulty to expect success without the divine assistance and blessing; than in other most dangerous battles, to think we can "by our own bow and by our own spear save ourselves;"—that we can obtain victory otherwise than from his hand and disposal who is the LORD of Hosts. Reason tells us, and experience also shows, and our SAVIOUR hath expressly said it, That, in these things, "without him," without his especial influence and blessing, "we can do nothing." He tells us that we are but branches inserted into him; so that without continually drawing sap from him, we can have no life or vigour spiritual. The wisest and best of men have, by their practice, taught us to acknowledge so much; to depend wholly upon him, to ascribe all to him in this kind. "Why," say ST. PETER

and **ST. JOHN**, "do ye wonder at this; or why gaze ye upon us, as if by our own power or piety we had made this man walk? His name," (the name of **JESUS**,) "through faith in his name, hath made this man strong." That acknowledgment indeed concerns a miraculous work, but spiritual works are in reality no less; they requiring as much or more of virtue supernatural, or the present interposition of **GOD'S** hand to effect them; they make less show without, but need as great efficacy within; so our **SAVIOUR** did imply when he said, "He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall do, and greater works than these." Every good and faithful man doth not work miracles; yet somewhat greater, by the grace of **CHRIST**, he performs. To these, **ST. PAUL** referred when he affirmed, "I can do all things through **CHRIST** that strengtheneth me;" nothing was so hard that he feared to attempt, that he despaired to master by the help of **CHRIST**. "Not," saith he again, "that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of **GOD**." He was as sensible of his own inability as he was confident in the gracious help of **CHRIST**.

Thus should we do all things in the name of **JESUS**; and it is not only a duty to do it, but it may be a great encouragement to us that we are capable of doing it; a great comfort to consider, that in all honest undertakings we have so ready and so sure an aid to second us; confiding in which, nothing is so difficult but we may easily accomplish; (a grain of faith will be able to remove mountains;) nothing is so hazardous but we may safely venture on: walking on the sea, treading upon serpents and scorpions, daring all the power of the enemy. In his name we may, if our duty or good reason calls us forth, how small and weak soever, how destitute soever of defensive arms, or weapons offensive, naked and unarmed, with a sling and a stone, go out against the biggest and best armed Philistine, nothing doubting of victory. Our weakness itself (if we be humbly conscious and sensible thereof) will be an advantage to us, as it was to **ST. PAUL**;

to all effects and purposes “the grace of our LORD will be sufficient for us,” if we apply it, and trust therein. But farther,—

6. To do in another’s name, may denote, to do it with such regard to another, that we acknowledge (that, I say, we heartily and thankfully acknowledge,) our hope of prospering in what we do ; our expectation of acceptance, favour, or reward to be grounded on him ; that are procured by his merits and means, are bestowed only for his sake. Thus our SAVIOUR bids us to offer our prayers in his name ; that is, representing unto GOD his meritorious performances in our behalf, as the ground of our access to GOD, of our hope to obtain from him what we request. So also we are enjoined to “give thanks in his name ;” that is, with persuasion and acknowledgment, that only in respect to him we become capable to receive, or enjoy any good thing ; that in effect, all the blessings by divine mercy vouchsafed us, have been procured by him for us, are through him conveyed unto us. And thus also we should do all things in the name of JESUS, offering all our deeds to GOD, as sacrifices and services unworthy of acceptance, both in themselves, and as proceeding from us ; but pleasing and acceptable to GOD only for his sake.

We should do well, upon all occasions, to remember our natural condition, and the general state of mankind ; such as it was before he did undertake, such as it would have continued still, had he not undertaken for it. That our race had forfeited, and was fallen from GOD’s favour ; having injured him beyond all power of making him any reparation or satisfaction ; that thence it was secluded from all means and hopes of happiness, was exposed and tended downright unto misery ; that consequently we had no ground to hope, that GOD (from whom no less in mind and in deed, than by reason of our guilt and state of condemnation, were we estranged) would bestow any good upon us, or accept favourably any thing we should do. But that, by our SAVIOUR’S performances, the case is altered ; he, by his entire obedience, having so pleased

GOD, by his patient submission to **GOD'S** will, having so appeased his anger, and satisfied his justice, that **GOD** is not only reconciled, but hath an especial favour, bears an earnest good will towards us : that now the good things we possess, we may truly esteem as blessings, and enjoy them with real comfort, as proceeding from mercy and kindness ; now what we honestly endeavour, we may hope shall please **GOD** ; now we have a free access to **GOD**, and may cheerfully present our sacrifice of duty and devotion, with a full persuasion that they shall be accepted. But all this happiness, all these favours and privileges, we must always remember to come from the continued procurement and mediation of the Beloved ; so as ever to be ready to acknowledge it, and to return our thanks for it.

To this sense, that our Apostle here had an especial regard, the words immediately following imply,—“Doing all in the name of the **LORD JESUS**, giving thanks to **GOD** and the **FATHER** by him :” that is, in all things we do, taking occasion to render thanks to **GOD**, as for his sake being merciful and bountiful to us ; bestowing upon us the good we enjoy, blessing our endeavours, accepting our performances. We must not conceit, that any regard, any mercy, any favour, any reward, is due to us in equity, is in effect conferred upon us upon our own personal score : (for, how mean things are we in comparison of his greatness, how vile and filthy must we appear to his most pure and all-discerning eyes ; how unworthy of his regard and of his affection must we needs take ourselves to be, if we are acquainted with ourselves !) But that “in him,” *i. e.*, for his sake, and by his means, “**GOD** hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings ;” in him, *ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς*, **GOD** hath favoured, and cast his grace upon us ; valuing us, notwithstanding all the spots with which we are defiled ; notwithstanding all the offences we have committed ; for the relation we have to **JESUS**. Nor must we look on our services, (the best we are able to perform,) as in themselves grateful or satisfactory : for all of them, if we mark them well, we shall find not only quite unprofitable to **GOD**,

but very defective in many respects: for who can say, he performs any thing both in kind, in manner, in degree, thoroughly right and good; with that ardency of love he owes to GOD, with that purity of intention, with that earnest vigour of spirit, with that undistractedness of mind, with which he should perform it? No; in all our flock we cannot pick out a sacrifice entire and unblemished; such as GOD requires, such as duty exacts of us. They need therefore, (all our services need,) to be commended and completed by the beloved SON, his perfectly well-pleasing performances; they need to be cleansed and hallowed, by passing through the hands of our most holy and undefiled High Priest; to become sweet and savoury from being offered up in his censer. In fine, as all our actions should, in our intention, be works of religion dedicated to GOD's service and honour; sacrifices, as it were, of gratitude and homage to GOD; so they ought all to be offered up in the name of JESUS. I add, farther,

7. *Lastly*, That to do in the name of JESUS, may well imply doing with invocation of him: Thus we may understand that place of ST. JAMES, where the Elders are advised, "to pray, and anoint the sick in the LORD's name;" for, to anoint them, imploring our LORD's blessing upon them, and upon those means used for their cure. And thus ST. CHRYSOSTOM expounds the words, Do all in JESUS's name; 'that is,' saith he, 'imploring him for your helper in all things; always first praying to him, undertake your business.' Doing thus, will indeed consecrate our actions: for "all things," saith our Apostle, "are sanctified by the word of GOD, and prayer:" that is, by GOD's blessing implored, and obtained by prayer; or, if GOD's word be there taken for his law, or revealed will, it is there signified, that our actions are not only sanctified by their lawfulness, or conformity to that good rule, GOD's declared will; but also by the invocation of his name: however, all our actions, it seems, are unhallowed and profane, if not accompanied with devotion. That to do thus is our duty, appears by those frequent injunctions,

to “pray without ceasing,” to “pray always,” to “abide instantly in prayer;” which not only import, that we should pray often, and continue with patience, and earnestness in prayer; but that we should annex it to, or interpose it among, all our actions, undertaking nothing without it. We should do it, (our SAVIOUR commands,) *παντι καιρω*, that is, on every occasion; and PAUL gives the same direction; “praying,” says he, *εν παντι καιρω*, “on all opportunities, with all prayer and supplication in spirit:” (in spirit, that is, I take it, in our hearts at least, and with secret elevations of our mind, if not with our mouth and voice.) And more explicitly elsewhere saith he, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, [in all your affairs,] by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to GOD.”

Thus to do, to accompany all our undertakings with prayer, we are indeed concerned upon many accounts. We need GOD’S direction, being ourselves blind and ignorant, in the choice of what we attempt, that our ends may be good, conducive to GOD’S honour, and our own true advantage. For, as the Prophet tells us, “The way of man is not in himself, neither is it in man that walketh to direct his steps;” and, as the Wise Man adds, “Man’s goings are of the LORD; how then can a man understand his own way?” (implying, since GOD only knows what is best for us, that we ourselves, without his direction, know not what to do, whither to go.) The holy Psalmist signifies the same in those words, very encouraging to the practice of this duty: “What man is he that feareth the LORD?” [that feareth him, that is, who worshippeth him, and seeketh his guidance;] “him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.”

We need also (being ourselves not only weak and infirm, but inconstant and unstable) GOD’S assistance, and upholding hand, in the pursuance of our well-chosen designs, that we may use the best means, and proceed in a straight course; that we may persist upright and steady in our proceedings, that which the Wise Man seems to call the

establishing of our thoughts and purposes, as a consequence upon our seeking God's assistance in our actions, and relying thereon. "Commit," says he, "thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established:" thou shalt drive on thy good purposes steadily, without stumbling or failing. So the Psalmist assures us concerning a good man: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD; none of his steps shall slide; though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down; for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."

As to the final success of our affairs, also, we stand in need of God's blessing; that he, upon whose will altogether depends the disposal of all events, should bestow a good issue on our endeavours; that which also the Psalmist assures us of obtaining, upon condition of our imploring and depending upon God for it: "Commit thy way," saith he, "unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." We do thus need, in all our affairs, the direction, assistance, and blessing of our LORD; but shall not have them without prayer; for the rule is, "ask and have, seek and find:" without asking we are not likely to obtain those gifts; without seeking we must not hope to find those benefits from God. If we are so proud, as to think we do not need them, or so negligent as not to mind them; or so distrustful of the divine power and goodness, that we imagine he cannot or will not afford them to us; we are like to be so unhappy as to want them. God expects from us that we should, in whatever we do, acknowledge him: it is the Wise Man's expression, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths:" acknowledge him as the only faithful guide and counsellor; as the sufficient helper and protector; as the only giver of good success.

Nothing therefore is well done, which is not thus done: we cannot be satisfied in what we do, we cannot hope for a comfortable end thereof; we cannot expect a blessing from God, if we have refused, or if we have neglected, the recommending our proceedings to his care. We can, I say,

do nothing ; not eat, not sleep, not trade, not travel, not study, with any true content, any reasonable security, any satisfactory hope, if we have not first humbly implored God's favour ; committing ourselves and our business into his hand, that hand which dispenseth all good, which alone can keep off all danger and mischief from us. God " shall send his angel before thee : " So did our father ABRAHAM send his servant about his business ; having questionless before commended it to God by prayer. " GOD ALMIGHTY give you mercy before the man : " So did JACOB give his sons their dispatches towards Egypt. In such a manner did we enter upon all our affairs, we could not but be full of hope, and void of care concerning them ; for, having committed our business into so sure a hand, how could we farther be solicitous about it ? Had we, according to ST. PETER's advice, " cast our care upon the LORD ; " or, " cast our burthen upon him, " as the Psalmist exhorts us ; had we duly sought him, who " never faileth them that seek him, " we should be secure, that nothing bad, or disastrous, could befall us ; we should experience it true, what the Prophet affirms, " Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee. " Thus, in the last place, should we do all things in the name of JESUS ; upon all occasions praying to him ; or, which is all one, to God, in his name ; which that we may do, that we are allowed and encouraged to do it, is also a privilege, and an advantage invaluable.

In so many ways may we, and ought we to perform all we do in the name of JESUS. We should do every thing out of grateful affection to him as our chief principle ; every thing as his servants, aiming especially at the pleasing him and promoting his honour, as our principal end ; every thing according to his will and commandment, as our constant rule ; every thing after his example, as our best pattern ; every thing in confidence of his gracious assistance and blessing, as our only strength and support ; every thing with hope of acceptance purely upon his account ; every thing with a thankful sense and acknowledgment to God for the mercies and favours conveyed

unto us by his means, conferred upon us for his sake ; every thing with humble invocation of him, or with prayer to God in his name : in sum, every thing with due regard to him ; so that he be not passed over or left out in any thing we undertake ; but come always into consideration, according as our relations to him, and our obligations to him, require. In the performances of which duties the life indeed of our religion, of all our good practice, of all our devotion, doth consist.

To all this I shall only subjoin the mention of one general duty, implied in all and each of those, which is this ;—

S. That our LORD JESUS should be frequently (and in a manner continually ; always, as to the habitual disposition of our souls, actually upon all fit occasions) present to our minds and thoughts. This, I say, is plainly implied in the former duties. For, how is it possible we should perform all our actions, yea, utter all our words, with regard to him, if we seldom think of him ? Things far distant, or long absent, can have small efficacy or influence ; it is so, we see, in natural, and it is no less so in moral causes, wherein representation to the fancy and memory have a force answerable to that which real conjunction hath in nature. As the heat and light of the sun, the farther he goes, and the longer he stays from us, does the more decrease ; so according to our less frequently and less seriously thinking upon any object, our affection and respect thereto decays. If therefore we desire to maintain in our hearts such dispositions (due affection and due reverence) towards JESUS ; if we intend to suit our actions accordingly with due regard to him, we should, in order to those purposes, apply this so necessary and useful mean of frequently bending our minds towards him, in order to the sanctifying our affections, and the governing our actions in a constant performance of our duty.

Will not that most amiable and most venerable idea of a person so entirely pure and holy, so meek and humble, so full of benignity towards all men, particularly towards ourselves, be apt to beget an especial love and reverence

towards him? Incline us strongly to do well, yea, teach us what and how we should do so, in conformity to such a pattern set before us? 'While it is impressed on our thoughts, that he is our LORD and Master, who made us and maintains us, who purchased us to himself, and redeemed us from miserable slavery by his own heart's blood, how can it fail to raise in us some awe, some sense of duty toward him? Will not the apprehension of what he did and what he suffered for us, powerfully mind us, that according to all justice and equity, in all ingenuity and gratitude, we are bound, to do only that which will please him? If we think of JESUS when we are setting upon any action, shall we not thereupon be apt thus to interrogate ourselves:—Shall I do otherwise than he did, or would have done, so rendering myself unlike or contrary to him? Shall I be so unfaithful to my glorious Master, as to disserve him, or to neglect his service? Shall I be so unworthy my gracious Redeemer, my best Friend, my most bountiful Benefactor, as to disoblige him, to wrong him, to dishonour him, to grieve him by thus doing? Shall I be so vain and rash as to cross him who is my King, able to control and subdue me; as to offend him who is my Judge, resolved to condemn and punish me? Shall I wilfully forfeit that favour of his, upon which all my happiness depends? Shall I procure his displeasure and enmity, from which my utter ruin must inevitably follow? Our frequent thinking upon, and the presence (as it were) of our blessed SAVIOUR to our minds, may therefore be commended to us as an excellent instrument of bettering our hearts and our lives.

To conclude: Let us always remember, and consider, that we are Christians, related unto CHRIST JESUS, and called by his name, and as so, in his name let us do all things.

LORD of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of thy name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

SERMON II.

OF CONTENTMENT:—IN FOUR SERMONS.

PHIL. iv. 11.

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

IN these words, by the example of an eminent saint, is recommended to us the practice of an excellent virtue; a practice grateful to God, and of great benefit to ourselves; being indeed necessary towards the comfortable enjoyment of our lives: It is contentedness; the virtue which, of all other, doth most render this world acceptable, and constituteth a kind of temporal heaven; which he that hath, is thereby *ipso facto* in good measure happy, whatever other things he may seem to want; which he that wanteth, doth, however otherwise he be furnished, become miserable, and carrieth a kind of hell within him. It cannot therefore but well deserve our best study about it, and care to get it; in imitation of ST. PAUL, who “had learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content.”

In discoursing upon which words, I shall consider two particulars: First, the virtue itself,—Contentedness in every state; the nature of which I shall endeavour to explain: Then the way of attaining it, implied by ST. PAUL in the words, “I have learned.”

I. For explication of the virtue: The word here expressing it, is *αὐτάρκεια*, which signifieth self-sufficiency; which is not to be understood absolutely, as if he took himself to be independent in nature, able to subsist of himself, not wanting any support or comfort without himself; (for this is the property and privilege of the great EL-SHADDAI, who alone subsisteth of himself, needing

nothing without himself: this is repugnant to the nature of man, who is a creature essentially dependant for his being, indigent of many things for his welfare;) but relatively; considering his present state, the circumstances wherein he was, and the capacities he had; which by GOD's providence were such, that he could not want more than he had in his possession, or reach. He meant not to exclude GOD, and his providence; but rather supposed that as the ground and cause of his self-sufficiency; according as elsewhere he expresseth it: "Not as if we were sufficient of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of GOD." Nor did he intend to exclude the need of other creatures, otherwise than as considered without his possession, or beyond his power; but he meaneth only, that he did not desire or want more than what GOD had supplied him with; had put into his hand, or had set within his reach; that his will did suit to his state; his desire did not exceed his power.

This is the meaning of the word which the Apostle useth: But for the more full and clear understanding the virtue itself, we shall first consider the object about which it is conversant; then the several acts wherein the exercise thereof consisteth.

1. The object of contentedness is, the present state of things, whatever it may be, whether prosperous or adverse, wherein by divine providence we are set: 'The things in which we are;' that is, our present condition, with all its circumstances. So it may be generally supposed, considering that it is ordinary, and almost natural, for men, who have not learned as ST. PAUL had done, to be dissatisfied and disquieted in every state; to be always in want of something; to find defects in every fortune; to fancy they may be in better case, and to desire it earnestly: If we estimate things wisely, rich men are more liable to discontent than poor men. It is observable, that prosperity is a peevish thing, and men of highest fortune are apt most easily to resent the smallest things. A little neglect, a slight word, an displeasing look, doth affect

them more than reproaches, blows, wrongs, do those of a mean condition.

The formal object of content may indeed seem to be a condition distasteful to our sense; an adverse or strait condition; a condition of poverty or disgrace, of inconvenience or distress: but since most men are absolutely in such a condition, exposed to so many wants and troubles, since many more are needy, comparatively, wanting the conveniences that others enjoy, and which themselves desire; since there are few, who in right estimation are not indigent and poor, that is, who do not desire, and fancy themselves to want many things which they have not; (for wealth consisteth not so much in the possession of goods, as in apprehension of freedom from want, and in satisfaction of desires;) since care, trouble, disappointment, satiety and discontent, following them, do not only haunt cottages, and the lowest sort of people, but even frequent palaces, and pursue men of highest rank, therefore any state may be the object of contentedness; and the duty is of a very general concernment. Princes themselves need to learn it: the lessons teaching it, and the arguments persuading it, may as well suit the rich and noble, as the poor and the peasant. So our Apostle himself doth intimate in the words immediately following our text: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need." He had the art not only to manage well both conditions, but to be satisfied in either.

But seeing real adversity, poverty, and disgrace, have naturally the strongest influence in disturbing our minds; since contentedness is plainly most needful in such cases, as the proper support or medicine of our mind in them; and other states do need it only as by fancy or infirmity they symbolize and conspire with these: Therefore unto persons in these states we shall more explicitly apply our directions, as to the proper and primary subjects of contentedness; the which, by analogy, or parity of reason,

may be extended to all others, who, by imaginary wants and distresses, create displeasure to themselves. So much for the object of the virtue.

2. The acts wherein the practice thereof consisteth, (which are necessary ingredients of it,) belong either to the understanding, or to the will, or to external demeanour and practice; being (1.) right opinions and judgments: (2.) Fit dispositions of heart: (3.) Outward good actions and behaviour, in regard to the events befalling us; the former being as the root; the latter, as the fruits and flowers of the duty.

(1.) As to our opinions and judgments of things, contentedness requireth, That

1. We should believe our condition, whatever it be, to be determined by **GOD**; and that all events befalling us proceed from him; at least, that he permitteth and ordereth them, according to his judgment and pleasure;—that “both good and evil proceedeth out of the mouth of the Most High;”—that “affliction” (as **JOB** said) “cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;” as a thing spontaneously, or sowed by the hand of some creature; but rather descendeth from Him who saith, “I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the **LORD** do these things.”

We are apt, when any thing falleth out unpleasant to us, to exclaim against fortune; or to inveigh against second causes, ascribing all to their influence; which proceeding argues in us a heathenish ignorance and infidelity, or at least much inconsiderateness, and impotency of mind; that our judgment is blinded and clouded, or perverted and seduced by ill passions: for, in truth, there is not in the world any occurrence merely fortuitous, or fatal, all being guided and wielded by the powerful hand of the All-wise and Almighty **GOD**; there is no creature which in its agency doth not depend upon **GOD**, as the instrument of his will, or subordinate thereto: wherefore, upon every event, we should, raising our minds above all other causes, discern and acknowledge **GOD**'s hand; as **DAVID** did,

when SHIMEI cursed him; "Let him," said the good King, "curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse DAVID;" as JOB did, when he was rifled of his goods; "The LORD," said he, "gave, and the LORD hath taken away;" as our SAVIOUR did, when in regard to the sore hardships he was designed to undergo, He said, "The cup which my FATHER hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

2. Hence we should always judge every thing which happeneth to be thoroughly fit and good, worthy (all things considered) to be appointed, or permitted, by that Governor of things; not entertaining any harsh thoughts of GOD, as if he were not wise, just, or benign, in ordering us to be afflicted or crossed; but taking all occurrences to be well consistent with all GOD's holy perfections.

We are apt to conceit, that the world is ill ordered, when we do not prosper therein; that every thing is irregular, which squareth not to the model of our fancy; that things had gone much better, if our designs had found success: but these are vain conceits; for that certainly is most good which seemeth good to GOD: his will is a perfect standard of right; his eye never aimeth wrong; his hand never faileth to hit the mark of what is best. "All his paths are mercy and truth: He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." So did King HEZEKIAH rightly judge, when, upon denunciation of a sad doom to his country and posterity, he replied to the Prophet, "Good is the word of the LORD, which thou hast spoken." So even the Pagan sage discerned, when he thus rebuked a mal-content: 'You slave, do you desire any thing but what is best? And is not that only best, which seemeth best to GOD?'

3. We should be satisfied in our mind, that, according to GOD's purpose, all events conduce to our particular welfare; being not only good, in order to more general ends, but serving towards our private advantage. We may be ready perhaps to confess, that whatever happeneth may be just and fit in some distant and occult respects;

but hardly can be induced to allow, that what we feel offensive to our sense and fancy is really good for us, or was meant for our benefit; we cannot easily discern any thing of love or favour in such matters: those sort of aphorisms in Holy Scripture, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth,"—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten," sound strangely; such is our blindness of mind, and dulness of apprehension: but God knoweth with so exact a skilfulness to manage things, that every particular occurrence shall be advantageous to the person whom it toucheth: and accordingly, to each he dispenseth that which is most suitable to him; whence, as frequently it is needful for us that we should be crossed, (for otherwise we should often much harm, sometime we should quite undo, ourselves,) so it always, when God ordereth it, is to be deemed most profitable for us: We are therefore, in reason, obliged to take the sharpest afflictions, coming upon us by providence, to be no other than fatherly corrections, or friendly rebukes, designed to render us good and happy; as arguments, therefore, and instances of especial good-will towards us; conceiving under every dispensation, that we do, as it were, hear God speaking to us, as He did to those by the Prophet: "I know the thoughts that I think towards you; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

4. Hence we are to believe, that our present condition, whatever it be to sense, is, all things considered, the best; most proper, most desirable for us; better than we, if it were at our choice, should put ourselves into: for God, "the Saviour of all men, who desireth that no man should perish; who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works," doth ever, (here in this life the time of trial,) with a most wise good-will, design our best good; and by the most proper methods; (such as best suit our circumstances and capacities,) doth aim to draw us to happiness; and accordingly doth assign a station for us, most befitting in order to that great end. We therefore

should think ourselves well placed, because we are where **God** doth set us ; that we have enough, because we have what **God** allotteth us.

(2.) From such judgments concerning things incident to us, should proceed the following dispositions.

1. We should entertain all occurrences, how grievous soever to us, with entire submission and resignation of our will to the will of **God** ; wholly acquiescing in his good pleasure ; saying in our hearts after our **LORD**, “ Let not my will, but thine, be done ; ”—with good **ELI**, “ It is the **LORD**, let him do what seemeth him good ; ”—with **DAVID**, “ Behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him ; ”—even with **SOCRATES**, ‘ If it pleaseth **God**, so let it be ; ’—with **EPICETUS**, ‘ I always will that which cometh to pass ; for I account that better which **God** willeth, than what I will myself ; I will adhere as a servant and follower to him ; I pursue, I affect, I simply will, with him.’ Looking upon them as sent from **God**, we should heartily bid them welcome ; we should kindly embrace them, we should use them with all fair respect : ἀσπάζεσθαι τὰ συμβαίνοντα, (kindly to embrace the things which fall out,) φιλεῖν τὰ ἀπονεμόμενα, (to love things dispensed by Providence,) are precepts, which even Philosophers inculcate.

This excludeth all rebellious swellings of mind against Providence ; such as argue that we dislike **God**’s government ; that were we able we should struggle with **God**’s will ; that we gladly would shake off his yoke ;—all such repining at our lot, which maketh **God**’s hand grievous, and his yoke uneasy to us ; such affections as the wise man toucheth, when he saith, “ The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the **LORD**.”

2. We should bear all things with steady calmness and composedness of mind ; quelling those tumults, those storms, those passions, which the sense of things disgustful is apt to excite. No adversity should so ruffle

our minds, as to hinder us from perceiving or performing what becometh us, so as to engage us into any irregular or unseemly behaviour.

3. We should indeed bear the worst events with a sweet and cheerful disposition of mind, so as not to be put out of humour, not to be dejected or discouraged by them, not to fall into that heaviness, which, as the Wise Man saith, “maketh the heart of man to stoop;” but rather finding delight and complacence in them, as considering whence they come, whither they tend: such was the disposition of the Apostles and primitive Christians, in the midst of their most grievous sufferings; “they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; they accounted it all joy, when they fell into divers tribulations; they were as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;” their state was grievous, but their heart was constantly cheerful. Such a constant frame of mind we should maintain, so continually prepared we should be against all contingences, that nothing should happen amiss to us, so as deeply to affect us, or to unsettle us in our temper; that every thing from God’s hand should be acceptable; that no sadness may seize on us, at least that we do not indulge or cherish it; that in no wise we suffer any regret to quench our spiritual comfort and joy in God, which becometh the upright, as the Psalmist saith, and which we are so often enjoined perpetually to maintain, as in all cases, so particularly under afflictions and trials. We cannot be content, if we are not cheerful; for the mind can hardly stand in a poise, so as neither to sorrow nor joy: We cannot digest adversity if we do not relish it; we will not submit to it as His will, if we do not take it for an argument of his love: *εὐδοκῶ*, ‘I,’ saith St. PAUL, ‘have a liking, or pleasure, in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for CHRIST’s sake;’ “for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

4. We should with faith and hope rely and wait on God for the removal or easement of our afflictions; or, however, we should confide in him for grace and strength

to support them well; as our SAVIOUR did when he prayed, "FATHER, if thou be willing, remove this cup;"—as they did in the Prophet, who said, "In the way of thy commandments, O LORD, we have waited on thee;"—according to that rule in the Lamentations, "It is good that a man should both hope, and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD;"—and those precepts in the Psalms, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him; wait upon the LORD, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

We should, in any case, be ready, with the holy Psalmist, thus to interrogate and sustain ourselves: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in GOD, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Remembering and considering, that (as we are expressly taught in Scripture, and as all our religion doth clearly suppose) "GOD knoweth to rescue the godly out of tribulation;" (he knoweth the proper season when it is fit to do it;) that "he is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it;"—reflecting, I say, on these certain truths, we should never "sorrow as those who are without hope;" we should never despair of a good riddance from our adversity, when it shall be seasonable and beneficial for us; we should always be assured of a comfortable support under it, which is usually better than deliverance from it; our minds should never sink into despondency. That this is practicable in the worst case, we have conspicuous instances to assure us: it hath been the practice of most illustrious and excellent persons; never was any condition, in outward respects and appearance, more forlorn and dismal than was theirs, yet it no wise bereaved them of hope or courage. "We," they could say, "are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

5. We should not faint or languish in our minds upon any occasion : no adversity should impair the force of our spirit, should enervate our courage, or slacken our industry ; should render us sick or weak in heart ; for “ If,” saith the Wise Man, “ thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small ; ” (it is the sign of an infirm mind ;) and *μη̄ ἐκκακῆσῖν*, not to fault or decay, *μη̄ ἐκλύεσθαι*, not to be dissolved or disjointed in our souls, (as the body is in scorbutic distempers,) are rules prescribed to us in such cases. We do then, indeed, need a firm and robust constitution of soul ; we should then bear up most resolutely. The encouragement of MOSES to the people entering upon battle, may well be accommodated to us, in regard to our conflict with adversities : “ Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.”

6. We should not be weary of our condition, or have irksome longings for alteration ; but with a quiet indifference, and willingness of mind, lie under it, during GOD’S pleasure, according to the Wise Man’s advice : “ My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD, neither be weary of his correction ; ” and that of the Apostle, enforced by our LORD’S example : “ Consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” We should not think GOD slow, or his time long and tedious, as if he were forgetful of us, or backward to succour us ; as the Psalmist was inclined to do, when in the day of trouble he brake forth into these expressions : “ Will the LORD cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more ? Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious ? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ? ” Thus he was apt to think and speak ; but recollecting himself, he perceived it was his error, and confessed it was his fault thus to imagine : “ I said it was mine infirmity ; ” and it will be ours likewise, if we entertain such conceptions. We should, with the same mind, endure our present state, as we pass through a hard winter, or a

time of foul weather, taking it for seasonable and fit, because the wise Author of nature hath so appointed it.

7. We should, by adverse accidents, be rendered lowly in our own eyes, and sober in our conceits of ourselves; meek and gentle, tender and pliable in our temper; sensible of our unworthiness and meanness, of our natural frailty, penury and misery, of our actual offences; deeply affected in regard to the awful majesty and power, to the perfect holiness and strict justice of GOD: they should quell our haughty stomach; they should supple our stiff wilfulness; they should soften our hard hearts; they should mitigate our peevish humours. To effect these things is usually the design of such incidents, and it is ever the best fruit of them. This is that which ST. PETER adviseth to, when he saith, "Be humbled under the mighty hand of GOD;" which GOD approveth, and encourageth with a gracious promise, when he saith, "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." This disposition is an inseparable adherent to contentedness: he that hath not his Spirit thus broken, or mollified, will hardly be content in any state; he that is haughty in conceit, and sturdy in humour, will every where find that which will disturb him.

8. It is required that we should, notwithstanding any hardness of our condition, be meekly and kindly affected toward others, being satisfied and pleased with their more prosperous state. We should not be angry with the world, because we do not flourish in it; we should not be sullen or peevish toward any man, because his fortune is better than ours; we should not repine at the good success of any of our brethren, because we want the like ourselves; we should rather "rejoice with them that rejoice," borrowing some satisfaction from their enjoyments. It is humane thus to do, because of the natural relation of men; it is christian, because of our spiritual consanguinity, by virtue whereof we re so knit together, and made members each to other,

that if, as ST. PAUL telleth us, “one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it.” We can hardly be content without thus appropriating the goods, and sharing in the delights of others; he can never be content, who looketh with an evil eye upon other men’s prosperity; he cannot do well himself, who loveth not to see his neighbour do well; numberless occasions will happen to discompose him.

Adversity impatiently borne is apt to sour our spirits, and render us froward toward men; especially when it proceedeth from the unkindness, ingratitude, or treachery of friends, or of persons obliged to us for our good-will, or for benefits done to them: but nothing should render us unkindly disposed toward the world, nothing should extinguish charity in us toward any man; so plain reason teacheth us, so great examples enforce. MOSES did not lose his affection towards his countrymen, because he was by one of them threatened into banishment; the Apostles became not disaffected to the world, because it misused and persecuted them; our LORD continued most earnestly to desire, and laboriously to endeavour, the good of those who most despitefully used him. Like theirs, in all cases, should our disposition be; we should ever observe the Psalmist’s advice: “Cease from anger, forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

9. Again, Contentedness doth imply a freedom from all solicitude and anxiety of mind, in reference to provision for the needs and conveniences of life; according to those rules of, “casting our burden and care upon the LORD,” of being “careful for nothing, but commending our affairs to God’s ordering;” according to that most comfortable precept of our LORD: “Take no care, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed; for your heavenly Father knoweth, that ye want all these things.” If we do not thus, it is hardly possible that we should be content: if we do not depend upon Providence, we cannot escape being often distracted

with care, and perplexed with fear ; we cannot cheerfully hope for any thing we need, nor be quietly secure of any thing we possess.

10. It requireth also that we should curb our desires, and confine them in narrow bounds ; so as not to affect more in quantity, or better in quality, than nature does require. If we must have superfluities, if we can only relish dainties, we shall never be pleased ; for as nature hath limits, and is content with little, so curiosity is an infinite and insatiable thing. “ He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man ; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich : ” that is, he that is curious and nice in his desires, will never have enough. The rule which (according to ST PAUL) should regulate our desires, is this,—“ Having food and raiment, let us with them be satisfied.” If this will satisfy us, we may easily obtain satisfaction ; a moderate industry, with GOD’s blessing, will procure so much : GOD hath promised to bestow it. If this will not suffice, there is no sure way of getting or keeping more. As GOD is no wise obliged to provide us superfluities, or concerned to relieve our extravagant longings ; so we may fear, that Providence will be ready to cross us in our cares and endeavours tending to those purposes, so that we shall be disappointed in the procurement, or disturbed in the fruition of such needless things : however, he that is most scanty in his desires, is likely to be most content in his mind : ‘ He,’ as SOCRATES said, ‘ is nearest the gods,’ (who need nothing,) ‘ that needeth fewest things.’

In fine, contentedness doth import, that whatever our condition is, our minds and affections should be modelled according to it ; so that our inclinations be compliant, our desires suited thereto ; so that we can easily comport with the inconveniences, can relish the comforts, can improve the advantages of it : otherwise, like an ill-made garment, it will sit unhandsome upon us, and be troublesome to us. It is not usually our condition itself, but the unsuitableness thereof to our disposition and desires, (which soureth all its sweets, and rendereth its advantages

fruitless,) that createth discontent; for, although it be very mean, others bear the same cheerfully; many would be glad thereof: if therefore we will be content, we must bend our inclinations, and adapt our desires, to a correspondence with our state.

If we are rich, we should get a large and bountiful heart, otherwise our wealth will hang loose about us; the care and trouble in keeping it, the suspicion and fear of losing it, the desire of increasing it, the unwillingness to spend or use it, will bereave us of all true satisfaction therein, and render it no less unsavoury to us than unprofitable to others.

If we are poor, we should have a frugal, provident, industrious mind, sparing in desires, free from curiosity, willing to take pains, able to digest hardships; otherwise the straitness of our condition will pinch and gall us.

Are we high in dignity or reputation? We then need a mind ballasted with sober thoughts, otherwise the wind of vanity will drive us into absurd behaviour, thence will dash us upon disappointments, and consequently plunge us into vexation and discontent.

Are we mean and low? We need a meek and lowly, a calm and steady spirit; not affecting respect, or resenting the want of it; apt to pass over, or to bear quietly, affronts and neglect; not apt to be moved by words of contempt or disdain: else (being fretted with such things, which we may be sure often to meet with) we shall be uneasy, and impatiently wish a change of our state.

These, and the like dispositions, this duty containeth. From hence should arise such actions as these which follow:—

1. We should restrain our tongues from all expressions implying dissatisfaction in God's proceedings, or displeasure at his providence; arguing distrust in God; such as were those of the discontented Israelites: "They," saith the Psalmist, "spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rocks that the waters gushed out, and the streams

overflowed. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?" Such as they used, of whom the Prophet said, "When they shall be hungry, they will fret themselves, and curse their King and their GOD;" as those in the Apocalypse, who, being afflicted with deserved judgments, "did blaspheme the name of GOD, which had power over those plagues." Into such profane enormities is discontent apt to break forth, questioning the power of GOD, or his willingness to succour us; venting wrath and displeasure toward him; charging him foolishly with injustice, or with unkindness, or with negligence, or with impotency; the abstaining from which behaviour, under the sense of his bitter calamities, is a great commendation of JOB: "In all this," it is said, "JOB sinned not, neither charged GOD foolishly."

2. We should indeed forbear any the least complaint or murmuring, in regard to the dispensations of Providence, or upon dissatisfaction in the state allotted us. St. JUDE saith, that GOD in the last day will come "to execute judgment, and to convince men of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him; these," subjoineth he, "are, *γογγυσταί, μεμψίμοιροι*, murmurers, that complain" of their lot; which signifieth the heinousness and extreme danger of this practice. "Wherefore doth the living man complain?" is the Prophet's question; implying it to be an unreasonable and blameable practice. Wherefore the advice of DAVID is good; to suppress all complaint, to be still and silent in such cases. "Be still," saith he, "and know that I am GOD;" and, "Be silent to the LORD;" the which precepts his practice may seem well to interpret and back: "I was," saith he, "dumb, I opened not my mouth, because it was thy doing:" and accordingly JOB: "Behold," saith he, (after having considered all the reasons he could imagine of GOD's proceedings,) "I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." And thus our SAVIOUR, when "he was oppressed and afflicted, opened not his mouth."

3. Yea, it is our duty in these cases to spend our breath in declaring our satisfaction in God's dealing with us; acknowledging his wisdom, justice, and goodness therein; blessing and praising him for all that hath befallen us; each of us confessing, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me:" imitating JOB, who, upon the loss of all his goods, did say no more than this: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

4. We should abstain from all irregular and unworthy courses toward the removal or remedy of our needs or crosses, choosing rather to abide quietly under the pressure, than by any unwarrantable means to relieve ourselves; rather bearing patiently than violently, like those in the Prophet, "breaking our yoke, and bursting our bands. Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen, rather than affliction." We should rather continue poor, than by cozenage and rapine endeavour to raise our fortune; we should rather lie under disgrace and contempt, than by sinful and sordid compliances strive to acquire the favour of men; we should rather willingly rest in the lowest condition, than do as those, who by disturbing the world by fomenting disorders and factions, by supplanting their neighbours, by venting slanders and detractions, labour to increase their estate; we should rather endure any inconvenience, than have recourse to ways of evading them disallowed by God; doing as the Jews did, who in their straits, against the declared pleasure of God, "set their faces toward Egypt, strengthened themselves in the strength of PHARAOH, trusted in the staff of that broken reed." In neglect or diffidence toward God, to embrace such aids, is (as God in the Prophet declareth) a very mischievous folly. "Ephraim," saith he, "is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria: woe unto them, for they have fled from me; destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me." We may consider how ST. PAUL reproveth

the Corinthians for seeking a redress of wrong, scandalous and dishonourable to the Church: "Now therefore it is utterly a fault among you, that ye go to law one with another; why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Even to right ourselves in a way whereby any dishonour may come to God, or damage to his Church, is not to be approved; and better it is, in the Apostle's judgment, to bear any injury ourselves: "Better it is," saith ST. PETER, "if the will of God be so, that we suffer for well-doing than to do ill;" and, "Let them who suffer according, to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

5. We should, notwithstanding any adversity, proceed in our affairs (such as God requireth) with alacrity, courage, and industry; performing, however, so far as our circumstances permit, what is good and fit for us. No disappointment or cross, no straits or grievances, should render us listless or lazy, but rather quicken and inflame our activity; this being a good way to divert us from the sense of our misfortunes, and to comfort us under their pressure, as also the readiest way to remove or to abate them; to order the present well, whatever it may be, to march forward whither God calls, how difficultly or slowly it be, in a rough or dirty way. Not to yield to difficulties, but resolutely to encounter them, to endeavour with all our might to surmount them, are acts worthy of a christian courage: to direct ill accidents to good ends, and improve them to honest uses, is the work of a noble virtue. "Put thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good," is the Psalmist's advice in such a case; and it is a practice necessary to the procuring and maintaining content.

6. We should behave ourselves fairly and kindly toward the instruments of our adversity, toward those who brought us into it, and those who detain us under it, by keeping off relief, and those who forbear to afford the succour we expect; forbearing to express any wrath or displeasure, to exercise any revenge or enmity toward them, but rather,

even upon that score, bearing good will and expressing kindness toward them, not only as to our brethren, whom, according to the general law of charity, we are bound to love, but as to the servants of God in this particular case, and the instruments of his pleasure toward us ; considering, that by maligning or molesting them, we express displeasure at God's dealing with us, and in effect, through their sides wound his providence. Thus the holy Apostles, being reviled, did bless ; being defamed, did entreat. Thus our LORD demeaned himself toward his spiteful adversaries, who "when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed it to him that judgeth righteously."

In these and such like acts the duty of contentedness is especially employed and exercised ; and so much may suffice for the explication of its nature. I come now to consider the way of attaining it.

SERMON III.

OF CONTENTMENT.—PART II.

PHIL. iv. 11.

I have learned to be content.

BUT how may this be learned? I answer, chiefly, (divine grace concurring,) I. By understanding the rules wherein the practice thereof consisteth. II. By seriously considering and impressing upon our minds those inducements which are apt to persuade the practice thereof. These may be drawn from several heads: from GOD, from ourselves, from our particular condition or state, from the general state of men here, from the particular state of other men in comparison to ours, from the nature and consequences of the duty itself; every thing about us, well examined, will minister somewhat, by the grace of GOD inducing and assisting thereto.

I. In regard to GOD we may consider, that equity doth exact, and gratitude require, that we should be content; in being discontented we behave ourselves very unbecomingly and unworthily, are unjust, ungrateful, and foolish toward him.

1. Equity doth exact this of us, and in performing it we act justly toward GOD, both admitting his due right, and acknowledging his good exercise thereof. That saying in the Gospel, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" is a most evident maxim of equity; it is therefore the natural right and prerogative of GOD, (as the Creator and Preserver, and consequently the absolute Lord, Owner, and Governor of all things,) to assign his station, and allot his portion to every person,

as he judgeth good and convenient ; it is most just that inviolably he should enjoy this right ; he being also infinitely wise and good, it is likewise most just to acknowledge that he doth perfectly well manage this right. Now by submission to GOD's disposal of things, we express our due regard to both these, avowing his right, and approving his exercise thereof ; but by discontent, and regret at what happeneth, we do in effect injure GOD in both these respects, disavowing his right, and impeaching his management. We thereby so renounce his right, as in effect to invade it, and usurp it to ourselves ; signifying, that in our opinion things ought not to be ordered according to his judgment and pleasure, but after our fancy and humour ; we claim to ourselves the privilege of dispensing his goods, so as to be our own carvers, and to assume to ourselves so much as we think good ; we imply, that if we were able, we would extort the power out of his hands, and manage it ourselves, modelling the world according to our conceits and desires.

We do also (since we cannot but perceive the attempt of dispossessing GOD to be fruitless) in effect charge GOD with misdemeanor, with iniquity or infirmity in his distribution and disposal of things ; intimating, that in our opinion he doth not order them so justly or so wisely as might be, not so well as we in our wisdom and justice should order them ; for did we conceive them managed for the best, we could not but judge it most unreasonable to be aggrieved, or to complain : so heinously insolent and unjust are we in being discontent. In earnest, Which is most equal, that GOD should have his will, or we ? For shame we shall say, GOD. Why then do we not contentedly let him have it ?

It is indeed, if we consider it, the highest piece of injustice that we can be guilty of ; exceeding that which we commit in any other sort of disobedience. For as in any State, seditious mutinying is the greatest crime, as most directly violating the majesty, and subverting the authority of the Prince ; so in the world, none may be supposed

more to offend and wrong its Sovereign Governor, than such malecontents as dislike and blame' his proceedings. Even a Heathen could teach us, that it is our duty to subject our mind to Him that administereth all things, as good citizens to the law of the commonwealth ; if we do not, we are rebellious and seditious, which is the highest pitch of injustice towards our most gracious Sovereign.

Again, there can be no greater injury or affront offered to GOD, than to give him the lie, by questioning his veracity. This discontent plainly doth : for GOD hath expressly declared himself ready upon all occasions to do us good ; he hath promised to care for us, and never to forsake us, or leave us destitute ; which word of his, if we did not distrust, and take him to be unfaithful, we could not be discontent. As no man is displeased with his condition, or suspicious of want, who knoweth that he hath abundant supply of all he can need in a sure place,—that he hath a person most able, most willing, most faithful, engaged to succour him ; so did we believe GOD to be true, who hath promised to help us, we could not be discontented for fear of any want,

We must at least, in so doing, suspect GOD to be deficient in goodness towards us, or unwilling to help us ; or we must apprehend him impotent, and unable to perform what he hath promised for us ; like those infidels who said, “Can GOD furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread also, can he provide flesh for his people?”

2. Gratitude requireth of us this duty : for we having no right or title to any thing, all that we have coming from GOD's pure bounty,—He having upon us all, whatever our condition comparatively is, freely conferred many great benefits, common to all men among us ; (our being, life, reason, capacity of eternal happiness, manifold spiritual blessings, incomparably precious and excellent ;) we in all reason should be thankful for these, without craving more, or complaining for the want of other things : whereas also, all events (how cross soever to our sensual conceits

or appetites) are by **God** designed and dispensed for our good ; and gratitude requireth, that we should thank **God** for them, and not murmur against them.

Surely, if instead of rendering **God** thanks for all the excellent gifts, which he most liberally, without any previous obligation to us, or desert of ours, hath bestowed on us, and continueth to bestow, we fret, and quarrel with them, we are extremely ungrateful and disingenuous toward him. He hath made us capable of the greatest goods imaginable, and upon easy terms proffereth them to us ; he even tendereth himself, (himself, the immense and all-comprehending good, the fountain of all joy and bliss,) to be fully enjoyed by us ; his wisdom he offereth to instruct and guide us, his power to protect and guard us, his fulness to supply us, his goodness to comfort us ; he offereth his love and favour to us, in having which, we, in effect, have all things ; becoming thereby, in the highest degree, rich, and honourable, and happy. And is it not then outrageous unworthiness to prize any other thing, (any petty accommodation of this transitory life, any pitiful toy here,) so much as to be displeased for the want thereof ; as if all this were not enough to satisfy our needs, or satiate our desires ; as if, notwithstanding all these immense effusions of bounty upon us, we could be indigent or unhappy ? “ Shall we receive so much good from the bountiful hand of **God** ; and shall we not contentedly receive so small evils from him ? ” Evils in name, but not in reality ; at least not so in **God**'s design ; but rather things convenient and profitable for us ; which is another aggravation of our ingratitude. For,—

Are we not also ungrateful in misapprehending and disliking that which **God** doeth out of a gracious intention towards us ; in loathing his fatherly and friendly dispensations ; the fatherly chastisements and friendly disciplines, which he unwillingly is forced (is, I say, forced by his own great love, and by our pressing needs) to inflict upon us ? Surely our ill opinion of, or despising, as the **Wise Man** calleth it, these unpleasant blessings is no small fault,

neither will our not discerning, out of affected dulness, the wisdom of God's methods, and the wholesomeness of the means he useth to better us, excuse us from foul ingratitude.

3. Again, upon many accounts, reason farther dictateth, in respect to God, that we should be content; because it is most reasonable to acquiesce in God's choice of our state, He being infinitely more wise than we, and infinitely better understanding what is good for us than we can do; because He is well affected to us, and more truly loveth us than we do ourselves; because He hath a just right, and irresistible power to dispose of us, which whatever we can do, he will effectually make use of, whence it is extremely foolish to be discontent: foolish it is to be dissatisfied with the results of his wisdom, adhering to our vain apprehensions; foolish to distrust his goodness, in compliance with our fond self-love; foolish to contest his unquestionable right and uncontrollable power, having nothing but mere impotency to oppose against them; no less than downright madness it is to fret at that which we can in no wise help, to bark at that which lodgeth in heaven so far above us. If we think, that our displeasure will affect God, that our complaints will incline him to alter our condition, we conceit vainly, and without any ground; sooner may we, by our imagination, stop the tides of the sea, or turn the streams of rivers backward; sooner, by our cries, may we stay the sun, and change all the courses of the stars, than by our passionate resentments or moanful clamours we can check the current of affairs, or alter that state of things, which is by God's high decree established. Discontented behaviour will rather fasten our condition, or remove it into a worse place: as it highly doth offend God, and increaseth our guilt, so it moveth God to continue and to augment our evils. Thus lifting up our eyes to heaven, and considering all things with respect to God, will induce us to bear our case contentedly.

II. Again, reflecting upon ourselves, we may observe much reason to be content with our state; in whatever

capacity we look upon ourselves, we in duty are obliged to be so.

As creatures, we naturally are indigent and impotent, we have no just claim to any thing, nor any possession maintainable by our power ; all that we have or can have, cometh from pure bounty ; wherefore how little soever is allowed us, we have no wrong done us, nor can we justly complain thereat : such beggars as we are must not pretend to be choosers ; if any thing be given us we may be glad, we should be thankful. It is for those who have a right and a power to maintain it, to resent, if their due be withheld ; but for us that never had any thing which we could call our own ; that have no power to get or keep any thing ; for us that came into the world naked and defenceless, that live here in continual, absolute dependance for all our subsistence, to contest with him that maintaineth us, or to complain of his dealing, is ridiculously absurd.

Upon a moral account we have less reason to challenge ought, or to complain of any thing, for we deserve nothing but evil. If we rightly value ourselves, any thing will seem good enough for us, any condition better than we deserve. Duly examining the corruption of our nature, the depravedness of our hearts, the enormities of our lives, we cannot but apprehend, that we are unworthy even of the " crumbs which fall from our Master's table ; " we cannot but acknowledge, with the good Patriarch, that we are " less than the least of God's mercies." Considering our natural unworthiness, we deserve not so much as those common benefits without which we cannot subsist ; so that in regard to them we should be ready to acknowledge, " LORD, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man, that thou makest account of him ? " Trying our hearts, and examining our ways, we shall soon discover it to be abundant mercy, that we are not utterly deprived of all good things, stripped of all comforts, yea, dispossessed of our very being ; so that we are obliged to acknowledge, " It is of the LORD's mercies that we are

not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Were we far better than we are, yet it would not become us to contest with him, to whose disposal and judgment we are subject; as **JOB** teacheth us: "Behold," saith he, "**GOD** taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou? If he will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers stoop under him; how much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him; whom though I were righteous, I would not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge:" but for us, men so unrighteous and guilty, to debate with, to question the proceedings of, our Judge is much more unseemly.

Nothing can be more absurd, than for men so deeply indebted, than for sinners so obnoxious to wrath, to murmur in any state. Shall we, who are conscious to ourselves of so many sins against our **GOD**; who by wilful transgressions, or slothful neglects, have so much affronted and offended him; who have so little requited his love, and so much abused his patience; who have borne so little fruit, and rendered him so little service,—shall we be angry that our humour is not pleased in all things? Shall we affect to swim in plenty, to wallow in pleasure, to bask ourselves in ease, who deserve not the meanest competence; to whom it is a great favour that we are permitted to subsist, whom strict justice would often have cast into utter misery? It is not surely for such persons to be dissatisfied with any thing in this world, but to bless **GOD**'s exceeding mercy, that they abide on this side of the bottomless pit: it is their part, with submissive patience, to bear whatever is inflicted on them, humbly saying, "I will bear the indignation of the **LORD**, because I have sinned against him." Seeing, whatever our crosses or sufferings be, we cannot but confess to **GOD**, "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;" being in comparison to what was due to us, very favourably dealt with. Why should we be dissatisfied? If in such cases men should deal so favourably with us, we should be much pleased, and ready to thank them; why then should we take it ill

of God, when He even in his hardest proceedings against us, expresseth so much indulgence and mercy?

If we must be displeased and complain, we have reason rather to accuse ourselves, than to exclaim at Providence; for our evils are not so much the voluntary works of God, who “doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men,” as the natural products of our sins, which we willfully commit. It is, as the Prophet speaketh, “our sins that withhold good things from us;” and bring evil things upon us: “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.” We make adversity necessary or expedient for us; then we cry out upon it; we labour in planting, but cannot brook “the fruit of our doings. But wherefore doth the living man complain for the punishment of his sins?”

We may farther, looking on ourselves, consider ourselves as servants to God, absolutely subject to his disposal; and shall any servant presume to choose his place, or determine his rank in the family? Shall he appoint to himself what office he will discharge, what he will do, and how he shall be accommodated? Is it not fit that all these things should be left to our Master’s discretion? Is it not reasonable that we should thoroughly acquiesce in his determination? Even a pagan Philosopher could teach us this, who thus piously directeth his speech to God: ‘For the rest, use me to what thou pleasest. I consent unto thee, and am indifferent. I refuse nothing which seemeth good to thee; lead me whither thou wilt; put on me what garment thou pleasest. Wilt thou have me to be a governor or a private man, to stay at home or be banished, to be poor or to be rich? I will, in respect to all these things, apologize for thee with men.’ Thus did **EPICETUS** say; and such speech well becometh our relation to God. Servants should be content with their master’s appointments and allowances; they should not only themselves forbear to find fault with, but be ready to maintain, his proceedings against any, who shall presume to blame them; especially such servants as we are, who,

“after we have done all things commanded us, must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants:” such as can bring no benefit to our LORD, or anywise advance his state; such as therefore cannot challenge any wages from him, more than he, out of mere favour, is pleased to allow. Could we by our labours enrich GOD, or raise him in dignity, it might seem congruous that he should answerably reward us; but as he getteth nothing by us, so we cannot require any thing from him: Our best services indeed rather need pardon, than deserve any reward. No man hath lived so well, that he can pretend any thing from GOD, that he is not indeed much behindhand in his accounts with GOD, having received from GOD far more of benefit than he can return to him in service: no man, without extreme presumption, can offer to prescribe in what measure, or what manner, GOD should reward him.

Again, if we consider ourselves as the children of GOD, either by nature, or by adoption and grace, how can we be discontent for any thing? Have we not thence great reason to hope, or rather to be confident, that we shall never want any good thing necessary and convenient for us? For is not GOD by paternal disposition inclined, is he not in a manner, by paternal duty, engaged, in all needful occasions, to supply and succour us? Can we, without great profaneness, surmise that he, who is so immensely good, will be a bad, an unkind, or a neglectful Father to us? No; as there is no other father in goodness comparable to him; so none, in real effects of benignity, can come near him: so our LORD assureth us: “If ye,” saith he, “being evil, know how to give good things to your children; how much more will your heavenly FATHER give good things to his children that ask him?”

If we consider ourselves as Christians, we have still more reason to practise this duty: As such, we are not only possessed of goods abundantly sufficient to satisfy our desires; we have hopes able to raise our minds above the sense of all present things; we have entertainments that ever may divert our minds, and fill our hearts with com-

fort ; but we have also an assurance of competent supplies of temporal goods : for, “godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise both of the present life, and that which is to come ;” and, “If we seek first the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us.” It is indeed strangely unhandsome for a Christian ever to droop or to be disconsolate ; for a friend of God, and an heir of heaven, to think he wants any thing, or fear that he shall ever want ; for him, whose treasure and heart are above, to be so concerned with any thing here.

Wherefore, considering ourselves, our capacities, our relations, our actions, it is most reasonable to be content with whatever doth befall us.

Farther, if we consider our condition, be it what it will, how poor, how mean, how despicable soever, we can have from it no reasonable ground of discontent.

1. Our condition in this world cannot, if rightly estimated, and well managed, be extremely bad ; nothing here can occur insupportable ; we cannot, if we please, want any thing considerable, the defect whereof may not be supplied, or supported by far better enjoyments. If we have high opinions of some things, as very excellent or needful for us, it is no wonder, if we want them, that our condition is unpleasant ; if we take other things for huge evils, then, if they be on us, we can hardly escape being displeased ; but if we thoroughly look through such things and scan them exactly, valuing them, not according to sense or fancy, but according to sound reason, we may find, that neither the absence of the former, nor the presence of the latter, doth render our case deplorable.

We are, for instance, poor : and what great harm in this ? It is a state which hath its no small conveniences, which freeth us from many cares and distractions, from many troubles and crosses, from many incumbrances, dangers, temptations, many sore distempers of body and soul, many grievous mischiefs, to which wealth is exposed ; which maintaineth health, industry, and sobriety ; disposeth

us to feed heartily, to move nimbly, to sleep sweetly; which preserveth us from luxury, from satiety, from sloth, and unwieldiness. It is a state, which many have borne with great cheerfulness; many wise men have voluntarily embraced; which is allotted by divine wisdom to most men, and which the best men often endure; to which GOD hath declared an especial regard; which the MOUTH of Truth hath proclaimed happy; which the SON of GOD hath dignified by his choice, and sanctified by his partaking deeply thereof: and can such a condition be very loathsome, can it reasonably displease us?

Again, thou art, suppose, fallen into disgrace, or, from honour and credit, art depressed into a state of contempt. This also, rightly prized, is no such wretchedness: for what doth this import? What, but a change of opinion in giddy men, which thou dost not feel, which thou art not concerned in, if thou pleasest; which thou never hadst reason much to regard, or at all to rely upon? What is thy loss therein? It is the breaking of a bubble, the sinking of a wave, the changing of a wind: what is honour, but thought; and what more flitting, what sooner gone away, than a thought? And why art thou displeased at the loss of a thing so very slender? If thou didst know its nature, thou canst not be disappointed; if thou didst not, it was worth thy while to be thus informed by experience, that thou mayest not any more regard it. Is the contempt thou hast incurred, from thy fault? Bear the consequence thereof patiently, and do thy best by removing the cause to reverse the effect. Is it undeserved? Be satisfied in thy innocence, and be glad that thou art above the injustice of those that contemn thee. Let thy affections rather be employed in pity of theirs, than in displeasure for thy own case.

But thou art perhaps troubled because thou art wrongfully censured, odiously traduced and defamed, abused by slander, which asperseth thee with things whereof thou art no wise guilty, or representeth thee in a character unworthy of thee? Be it so: what then?

Is not every man subject to these things? Are not the greatest men, the wisest, the best, liable to the same? Yea, chiefly liable, excellency being the special mark of envy and obloquy. Can any good men escape free of them among so many bad men, whose doings, as goodness doth reproach, so it provoketh their malignity? Canst thou imagine to pass thy days in so unjust a world, without incurring such usage? Can so many vain, so many bold, so many lawless tongues be tied up, or kept within compass of truth or equity? Wilt thou suffer it to be in the power of any man, at his pleasure, so easily to discompose thee? Because he will be bad, shalt thou be miserable? Why dost thou not rather please thyself in thy innocence, and clearness from the blame which they impose on thee? Why dost thou not rather pity their unhappiness, who stoop to so base practices? They do themselves far more mischief, than they can do thee.

And why dost thou not consider, that thou art really guilty of many faults, and full of imperfections, so that no man can easily derogate from thee more than thou deservest. He may indeed tax thee unjustly, he may miss in the particulars of his charge, he may discover groundless ill-will toward thee; but thou knowest thyself to be a grievous sinner, and it is just that thou shouldst be reproached: (GOD, for thy humiliation or thy correction, may have ordered him, as DAVID said of SHIMEI, to curse thee:) thou hast therefore more need to be humble in reflection on thyself, than to swell with disdain in regard to his injury.

Thou shouldst improve his dealings, and make it wholesome to thee, by taking occasion thence to correct thy real faults; that so thy conscience may be a firm bulwark against all detraction. In fine, satisfy thyself by "committing thy soul with patience in well doing," unto thy Judge, who assuredly will do thee right, will protect thy reputation, and clear thy innocence: His judgment is only worth regarding; be little concerned with any other.

Again, being disappointed and crossed in the success of

their undertakings, is wont to put men, as they conceive, into a woeful case. But why so? Why didst thou build upon uncertainties? Didst thou not foresee a possibility, that thy design might miscarry? and if so, why art thou not prepared to receive what happeneth? Didst thou refer the business to GOD's disposal? If not, thou deservest to be crossed, and rather confess thy fault, than complain of thy fortune; if thou didst, then be consistent with thyself, and acquiesce in his determination. If thou so improvest thy disappointment, thou art a gainer by the loss; thou dost more than conquer by thy defeat. However, since the gain, the credit, the preferment thou hast missed, are things in themselves of no great value, and such as thou mayest well live without, as other good men have done, thou canst not have much reason to be displeas'd upon this account.

But friends, will some men say, have been unkind, have been ungrateful, have been fickle and false, have neglected, deserted, betrayed me; "It was not an enemy that reproach'd me, then I could have borne it." This indeed is commonly most grievous; yet, being scanned, will not render a man's condition so lamentable; for, such misbehaviour of friends is more their calamity than ours. The loss of bad friends is no damage, but an advantage: it is but the loss of a mischief and a trouble. The fewer we have of such, the more time we save, the less trouble we meet with, the greater security we enjoy. The kindness we have showed, the obligations we have put on such, are not quite lost; they will bring a reward. And if all other friendships should fail, there is one remains, worth millions of other friends, who can never prove unfaithful or inconstant, who never will be unmindful of us, or deficient in kindness.

The death of friends doth, it may be, oppress thee with sorrow.

But canst thou lose thy best Friend; canst thou lose the presence, the conversation, the protection, the advice, the succour of GOD? Is he not immortal, is he not

immutable, is he not inseparable from thee? Canst thou be destitute of friends, whilst He stands by thee? Is it not an heinous indignity to him, to behave thyself as if thy happiness, thy welfare, thy comfort, had dependance on any other but Him? Is it not a great fault to be unwilling to part with any thing when He calleth for it?

Neither is it a loss of thy friend, but a separation of a small time; he is only parted from thee as taking a little journey; within a while we shall be sure to meet again, and joyfully to congratulate in a better place: *præmisimus, non amisimus*; we have sent him thither before, not quite lost him from us.

Thy friend, if he be a good man, (and in such friendships only we can have true satisfaction,) is himself in no bad condition; thou canst not therefore reasonably grieve for him; and to grieve only for thyself is perverse selfishness.

But thou hast lost a great comfort of thy life, and advantage to thy affairs here. Is it truly so? Is it indeed an irreparable loss, even secluding the consideration of GOD, whose friendship repaireth all possible loss? What is it, I pray, that was pleasant, convenient, or useful to thee in thy friend, which may not in good measure be supplied here? Was it a sense of hearty good will, was it a sweet freedom of conversation, was it sound advice or kind assistance in thy affairs? And mayest thou not find those left, which are alike able and willing to minister those benefits? May not the same means, which knit him to thee, conciliate others to thee? He did not surely possess all the good nature and wisdom in the world, nor hath carried them all away with him: other friends thou mayest find to supply his room: is it not, therefore, a fond and unaccountable affection, rather than want of a real convenience that disturbeth thee?

But farther, it perhaps displeaseth us, that the course of the world doth not go right; that justice is not well dispensed; that virtue is not considered; that industry is not rewarded; that innocence and modesty are trampled upon; that favour, partiality, corruption, flattery, craft, impu-

dence, carry all before them ; devouring all the encouragements due to honest industry. This may be, but art thou guilty of contributing to this ? Then mend ; if not, then bear ; especially seeing thou canst not help it : for so it hath always been, and ever will be in the world, that things never have gone there as the best men desire. There never have been good men enough to sway the world ; nor will the few good men that are, be so active in promoting public good, as bad are in driving on their private designs. Doth not this course of things necessarily spring from the nature of men, which therefore we should no more be vexed at, than for that a serpent hath poison, or that a wasp hath a sting ? We cannot wonder at it ; why then should we be strangely affected by it ? Could any man ever have been pleased, if this were a sufficient cause of displeasure ? However the world goes, GOD is engaged to provide for us ; and that should satisfy us. GOD observeth these things no less than we, and he can easily hinder them ; yet he thinketh good to suffer them ; and shall not we do so likewise ? There is, in fine, appointed a judgment, when all these things shall be set straight ; when virtue shall triumph, when integrity and industry shall find their due recompense : It is but a moment to that time, and until then we may rest satisfied.

Thus, if we rightly state things which cause discontent, we shall find, that not from the things, but from ourselves, all the mischief proceeds. We by our imagination give to the lightest things a weight, and swell the smallest things into a vast bulk ; we fancy them very frightful and doleful, then we tremble and grieve at them. Mere names (the names of poverty, of disgrace, of defeat) scare us, without consulting reason : we follow silly prejudices, judging that highly good which the vulgar admireth ; that very evil which the weakest sort of men complain of : hence so commonly doth our case seem grievous. But in truth there is no condition so bad, but if we manage it well and wisely, if we moderate our passions about it, if we vigilantly embrace and enjoy the advantages thereof, may be easily

supportable, yea comfortable to us; it is our fond conceits, our froward humours, our perverse behaviours, which create the trouble that imbittereth every state; which from any slight occasion doth create vexation, and turneth every event into disaster.

2. As there is no condition here perfectly and purely good, (not deficient in some conveniences, not blended with some troubles,) so there is none so thoroughly bad, that it hath not somewhat convenient and comfortable therein: Seldom or never all good things forsake a man at once, or all mischiefs together assail him; somewhat usually abideth, which well improved, or wisely enjoyed, may satisfy a man, yea render his estate comparable to theirs, who, to vulgar eyes, appear to be in the best condition. There is in every condition somewhat of good compensating its evils, and reducing it to a balance with other more plausible states. We are, suppose, in poverty, (that instance I propound usually, as the most ordinary ground of discontent,) but have we therewith good health? Then most rich men may envy us, and reasonably we should not exchange our state with many crazy Princes. Have we therewith our liberty? That is an inestimable good, which often the greatest men would have purchased with heaps of gold. Have we therein a quiet mind? It is that which wise men have prized above any wealth. Have we friends? That is more than the richest persons can assure themselves of; to whom it is impossible to distinguish the friends of their person from the flatterers of their fortune: it is a privilege which Princes are hardly capable to arrive at. Have we just sufficient to maintain our life? We thereby keep our appetites in better compass, and our faculties in greater vigour; we thence better relish all things; we, in consequence thereof, avoid the burdens, the diseases, the vices of sloth and luxury. Why then, if our poor state hath so manifold conveniences, do we so much distaste it? Why do we so dwell on the inconveniences, overlooking the benefits we may enjoy thereby? This indeed ordinarily is our folly, that the want of any little thing which we fancy,

doth hinder us from satisfaction in all other things : one dead fly causeth all our ointment to stink ; the possession of a kingdom will not keep us from being heavy and displeased, as **AHAB** was, if we cannot acquire a small vineyard near us. So capriciously and unaccountably prone are we to discontent.

3. Is our condition, let me ask again, so extremely bad, that it cannot be worse ? Are we sunk to the bottom of all calamity ? No surely ; God's providence will not suffer that to be. But however, let us imagine our case to be the worst that can be,—that a confluence of all temporal mischiefs hath arrived,—that we are utterly bereaved of all comforts this world afforded,—that we are stripped of all our wealth, quite sunk in our reputation, deserted of every friend, deprived of our health and our liberty,—that all the losses, all the disgraces, all the pains which poor **JOB** sustained, or far more than those, have together seized on us, yet we cannot have sufficient reason to be discontent ; for nevertheless we have goods left us in our hands, or within our reach, far surpassing all those goods we have lost, much outweighing the evils we undergo. When the world hath done its worst, we remain masters of things incomparably better than it, and all it containeth, the possession whereof may, and (if we be wise) will, abundantly satisfy us. We are men still, and have our reason left behind, which alone, in worth, exceedeth all the treasures of the world ; we may have a good conscience left, and that is “a continual feast,” yielding a far more solid pleasure than the most ample revenue can afford ; we may have hope in **GOD**, the author of all good things, and thereby far greater assurance of our convenient subsistence and welfare than all present possessions can bestow ; we have reserved a free access to the throne of grace, and thereby a sure means, grounded on **GOD**'s infallible promise, of obtaining whatever is good for us ; we have a firm right to innumerable spiritual blessings, each of them justly valuable beyond whole worlds ; we can, in a word, enjoy **GOD**'s favour, which immensely transcendeth

all other enjoyments, which vastly more than counter-vaileth the absence of all other things; of this, by applying ourselves to the love and service of GOD, we are infallibly capable; of this no worldly force or fortune can despoil us; we having this, our condition cannot be poor, contemptible, or pitiful; it is indeed thereby most rich, glorious, and happy: for how can he be poor that hath the LORD of all things always ready to supply him; who hath GOD (as the Psalmist is wont to speak) to be "his portion for ever?" How can he be despicable, that hath the honour to have the Sovereign Majesty of the world for his especial friend? How can he be miserable, who enjoyeth the fountain of all happiness; who hath "the light of GOD's countenance to cheer him;" who hath the consolations of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT to refresh and revive him? What can he want, who, besides his present interest in all the needful effects of GOD's bountiful love, is an heir of heaven? Seeing therefore it is in our power to be religious,—seeing we may, if we will, (GOD's grace concurring, which preventeth us to seek, which never is withheld from those who seek it,) be good Christians,—seeing nothing can hinder us from fearing GOD, or can separate us from his love; neither can any thing render our condition bad or unhappy, really distressed or needy. "O fear the LORD," saith the Psalmist; "for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

Why, then, are we discontent? What do we groan or grieve for? What is it that we want? Is it virtue, is it GOD's favour? Then indeed we have good cause to be displeased; but if we do want them, it is only ourselves that we should complain of; for we may have them if we will, and who can help it if we will not? If we shall wilfully deprive ourselves of them, who will be concerned to mind our complaints? But is it only money, or honour, or pleasure that we need? Is it that we cannot feed so delicately, or so finely clothe our backs, or so thoroughly soothe our fancies as we could wish, that we so pitifully

moan? Is it that we are slighted, that we are crossed in some design, which so discomposeth us? Then are we sottishly fond and childish: for proper it is to children, when they want no solid goods, to wail for worthless toys; it is for children, when they have not their will in petty matters, to cry and lament; children are much affected with every word or little show that crosseth them. If we were (as ST. PAUL chargeth us to be) perfect men,—if we had manly judgments and manly affections, we should not so value any of these transitory things, either good or evil, as by the want of one, or the presence of the other, to be much disturbed; we should, with ST. PAUL, style any present evil, τὸ ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως, “a lightness of affliction.” We should, with him, reckon, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glories which shall be revealed to us;” we should, with ST. PETER, “greatly rejoice, though for a season we are in heaviness through manifold trials,” or afflictions; we should esteem any condition here very tolerable, yea, very good.

4. In truth, (if we can bear truth sounding like a paradox,) usually our condition is better when it seemeth worse; then we have most cause to be glad, when we are aptest to grieve; then we should be thankful, when we complain: that it appeareth otherwise to us, is because we ordinarily judge (or rather not judge, but fancy) like beasts, prizing things merely according to present sense or show, not examining their intrinsic natures or consequences.

Adversity is the thing which we chiefly loathe; whereas, in true judgment, nothing commonly is more necessary, more wholesome, more beneficial to us; nothing is more needful or conducive to the health of our soul, and our real happiness; it is the school of wisdom, wherein our minds are disciplined and improved in the knowledge of the best things, whence it is termed παιδεία, that is, instructive chastisement. So DAVID found it: “It is,” said he, “good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;” and our LORD himself, ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν

ἐπαθε, “learned obedience from what he suffered.” It is the academy wherein virtue is acquired and exercised: so **GOD** meant it to his people: “**THE LORD thy GOD,**” saith **MOSES**, “led thee this forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee and prove thee.” So the **Wise Man** saith, that “by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better;” and, “it yieldeth,” saith the **Apostle**, “the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.”

It is the furnace of the soul, wherein it is tried, cleansed, and refined from the dross of perverse humours, of vicious distempers: “When,” saith **JOB**, “he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold;” and “gold,” saith the **Wise Man**, “is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.”

It is the method whereby **GOD** reclaimeth sturdy sinners to goodness, engageth them to seek and serve himself; so of the Israelites the **Prophet** saith, “**LORD**, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them;”—so **MANASSEH**, “when he was in affliction, besought the **LORD** his **GOD**, and humbled himself greatly before the **GOD** of his fathers;”—so **NEBUCHADNEZZAR**, after being driven from his kingdom, “his understanding returned unto him, and he blessed the **Most High**, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever;”—so **DAVID** himself: “Before,” said he, “I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.”

It is that whereby **GOD** doth prepare men for the blessed rewards hereafter. “Our light affliction,” saith **ST. PAUL**, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;” and, “ye,” saith **ST. PETER**, “greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour at the appearing of **JESUS CHRIST.**” Such is the nature, such the use, such the fruits of adversity.

It is indeed scarce possible, that without tasting it somewhat deeply, any man should become in good measure either wise or good. He must be very ignorant of himself, of his own temper and inclinations, of the strength and force of his reason, who hath not met with some crosses to try himself and them with; the greater part of things he must little understand, who hath not experienced the worst part; he can be no good pilot in matters of human life, who hath not some time sailed in a rough sea, in foul weather, among sands and shelves; he could have no good opportunity of employing thoroughly, or improving his wit, his courage, his industry, who hath had no straits to extricate himself from, no difficulties to surmount, no hardships to sustain; the virtues of humility, of patience, of contentedness, must be unknown to him to whom no disgraces, no wants, no pains, have arrived, by well enduring which, these are planted in the soul; scarce can he be charitable or compassionate to others, who never himself hath felt any distress. Our SAVIOUR himself suffered tribulation, that he might be merciful, and disposed to succour the afflicted: and how can he express his love to GOD, who is not (in submission to GOD'S will, and for his sake) put to suffer any thing grievous, or want any thing desirable? When can he employ any great faith or hope in GOD, who never hath any visible need of succour from him, who hath other aids to confide in? How can he thoroughly relish spiritual things, whose appetites are glutted with other delights? What but deprivation of these things can lay open the vanity, the deceitfulness, and slipperiness of them? What but the want of these satisfactions can drive us to seek our felicity elsewhere? When the deceit of riches possesseth us, how can we judge right of things? When their snares entangle us, and their clogs encumber us, how can we be free in doing good? When abundance fatteneth our hearts, and ease softeneth our spirits, and success puffeth up our minds;—when pride, sensuality, and sloth, the almost inseparable adherents to large estates, continually

insinuate themselves into us, what wisdom, what virtue, are we like to have ?

Seeing, then, adversity is so wholesome and useful, the remedy of so great mischiefs, the cause of so great benefits, why should we be displeased therewith ? To be displeased therewith, is to be displeased with that which is most needful, most convenient for us ; to be displeased that we are rescued from errors and vices, with all their train of miseries and mischiefs ; that we are not detained under the reign of folly and wickedness ; that we are not inevitably made fools and beasts. To be disgusted with Providence for affliction or poverty, is no other than as if we should be angry with our Physician for administering a purge, or prescribing abstinence to us ; as if we should fret at our Surgeon for searching our wounds, or applying needful corrosives ; as if we should complain of the hand which draweth us from a precipice, or pulleth us out of the fire. ‘Many benefits,’ saith **SENECA**, ‘have a sad and rough countenance, as to burn and cut in order to healing.’ Such a benefit of **GOD** is adversity to us ; and as such, with a thankful mind, should we receive it.

If with a diligent observation we consult experience, we shall find, that as many have great cause to bewail that they have been rich,—that they have been blinded and corrupted with prosperity,—that they have received their consolation here ; so many have great reason to be glad that they have been poor ; that they have been disappointed ; that they have tasted the bitter cup : it having instructed and corrected them ; it having rendered them sober and serious, industrious and frugal, mindful of **GOD**, and devout towards him : and what we may rejoice in, when past, why should we not bear contentedly when present ? Why should not the expectation of such good fruits satisfy us ?

Why should not such a condition, being so plainly better in itself, seem also better unto us ? We cannot, if we are reasonable, but approve it in our judgment ; why, then, are we not fully reconciled to it in our affection ?

SERMON IV.

OF CONTENTMENT:—PART III.

PHIL. iv. 11.

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

5. BUT farther: Let our state be what it will, good or bad, joyful or unpleasant, we may yet consider, that it cannot be desperate, it may not be lasting; for there is not any necessary connexion between the present and the future: wherefore, as the present, being momentary, can little trouble us, so the future, being uncertain, should not dismay us. As no man reasonably can be elevated with confidence in a good state, presuming on its duration; (“boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth;”) so no man should be dejected for a bad one, in suspicion that it will abide long; seeing neither (considering the frequent vicissitudes that occur) is in itself stable; and the continuance of each absolutely dependeth on God’s arbitrary disposal: and as God often doth overturn prosperity, to human judgment most firmly grounded, so he most easily can redress the most forlorn adversity; and, being especially “the helper of the helpless,” he doth frequently perform it. “He casteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble and meek. He sendeth the rich empty away, and filleth the hungry with good things.” “He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

Considering, therefore, the reason of things, and the nature of God, if our state be at present sorrowful, we have more reason to hope for its amendment, than to fear

its continuance. If, indeed, things went on in a fatal track, merely according to a stiff and unalterable necessity; if there were no remedy from God's Providence, or support by his grace to be expected, (although even then complaint would be vain, because fortune and fate are deaf,) yet our infirmity might somewhat excuse that idle proceeding; but since "not a sparrow falleth to the ground, not a hair of our head perisheth," nothing at all passeth, otherwise than by the voluntary disposition of a most wise and gracious God; since he doth always strictly view, and is very sensible of our griefs; yea, doth in a manner sympathize with them, according to those pathological expressions in the Prophets: "His bowels sound and are troubled,"—"His heart is turned within him,"—"In all their afflictions he was afflicted:" Since he farther hath by promise obliged himself to care for us, to support and succour us, we have all reason to hope, yea, firmly to believe, (if at least we can find in our hearts to hope and to believe,) that we shall, as soon as it is good and expedient for us, find relief and ease; we shall have that *εὐκαιρὸν βοήθειαν*, that "seasonable succour," of which the Apostle to the Hebrews speaketh.

Hope lieth at the bottom of the worst condition that can be: "The poor," saith JOB's friend, "hath hope;" and the rich can have no more: the future being equally close to both. The one can have no greater assurance to keep what he hath, than the other hath to get what he needeth: yea, clearly, the poor hath the advantage in the case; for God hath more declared, that he will relieve the poor man's want, than that he will preserve the rich man's store. If then we have in every condition a hope, why do we grieve as those who have no hope? Having ever ready the best anchor that can be to rest upon, (for in this rolling sea of human affairs, there is no firmer anchor than hope,) why do we let our minds be tossed with discontentful sollicitudes and fears? Why do we not rather, (as the Apostle enjoineth,) "rejoice in hope," than grieve in despair? Why do we not (as the Prophet adviseth)

“hope, and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD?” The effect of so reposing ourselves on GOD’S Providence, would be, content and peace, according to that of the Prophet,—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.”

It is very observable, that most discontent ariseth not from the sense of incumbent evil, but from suspicion or fear of somewhat to come. Although GOD at present dispenseth a competency of food and raiment; although we are in a tolerable condition, and feel no extremity of want or pain; yet not desecring the way of future provision for us, answerable to our desires, we trouble ourselves: which demeanour implieth great ignorance and infidelity. We must have somewhat in hand, or we cannot trust GOD for the future. This is that which our SAVIOUR cautioned against: “Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient to the day is the evil thereof:” An advice no less pious than full of reason and wisdom: for what a folly is it to anticipate that evil we would avoid; then, when we earnestly desire to put off sorrow, to pull it toward us; to feel that mischief which possibly shall never be; to give it a being in our fancy, which it may never have in nature? Could we follow this advice,—never resenting evils before they come, never pre-judging GOD’S Providence, constantly depending on the divine care, not taking false alarms, and trembling at things which shall never come near us, not being disturbed with panic fears,—no discontent could ever seize upon us; for the present is ever supportable: our mind cannot be overwhelmed by the pangs of a transitory moment.

6. But farther: Suppose our condition will certainly hold on; yet consider, it soon will cease: since we are mortal, our evils cannot be perpetual; we cannot long be infested with them.

As it may embitter all the prosperity in the world, to consider that it is fading and short-lived; that its splendour is but a blaze, its pleasures but a flash, its joy but as the

crackling of thorns ; so it should sweeten any adversity, to remember that it is passing away, and suddenly will be gone. Put the worst case that can be ; that those things which cause our displeasure, should continue through our whole life ; yet our life itself will soon be spun out, and with it all our worldly evils will vanish. What is said of ourselves must be applied to them : “ They flee like a shadow, and continue not ; they are winds passing and coming not again ; they are vapours appearing for a little time, and vanishing away ; they wither like grass, and fade away as a leaf ; ” they may die before us, they cannot out-live us : our life is but a hand-breadth ; and can then our evils have any vast bulk ? Our age is as nothing, and can any crosses therein be any great matter ? How can any thing so very short be very intolerable ?

We have but a narrow strait of time to pass over, and we shall land on the firm and vast continent of eternity ; when we shall be freed from all the troublesome agitations, from all the perilous storms, from all the nauseous qualms of this navigation : Death (which may be very near, which cannot be far off) is a sure haven from all the tempests of life ; a safe refuge from all the persecutions of the world ; an infallible medicine of all the diseases of our mind, and of our state : it will enlarge us from all restraints ; it will discharge all our debts ; it will ease us from all our toils ; it will stifle all our cares ; it will veil all our disgraces ; it will still all our complaints, and bury all our disquiets ; it will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and all sorrow from our hearts ; it perfectly will level all conditions, setting the high and low, the rich and poor, the wise and ignorant, all together, upon even ground, smothering all the pomp and glories, swallowing all the wealth and treasures of the world.

It is, therefore, but holding out a while, and all our molestation will expire : Time certainly will cure us ; but it is better that we should owe that benefit to faith, and let it presently comfort us.

Serious reflection upon our mortality, is, upon many

accounts, a powerful antidote against discontent ; being apt to extirpate the causes thereof.

It is because we admire these worldly things, that we so much grieve for the want of them : this will quell that admiration ; for how can we admire them, if we consider how transitory they are ? How can we deem them much worth, when we must very soon quite part with them ?

How can we dote upon the world, seeing “ the world,” as ST. JOHN saith, “ passeth away, and the desire thereof ? ”

How can we value any worldly glory, since “ all the glory of men is,” as ST. PETER telleth us, “ as the flower of the grass ; ” since, as the Psalmist saith, “ Man in honour abideth not, but is like the beasts that perish ? ”

How can we set our heart on riches, considering that “ riches are not for ever,” nor can (as the Wise Man saith) “ deliver from death ; ” that (as ST. JAMES admonisheth) “ the rich man fadeth in his ways ; ” that it may be said to any rich man, as it was to him in the Gospel, “ Thou fool, this night shall thy life be required of thee,”—and what thou hast prepared, to whom shall it fall ? How can we fancy pleasure, seeing however we eat, or drink, or play, the morrow we die ?

How can we admire any secular wisdom and knowledge, seeing it is true of every man, that “ his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish : ” particularly it is seen that wise men die no otherwise than as the foolish and brutish person perisheth ; and “ there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we are going ? ”

Do we admire the condition of those, who upon the stage appear in the state of kings, act the part of wealthy men, talk gravely and wisely like judges or philosophers for an hour or two ? If we do not admire those shadows and mockeries of State, why do we admire any appearances upon this theatre of the world, which are scarce a whit less deceitful, or more durable than they ?

Is it an envious or disdainful regret at the advantages of others before us, (as we conceit, no more worthy than ourselves,) that gnaweth our heart? Is it, that such persons are more wealthy, more honourable, in greater favour or repute than we? The consideration, how little time those slender pre-eminences will last, may (if better remedies want due efficacy) serve toward rooting out that disease. The Psalmist doth several times prescribe it: "Fret not thyself," saith he, "against evil doers; neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb:" and again, "Be not afraid when one is made rich, and when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." So whatever doth breed discontent, the reflection upon our mortal state may be a help to remove it.

7 I shall, in reference to our condition, and the nature of those things which cause our discontent, purpose but one consideration more: What is that we want or wait for? Is it any good we want, which by our industry we can procure; is it any evil that afflicteth us, which by the like means we can evade? If it be so, why then do we not vigorously apply ourselves to the business; why do we not, instead of ineffectual complaints, use the means offered for our relief?

But if we grieve, because we cannot obtain some good above our reach, or decline some unavoidable evil, what do we thereby but palpably express our folly, and wilfully heighten our woe; adding voluntary displeasure to the heap of necessary want or pain; impressing more deeply on ourselves the sense of them? In such a case, patience is instead of a remedy, which, though it do not thoroughly cure the malady, yet it alleviateth it, preventing many bad symptoms.

But farther, to allay our discontents, let us consider the world and general state of men here.

1. Look first upon the world, as it is commonly ordered

by men. Thou, perhaps, art displeas'd that thou dost not prosper therein ; that thou dost not share in the goods of it ; that thy pretences are not satisfied, and thy designs fail : this thou dost take to be somewhat hard and unequal, and therefore art griev'd. But if thou art wise, thou shouldest not wonder ; if thou art good, thou shouldest not be vexed ; for thou hast not, perhaps, any capacity for this world ; as it is, thy temper and disposition are not fram'd to suit with its way : thy principles and rules clash with it ; thy resolutions and designs do not well comport with prosperity here ; thou canst not, or wilt not, use the means needful to compass worldly ends : thou perhaps hast a meek, quiet, modest, sincere, steady disposition ; thou canst not be pragmatrical and boisterous, eager and fierce, importunately troublesome, intolerably confident, unaccountably various. Thou hast certain notions about right and wrong, certain fancies about another world, which thou dost stiffly adhere to, and which have an influence upon thy actions : thou hast a squeamish conscience, which cannot relish this, cannot digest that advantageous course of proceeding : thou hast a spice of generosity, which maketh divers profitable ways of acting (such as forging and feigning, supplanting others by detraction and calumny, soothing and flattering people) to be unworthy of thee : thou art resolv'd to observe strict rules of justice, of humanity, of charity ; to speak as thou meanest ; to do as thou wouldest be done to ; to wrong no man ; to consider the case of other men as thine own : thou carriest on thy designs by fair ways, nor canst be drawn to use any other, how seemingly needful soever, which savour of fraud, violence, any sort of wrong or baseness : thou art, in fine, like *HELVILIUS PRISCUS* in thy dealings, *pervicax recti* ; wilfully honest : such an one perhaps thou art, and such is thy way : and canst thou hope to be any body ? Shall such a conscientious simpleton pretend to any thing here ? No ; thou art here *piscis in arido* ; out of thy element : this world is not for thee to thrive in.

2. This world is for worldlings to possess. ' It was

(say the Rabbins) made for the presumptuous.' Although **GOD** did not design it for them, yet men have almost made it so: they are best qualified to thrive in it, who can lustily bustle and scramble; who can shrewdly overreach and undermine others; those slippery wily artists, who can veer any whither with any wind; those men of impregnable confidence, who can insist upon any pretences; who can be indefatigably and irresistibly urgent, nor will be repulsed or baffled by any means; those who have a temper so lax and supple, that they can bend it to any compliance advantageous to them; who have a spirit so limber, that they can stretch it any whither; who have face enough, and conscience little enough to do any thing; who have no certain principles, but such as will sort with their interests: "Behold, (saith the Psalmist,) these prosper in the world, and increase in riches: they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish."

But for thee, why dost thou jumble such inconsistencies together, as the eager desire of this, and the hopes of another, world? It becometh not such a gallant to whine and pule. If thou wilt be brave, be brave indeed; be not double-hearted; think not of arriving to the happiness of the other world, and attaining prosperity in this. Leave rather this world to those who are more fit for it, who venture so much, and take such pains for it. Be thou satisfied with the consequences of thy virtuous resolutions and proceedings; if it be worth thy while to live innocently, modestly, and conscientiously, do it, and be satisfied; follow effectually the holy Patriarchs and Apostles, who forsook all, and cheerfully went whither conscience and duty called them: if thou art not willing to do so, why dost thou pretend to the same principles, or hope for the like rewards? But, leaving the consideration of the world, as man hath made it, consider, that this world is not in its nature or design a place of perfect ease; we came not hither to do our will, or enjoy our plea-

sure ; we are not born to pick our condition here : no ; this world is a place of banishment from our first country, and the original felicity we were designed to ; this life is a state of travel toward another better country ; and well it is for us, as exiles and travellers, if we can find any tolerable accommodation : it should not be strange to us, if, in this our pilgrimage, we meet with rough passages, foul ways, hard lodging, scant or coarse fare : if we complain of such things, we do not consider where we are, whence we came, whither we are going ; we forget that we are the sons of ADAM, the heirs of sin and sorrow, who have forfeited our rest and joy upon earth ; we consider not, how unavoidable the effects are of that fatal condemnation and curse, which followed our first transgression ; we mind not, that the perfection and purity of the blessings we have lost is not to be found on this side the celestial paradise.

3. This life is a state of probation and exercise, like that (which prefigured it) of God's people in the wilderness, wherein God leadeth us through many difficulties and hazards, in many wants and hardships, to humble and prove us, in order to the fitting us for another more happy state.

No temptation therefore (or affliction) can seize upon us, but such as is human ; that is, such as is natural and proper to men. It is the consideration which ST. PAUL useth to comfort and support us in troubles ; and a plainly good one it is : for seeing " man (as ELIPHAZ saith) is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward ; " that nothing is more natural to any thing, than trouble to us ; if we are displeased therewith, we are, in effect, displeased that we are men : it implieth, that we gladly would put off our nature : we grieve that we are come to live in this world ; and as well might we be vexed that we are not angels, or that we are not yet in heaven, which is the only place exempt from trouble, where alone " there is no sorrow, no clamour, no pain."

It hath always been, and it will ever be, a universal

complaint, that the life of man and trouble are individual companions; that our state here is nothing but a combination of various evils, made up of cares, of labours, of dangers, of disappointments, of discords, of diseases, of manifold pains and sorrows; that all ages, from wailing infancy to querulous decrepitness, and all conditions, from the careful sceptre to the painful spade, are fraught with many great inconveniencies peculiar to each of them; that all the face of the earth is overspread with mischiefs, as with a general deluge. This the experience of all times loudly proclaimeth; for what are all histories, but continual registers of the evils incident to men? What do they describe, but wars and slaughters, mutinies and seditions, tumults and confusions, devastations and ruins? What do they tell us, but of men furiously striving together, circumventing, spoiling, destroying one another? What do we daily hear reported, but cruel broils, bloody battles, and tragical events; great numbers of men slain, wounded, hurried into captivity; cities sacked and rased, countries harassed and depopulated, kingdoms and commonwealths overturned? What do we see before us, but men carking, toiling, bickering; some worn out with labour, some pining away for want, some groaning under pain? And amidst so many common miseries and misfortunes, is it not absurd for us impatiently to bemoan our particular crosses?

4. Again: If we more particularly survey the states of other men, (of our neighbours all about us,) and compare our case with theirs, our condition can hardly appear to us so bad, but that we have associates therein; many as ill, many far worse bestead than ourselves. How many of our brethren may we observe conflicting with extreme penury and distress; how many undergoing continual hard drudgeries to maintain their lives; how many sorely pinched with hunger and cold; how many tortured with grievous sickness; how many oppressed with debt; how many shut up under close restraint; how many detained in horrible slavery; how many, by the wasting rage of war,

rified of their goods, driven from their homes, dispossessed of all subsistence? How many, in fine, passing their lives in all the inconveniencies of rude, beggarly, sordid, and savage barbarism? And who of us have, in any measure, tasted of these, or of the like calamities? Yet are these sufferers, all of them, the same in nature with us; many of them deserve as well, divers of them better than ourselves. What reason then can we have to conceive our case so hard, or to complain thereof? Were we the only persons exposed to trouble, could we truly say with the Prophet, "Behold if there be any sorrow like my sorrow," we might seem unhappy: but since we have so much company in our woe; since it is so ordinary a thing to be poor and distressed; it is plainly reasonable and just, that we should, without murmuring, take and bear our lot: for what privilege have we to allege, that we, rather than others, should be untouched by the grievances to which mankind is obnoxious? Are we not men framed of the same mould; are we not sinners guilty of like offences, with the meanest peasant, the poorest beggar, the most wretched slave? Then it is a perverse and unjust frowardness to be displeased with our lot: we may, if we please, pity the common state of men, but we cannot reasonably complain of our own.

5. We are indeed apt to look upward toward those few, who in supposed advantages (in wealth, dignity, or reputation) precede us; but seldom do we cast our eyes on those innumerable many, who lie beneath us: hence so few are satisfied with their condition, an epidemical eyesore molesting every man; for there is no man, of whatever condition, who is not in something outstripped by others: He, therefore, looking with an evil eye on such persons, and with senseless disregard passing over the rest of men, doth easily thereby lose his ease and satisfaction: whereas, if we would consider the case of most men, we should see abundant reason to be satisfied with our own; if we would feel the calamities of our neighbours, we should little resent our own crosses.

If with any heedfulness we view persons and things before us, we shall easily discern, that what seemeth great and weighty is indeed comparatively small and light; that we have our full share in good, and no more than our part in evil; that **SOCRATES** had reason to suppose, that ‘If we should bring into one common stock all our mis-haps; so that each should receive his portion of them, gladly the most would take up their own, and go their ways;’ that consequently it is both iniquity and folly in us to complain of our lot.

6. If we would diligently compare our state with the state even of those whom we are apt most to envy, it would afford matter of consolation. What is the state of the greatest persons, (of the world’s grandees,) but a state encompassed with snares and temptations; which, without extreme caution, and constancy, and command of all appetites and passions, cannot be avoided? What, but a state of pompous troubles; of living in continual noise and stir, subject to the urgency of business, and the tediousness of ceremony; of being abused by perfidious servants, and mocked by vile flatterers; of being exposed to common censure and obloquy, to misrepresentation, misconstruction, and slander, having the eyes of all men intent upon their actions, and as many severe judges as watchful spectators; of being pestered and pursued with pretences, with suits, with complaints, the necessary result whereof is to displease many, to satisfy few; of being frequently engaged in resentments of ingratitude, of treachery, of neglects, of defects in duty, and breaches of trust toward them; of being constrained to comply with the humours and opinions of men; of anxious care to keep, and fear of losing all; of wanting the most solid comforts of life, true friendship, free conversation, privacy, and retiredness: In fine, of being paid with false coin for all their cares and pains, receiving for them scarce any thing more but empty shows of respect, and hollow acclamations: (whence the Psalmist might well say, “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie;” a lie, for that their

state cheateth us, appearing so specious, yet being really so inconvenient and troublesome.) Such is the state of the greatest men; such as hath made wise Princes weary of themselves, and ready to acknowledge, that if men knew the weight of a crown, none would take it up; such indeed as, in sober judgment, we cannot prefer before the most narrow and inferior fortune. How then can we reasonably be displeas'd with our condition, when we may even pity Emperors and Kings; when, in reality, we are as well, perhaps much better than they?

7. Farther, it may induce us to be content, to consider what commonly hath been the lot of good men in the world. We shall, if we survey the histories of all times, find the best men to have sustained most grievous crosses; scarce is there in Holy Scripture recorded any person eminent and illustrious for goodness, who hath not tasted deeply of want and distresses. The Apostles were pinched with all kinds of want, harassed with all sorts of toil, exposed to all manner of hazards, persecuted with all variety of contumelies and pains. Above all, our LORD himself was, beyond expression, "a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief;" surpassing all men in suffering, as he excelled them in dignity and virtue: extreme poverty, having not so much as "where to lay his head," was his portion: to undergo continual labour and travel, without any mixture of ease or pleasure, was his state: in return for the highest good-will, and choicest benefits, to receive most cruel hatred and grievous injuries; to be loaded with the bitterest reproaches, the foulest slanders, the sorest pains which malice could invent, or rage inflict; this was his lot. Am I poor? So, may one say, was he to extremity. Am I slighted of the world? So was he notoriously. Am I crossed in my designs? So was he continually; all his most painful endeavours having small effect. Am I deserted or betrayed of friends? So was he, by those who were most intimate and most obliged to him. Am I reviled, slandered, misused? Was not he so beyond all comparison?

Have all these, and many more, “of whom the world was not worthy,” undergone all sorts of inconvenience; being “destitute, afflicted, tormented;” and shall we be sorry to be found in such company? Having such a cloud of martyrs, “let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Is it not an honour, should it not be a comfort to us, that we do in condition resemble them? If GOD hath thus dealt with those who, of all men, have been dearest to him, shall we take it ill that he in any manner dealeth so with us? Can we pretend, can we even wish, to be used better than GOD’s first-born, and our LORD himself hath been? If we do, are we not monstrously arrogant; especially considering that it is not only ordinary, but the peculiar character of GOD’s chosen, and children, to be often crossed, checked, and corrected? Even Pagans have observed it, and avowed there is great reason for it: ‘GOD,’ saith SENECA, ‘hath a fatherly mind towards good men, and strongly loveth them; therefore, after the manner of severe parents, he educateth them hardly.’ The Apostle doth in express terms assure us thereof: for “whom,” saith he, “the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, GOD dealeth with you as with sons; but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all” (that is, all good men, and genuine sons of GOD) “are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Would we be expunged from the number of GOD’s children? Would we be divested of his special good-will? If not, why do we not gladly embrace and willingly sustain adversity, which is by himself declared so peculiar a badge of his children, so constant a mark of his favour? It is peculiarly the lot of Christians, in conformity to their afflicted SAVIOUR; they are herein “predestinated to be conformable to his image; to this they are appointed.” “Let no man,” saith ST. PAUL, “be moved by these afflictions; for ye know that we are appointed thereunto.” To this they are called. “If when ye do well,” saith ST. PETER, “and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is

acceptable with GOD; for even hereunto were ye called." They are by profession bearers of the cross: "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Every one that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS must suffer persecution." By this are they admitted into the state of Christians: "By many afflictions we must enter the kingdom of heaven." This doth qualify them for enjoying the glorious rewards which their religion propoundeth: "We are co-heirs with CHRIST;" so that "if we suffer together, we shall also be glorified with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him."

In fine, seeing adversity is, as hath been declared, a thing so natural to all men, so common to most men, so incident to great men, so proper to good men, so peculiar to Christians, we have great reason to observe the Apostle's advice: "Beloved, wonder not concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as if some strange thing happened to you:" we should not wonder at it as a strange thing, that we are engaged in any trouble here; we are consequently not to be affected with it as a thing strange.

SERMON V.

OF CONTENTMENT: PART IV

PHIL. iv. 11.

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

MOREOVER, considering the nature of this duty itself, may be a great aid to the practice of it.

1. It is itself a sovereign remedy for all poverty and all suffering; removing or allaying all the mischief they can do us. It is well said by ST. AUSTIN, 'It is no matter what, but how a man suffereth.' The chief mischief adversity can do us is to render us discontent; in that consisteth all the venom thereof, which thereby being voided, adversity cannot be noxious to us, all distraction and disturbance from it being prevented. He that hath his desires moderated to a temper suitable with his condition, that hath his passions composed agreeably to his circumstances, what can make any impression on him, or render him any wise miserable? He that taketh himself to have enough, what doth he need? What can the largest wealth or highest prosperity yield more? He that hath this essential ingredient of felicity, is he not in effect most fortunate? Is not at least his condition as good as that of the most prosperous?

2. As good do I say? Yea, is it not plainly much better than can arise from any secular prosperity? For satisfaction springing from a virtuous disposition of mind, is far more precious, more noble and worthy, more solid and durable, more sweet and delectable, than that which any possession or fruition of worldly goods can afford. The "incorruptibility" as ST. PETER speaketh, "of a meek and quiet spirit is before GOD of great price:" before

God; that is, according to the most upright and certain judgment, it is the most precious and valuable thing in the world. 'There is,' the Philosopher could say, 'no spectacle more worthy of God, than a good man gallantly combating with ill fortune.' Not to be discomposed in mind, not to fret when all things flow prosperously, is no great sign of wisdom, or argument of goodness; it cannot be reckoned an effect of sound judgment or virtuous affection, but a natural consequent of such a state: But when there are urgent temptations to displeasure, when sense and fancy provoke to murmuring, then to be satisfied in our mind, then to keep our passions in order, then to maintain good humour, then to restrain our tongue from complaint, and to govern our demeanour sweetly, this is indeed honourable and handsome: to see a worthy man sustain crosses, wants, disgraces, with equanimity and cheerfulness, is a goodly thing; such a person, to a judicious mind, appeareth in a far more honourable state than any prosperous man; his virtue, shining in the dark, is far more bright and fair. "This," as ST. PETER saith in a like place, "is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God suffereth grief;" if, in our case, (we may say after him,) a man out of conscientious deference to God's will, doth contentedly undergo adversity; this God is ready to take for an obligation on himself, and will be disposed in a manner to thank him (or to reward him) for it. This indeed amounteth to a demonstration that such a person is truly wise and really good. So is the satisfaction of a contented poor man more worthy, and it is no less more sweet and comfortable, than that of any rich man pleasing himself in his enjoyments: contentedness satisfieth the mind of the one, abundance doth only satiate the appetites of the other; the former is the complacency of a man, the latter is gross and dull, like the sensuality of a beast; the delight of that sinketh deep into the heart, the pleasure of this doth only float in the senses or fancy; the poor good man's joy is wholly his own, a lovely child of reason and virtue; the rich man's pleasure cometh from without, and is thrust into him by sensible objects.

Hence is the satisfaction of contented adversity far more constant, solid, and durable than that of prosperity; it abideth in the mind, and cannot easily be driven thence by any corporeal impressions; whereas the other, issuing from sense, is subject to all the changes inducible from the restless commotions of outward causes. Whence the satisfaction proceeding from reason and virtue, the longer it stayeth the sweeter it groweth, turning into habit, and working nature to an agreement with it; whereas usually the joys of prosperity soon degenerate into fastidiousness, and terminate in bitterness. Nothing indeed can affect the mind with a truer pleasure, than the very conscience of discharging our duty toward God, in bearing hardship, imposed by his providence, willingly and well. We have, therefore, much reason not only to acquiesce in our straits, but to be glad of them; seeing they yield us an opportunity of immediately obtaining goods more excellent, and more desirable, than any prosperous or wealthy man can easily have; since they furnish us with means of acquiring and exercising a virtue worth the most ample fortune, yea, justly preferable to the best estate in the world: a virtue which indeed doth not only render any condition tolerable, but sweeteneth any thing, yea, sanctifieth all states, and turneth all occurrences into blessings.

3. Even the sensible smart of adversity is by contentedness tempered and eased: the stiller and quieter we lie under it, the less we feel its violence. It is tumbling and tossing that stirreth the humours, and driveth them to the parts most apt to be affected with them: where the mind is calm, and the passions settled, the pain of any grievance is less acute, less sensible.

4. Whence, if others in our distress are uncharitable to us, refusing the help they might or should afford toward the rescuing us from it, we hereby may be great benefactors to ourselves; we should need no anodyne to be ministered from without, no succour to come from any creature, if we would not be wanting to ourselves, in hearkening to grace and reason, and enjoying the consola-

tion which they afford. In doing this, we are more cruel to ourselves than any spiteful enemy or treacherous friend can be; no man can so molest us as we do ourselves, by admitting or fostering discontent.

5. The contented bearing of our condition is also the most ready means of bettering it, and of removing the pressures we lie under.

It is partly so in a natural way, as disposing us to embrace and employ the advantages which occur thereto: for as discontent blindeth men, so that they cannot descry the ways of escape from evil; it discourageth them from endeavouring to help themselves, it depriveth them of many succours and expedients which occasion would afford for their relief; so he that, being undisturbed in his spirit, hath his eyes open and his courage up, and all his natural powers in order, will be always ready and able to do his best, to act vigorously, to snatch any opportunity, and employ any means, towards the freeing himself from what appeareth grievous to him.

Upon a supernatural account, content is yet more efficacious to the same purpose: for cheerful submission to GOD's will doth please him much, doth strongly move him to withdraw his afflicting hand, doth effectually induce him to advance us into a more comfortable state. Of all virtues, there is none more acceptable to GOD than patience. GOD will take it well at our hands if we contentedly receive from his hand the worst things: it is a monstrous thing not to receive prosperity with a grateful sense, but it is heroical with the same mind to receive things unpleasant: he that doeth so suffereth loss as a man, but is crowned as a lover of GOD.

“Be humbled,” saith ST. PETER, “under the mighty hand of GOD, that he may exalt you in due time;” (ἐν καιρῷ, when it is opportune and seasonable;) and, “Be humbled,” saith St. JAMES, “before the LORD, and he will exalt you. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and he will save the humble person.” GOD, with favourable pity, hearkeneth to the

groans of them who are humbly contrite under his hand, and reverently "tremble at his word. He reviveth the spirit of the humble; he is nigh to the broken of heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit; he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds;" he proclaimeth blessedness to "the poor in spirit," and to "those that mourn," because they shall find comfort: all which declarations are made concerning those who bear adversity with a submissive and contented mind; and we see them effectually performed in the cases of AHAB, of the Ninevites, of NEBUCHADNEZZAR, of MANASSES, of HEZEKIAH, of DAVID; of all persons mentioned in the Holy Scripture, upon whom adversities had such kindly operations. But discontent and impatience offend God, and provoke him to continue his judgments, yea, to increase them. To be sullen and stubborn is the sure way to render our condition more intolerable: for "who hath hardened himself against God and prospered?" Those who, like the Israelites, have been "smitten in vain," as to any quiet submission or conversion to God, what have they but plunged themselves deeper into wretchedness?

It is indeed to quell our haughty stomach, to check our froward humour, to curb our impetuous desires, to calm our disorderly passions, to suppress our eager affection toward these worldly things; in short, to work a contented mind in us, that God ever doth inflict hardships on us, that he crosseth us in our projects, that he detaineth us in any troublesome state; until this be achieved, as relief would really be no blessing to us, so God (except in judgment) will no wise grant it: it would be a cruel mercy for him to do it. If, therefore, we do wish ever to be in a good case as to this world, let us learn to be contented in a bad one: having got this disposition firmly rooted in our hearts, we are qualified for deliverance; nor will God fail, in due season, to perform for us what he so often hath declared and promised: his nature disposeth him, his word hath engaged him to help and comfort us.

These are the most proper inducements to contentedness ; which, considering (in the light of reason and Holy Scripture) the nature of the thing, suggested my meditation. There are some other means, some general, some particular, which are very conducive thereto.

1. A constant endeavour to live well, and to maintain a good conscience. He that doeth this, can hardly be dismayed or discouraged with any occurrence here : this will yield a man so firm a satisfaction, as will bear down the sense of any incumbent evils ; this will beget such hope in GOD as will supply the want of all other things, and fully satisfy us that we have no cause to be troubled with any thing here ; he that by conscientious practice hath obtained such a hope, is prepared against all assaults : “ he will,” as the Psalmist saith, “ not be afraid of any evil tidings ; for his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.” Maintaining this will free us from all anxious care, transferring it upon GOD ; it will breed a sure confidence that he will ever be ready to supply us with all things convenient, to protect and deliver us from all things hurtful ; ensuring to us the effect of that promise, by the conscience of having performed the condition thereof : “ Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD and its righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

This was that which supported the Apostles, and kept them cheerful under all that heavy load of distresses which lay upon them : “ Our rejoicing is this,” could they say, “ the testimony of our conscience ; that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in this world.”

It is the want of this best pleasure that both rendereth the absence of all other pleasures grievous, and their presence insipid. Had we a good conscience, we could not want comfort ; as we could not be truly unhappy, so we could hardly be discontent ; without it no affluence of other things can suffice to content us. It is an evil conscience that giveth an edge to all other evils, and enableth them sorely to afflict which otherwise would but slightly

touch us ; we become thence incapable of comfort, seeing not only things upon earth to cross us, but heaven to lower upon us ; finding no visible succour, and having no hope from the power invisible, yea, having reason to be discouraged with the fear of God's displeasure. As he that hath a powerful enemy near cannot abide in peace, without anxious fear ; so he that is at variance with the ALMIGHTY, who is ever at hand, what quiet of mind can he enjoy ?

2. The contemplation of our future state is a sovereign medicine to work contentedness, and to cure discontent. As discontent easily cleaveth to souls which earnestly pore upon these present things, so if we firmly believe, seriously consider, and worthily prize the future state, we can hardly ever be discontent in regard to these things. Considering heaven and its happiness, how low and mean, how unworthy of our affection, will these inferior things appear ! How unconcerned shall we be in them, and how easily thence shall we be content to want them ! What, shall any of us say, doth it concern me in what rank or garb I pass my few days here ? What considerable interest can I have in this uncertain and transitory state ? What is any loss, any disgrace, any cross, in this world to me, who am a citizen of heaven ; who have a capacity and hope of the immense riches, the incorruptible glories, the perfect and endless joys of eternity ? This was that which sustained the holy Apostles in all their distresses. "For this cause," saith ST. PAUL, "we faint not, while we look not on the things which are seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal ;" and "I reckon," saith he again, "that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

If likewise we with faith and seriousness consider the dismal state of those who are eternally secluded from all joy, who are irrecoverably condemned to utter darkness, how tolerable will the meanest state here appear ! How

vain a thing will it then seem to dislike or to be troubled with any worldly thing? What, shall we say, is this loss to the loss of my soul, and all its comforts for ever? What is this want to the perpetual want of heavenly bliss? What is this short and faint pain to the cruel pangs of endless remorse, to the “weeping, and gnashing of teeth in outward darkness.”

3. Constant prayer is an excellent guard of content, and is an excellent fence against discontent.

It is such in way of impetration, procuring the removal or alleviation of our crosses; for GOD hath promised, that “He will give good things to those that ask him. The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth; he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The poor man crieth, and the LORD heareth him, and saveth him out of all his troubles.” The Holy Scripture is full of such declarations and promises, assuring us of succour upon our supplication to GOD; whence ST. PAUL thus adviseth against all solicitude: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to GOD; and” addeth, signifying the consequence of this practice, “the peace of GOD, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through JESUS CHRIST.”

It likewise performeth the same by procuring aid from GOD. It enables us to bear all evils well, which is really much better than a removal of them; for that hence they become profitable to us, and causes of present good, and grounds of future reward. Thus when ST. PAUL besought GOD for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh, the return to him was, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” It was a greater favour to receive an improvement of spiritual strength, occasioned by that cross, than to be quite freed from it.

Devotion also hath of itself a special efficacy to produce content. As in any distress it is a great consolation that we can have recourse to a good friend, that we may dis-

charge our cares into his bosom, that we may demand advice from him, and, if need be, request his succour; so much more it must be a great comfort, that we can in our need approach to **GOD**, who is infinitely the most faithful, the most affectionate, the most sufficient friend that can be; always most ready, most willing, most able to direct and to relieve us. He desires and delights that "in the day of our trouble we should seek him;" that "we should pour forth our hearts before him;" that we should "cast our burthens and our cares upon him;" that we should upon all occasions implore his guidance and aid. And complying with his desires, as we shall assuredly find a successful event of our devotion, so we shall immediately enjoy great comfort and pleasure in them.

The **GOD** of all consolation doth especially by this channel convey his comforts into our hearts; his very presence (that presence in which the Psalmist saith "there is a fulness of joy") doth mightily warm and cheer us; his **HOLY SPIRIT** doth in our religious intercourse with him insinuate a serenity of mind, doth kindle sweet and kindly affections, doth scatter the gloomy clouds of sadness: practising it we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Humbly addressing ourselves to **GOD**, and reverently conversing with him, doth compose our minds and charm our passions; doth sweeten our humour, doth refresh and raise our spirits, and so doth immediately breed and nourish contentedness.

It also strengtheneth our faith, and quickeneth our hope in **GOD**, whereby we are enabled to support our present evils, and peace of mind doth spring up within us.

It inflameth our love to **GOD**, in sense of his gracious illapses; thence rendering us willing to endure any want or pain for his sake, or at his appointment.

It, in fine, doth minister a ravishing delight, abundantly able to supply the defect of any other pleasures, and to allay the smart of any pains whatever; rendering thereby

the meanest estate more acceptable than any prosperity without it can be. So that if we be truly devout, we can hardly be discontent: it is departing from God by a neglect of devotion, or by a negligence therein, that doth expose us to the incursions of worldly regret and sorrow.

These are general remedies and duties both in this and all other regards necessary, which yet we may be induced to perform, in contemplation of this happy fruit (contentedness) arising from them. Farther,—

4. It serveth toward production of contentedness to reflect much upon our imperfection, unworthiness, and guilt, so as thereby to work in our hearts a lively sense of them, and a hearty sorrow for them: this will divert our sadness into its right channel; this will drown our lesser grief by the influx of a greater. It is the nature of a greater apprehension of pain to swallow up the sense of a lesser, as he that is under a fit of the stone doth scarce feel a pang of the gout; he that is assaulted by a wolf will not regard the biting of a flea. Whereas, then, of all evils moral evils are incomparably the greatest,—in nature the most ugly and abominable, in consequence the most hurtful and horrible,—seeing, (in ST. CHRYSOSTOM'S language,) 'excepting sin, there is nothing grievous or terrible among human things; not poverty, not sickness, not disgrace, not that which seemeth the most extreme of all evils, death itself,'—seeing, according to just estimation, no evil beareth any proportion to the evil of sin, if we have a due sense thereof, we can hardly be affected with any other accident. If we can keep our minds intent upon the heinous nature, and the lamentable consequences, of sin, all other evils cannot but seem exceedingly light and inconsiderable; we cannot but apprehend it a very silly and unhandsome thing to resent or regard them. What (shall we then judge) is poverty in comparison to the want of a good conscience? What is sickness, compared to distemper of mind, and decay of spiritual strength? What is any disappointment, to the being defeated and overthrown by temptation? What, any loss, to

the being deprived of God's love and favour? What, any disgrace, to the being out of esteem with God? What, any unfaithfulness or inconstancy of friends, to having deserted or betrayed our own soul? What can any danger signify, to that of eternal misery, incurred by offending God? What pressure can weigh against the load of guilt, or what pain equal that of stinging remorse? In fine, what condition can be so bad as that of a wretched sinner? Any case sure is tolerable, is desirable, is lovely and sweet in comparison to this. Would to God, may a man in this case say, that I were as poor as any beggar; that I were covered all over with blains as LAZARUS; that I were bound to pass my days in a hospital or a dungeon; might I be chained to an oar, might I lie upon the rack, so I were clear and innocent. If such thoughts and affections reflecting on our sin impress us, what place can there be for resentment or petty crosses?

Contrition also upon this score is productive of a certain sweetness and joy, apt to allay worldly grief. As it "worketh a salutary repentance not to be repented of," so it breedeth a satisfactory comfort which doth ever attend repentance. He that is very sensible of his guilt, cannot but consequently much value the remedy thereof, mercy; thence will spring up a cheerful satisfaction, so possessing the heart as to expel other displeasures. A holy and a worldly sadness cannot well consist together.

5. Another instrument of contentedness is sedulous application of our minds to honest employment. Honest studies and cares divert our minds, and drive sad thoughts from them; they cheer our spirits, they yield good fruits, which will extinguish or temper discontent. While we are studious or active, discontent cannot easily creep in, and soon will be stifled.

Idleness is the great mother and the nurse of discontent; it layeth the mind open for melancholy to enter; it yieldeth harbour to it, and entertainment there; it depriveth of all the remedies and allays which business affordeth.

Reciprocally discontent begetteth idleness, and by it groweth : they are like ice and water, arising each out of the other. We should therefore not suffer any sadness so to encroach upon us, as to hinder us from attending to our business, (the honest works and studies of our calling,) for it thereby will grow stronger and more hardly vincible.

6. It conduceth to this purpose to contemplate and resent the public state of things, the interest of the world, of our country, of God's Church. The sense of public calamities will drown that of private, as unworthy to be compared with them ; the sense of public calamity will allay that of particular misfortune. How (will a wise and good man say) can I desire to flourish, while the state is in danger or distress ? How can I grieve, seeing my country is in good condition ? Indeed,

7 All hearty charity doth greatly alleviate discontent. If we bear such a good-will to our neighbour as to have a sincere compassion of his evils, and complacence in his good, our case will not much afflict us. If we can enjoy the prosperity, the wealth, the reputation of our neighbour, by delighting in them, what can we want ? what can displease us ? If our heart is enlarged in pity for the misfortunes of others, it cannot be contracted with grief for our own : our own sorrow, like water, being thus diffused, cannot be so deep, but it will be more fruitful ; it will produce such effects as will comfort and please us. It is selfishness which maketh us so sensible of crosses, and incapable of comfort.

8. Again, if we will attain contentment, we must take heed of setting our affection upon any worldly thing whatever, so as highly to prize it, passionately to affect it, eagerly to pursue it, so as to conceive our happiness in any measure to hang on it : if there be any such thing, we shall be disappointed in the procurement, or the retention of it ; or we shall be dissatisfied in its enjoyment.

So to adhere in affection to any thing is an adulterous disloyalty toward our Maker and best Friend ; from which it is expedient that we should be reclaimed : whence **God,**

in just anger or in kind mercy, will be apt to cross us in our attempts to get it, or to deprive us of its possession; whence the displeasure will follow which always attendeth a separation from things we love. But if we be suffered to obtain or to retain it, we shall soon find dissatisfaction there, being either disgusted with some bitterness in it, (such as doth lurk in every sensible good,) or cloyed with its lusciousness; after a small enjoyment it will become either distasteful or insipid.

This, according to continual experience, is the nature of all things pleasant only to sense or fancy, presently to satiate. No beauty can long please the eye, no melody the ear, no delicacy the palate, no curiosity the fancy; a little time doth waste away, a small use doth wear out the pleasure which at first they afford. Novelty commendeth, distance representeth them fair and lovely, the want or absence of them rendereth them desirable, but the presence of them dulleth their grace, the possession of them deadeneth the appetite to them.

Only those things which reason (religious and sound reason) doth approve, yield a lasting, undecaying, unalterable satisfaction: if we set our affections on them, we cannot fail of content; in seeking them we cannot be disappointed: for God, without any reservation or exception, hath promised to bestow them upon those who diligently seek them. Nor can we be dispossessed of them: God will not take them away; and they lie beyond the reach of any other hand: having them, then, we cannot but fully and durably be satisfied in the fruition of them; the longer we have them, the more we shall like them; the more we taste them, the better we shall relish them. Time wasteth not, but improveth the sense of their unfading beauty and indefectible sweetness.

9. We should to this purpose take especial care to search our condition, and pick thence the good that is therein, making the best we can of it, enjoying and improving it; but what is offensive therein diminishing it, tempering it so well as we may, always forbearing to aggravate it. There are in nature divers simples, which

have in them some part or some juice very noxious, which being severed and cast away, the rest becometh wholesome food; neither indeed is there any thing in nature so venomous, but that from it, by art and industry, may be extracted somewhat of good use, when duly applied; so in most apparent evils lieth enclosed much good, which, if we carefully separate, (casting away the intermixed dross and refuse,) we shall find benefit, and taste comfort thence. There is nothing so thoroughly bad, but being well ordered and opportunely ministered, will do us much good: so, if from poverty we cast away or bear quietly that which pincheth the sense or grateth on the fancy, and enjoy the liberty, the leisure, the health, the security from envy, obloquy, strife, which it affordeth, how satisfactory may it become to us! The like conveniences are in disgrace, disappointment, and other such evils, which, being improved, may endear them to us. Even sin itself (the worst of evils, the only true evil) may yield benefit to us; it may render us sober and lowly in our own eyes, devout in imploring mercy, merciful and charitable towards others in our censures, more laborious in our good practice, and watchful over our steps. And if this deadly poison may yield effects so exceedingly beneficial, what may other harmless, though unpleasant things do?

10. It is a most effectual means of producing content, and curing discontent, to rouse and fortify our faith in God, by seriously reflecting upon the arguments and experiments which assure us of God's particular providence over all, over us. It is really infidelity (in whole or in part, no faith, or a small and weak faith) which is at the root, as of all sin, so particularly of discontent: for how is it possible, did we firmly believe, and with any measure of attention consider, that God taketh care of us, that he tendereth our good, that he is ready at hand to succour us,—how then, I say, is it possible that we should fear any want, or grievously resent any thing? But we, like ST. PETER, are “of little faith,” therefore we cannot walk on the sea, but in despair, sink down. Sometimes our faith is buried in oblivion or carelessness; we forget, or

mind not, that there is a Providence; but look on things as if they fell out casually or fatally, thence expect no redress from heaven, so tumble into despair and desolateness. Sometimes, because **God** doth not in our time and our way relieve or gratify us, we slip into profane doubt, questioning in our hearts whether he doth indeed regard us, or whether any relief is to be expected from him; not considering, that only **God** can tell when and how it is best to proceed; that often it is not expedient our wishes should be granted; that we are not wise enough or just enough to choose for ourselves; that it would be a mad world, if **God** in his government thereof, should satisfy all our desires.

We forget how often **God** hath succoured us in our straits; how continually he hath provided for us; how patiently he hath borne with us; what miracles of bounty he hath performed in our behalf. We are like that distrustful and inconsiderate people, who “remembered not the hand of **God**, nor the day when he delivered them; but soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel: they forgot **God** their SAVIOUR, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things in the Red Sea.”

From such dispositions our discontents spring; and we cannot cure them, but by recovering from such forgetfulness and negligence, by shaking off such wicked doubts and distrust, by fixing our hearts and hopes on Him who alone can help us; who is “our strength, the strength of our heart, of our life, of our salvation.”

Of Him (to conclude) let us humbly implore, that he in mercy would bestow upon us grace to submit in all things to his will, to acquiesce in all his dispensations, gladly to embrace and undergo whatever he alloteth to us; in every condition, and for all events befalling us, heartily to adore, thank, and bless him. Even so to the ever-blessed **God**, our gracious Maker and Preserver, be eternally rendered all glory, thanksgiving, and praise. Amen.

S E R M O N VI.

REJOICE EVERMORE.

Rejoice evermore.—1 THESS. v. 16.

REJOICE evermore ! O good Apostle, how acceptable rules dost thou prescribe ! O blessed GOD, how gracious laws dost thou impose ! This is a rule to which all men should be forward to conform ; this is a law which it may seem strange for any man to disobey : for what can any soul desire more than to lead a life in continual alacrity ? Who would not readily embrace a duty, the observance whereof is not only pleasant, but pleasure itself ? Who is so wild as to affect a sin, which hath nothing in it but disease and disgust ?

That joy should be enjoined, that sadness should be prohibited, may it not be a plausible exception against such a precept, that it is superfluous ; seeing all the endeavours of men aim at nothing else but to procure joy, and eschew evil. Were it not rather expedient to recommend sober sadness, or to repress the inclinations of men to effuse mirth ?

So it may seem : but yet, alas, if we consult experience, or observe the world, we shall find this precept very ill obeyed : for do we not commonly see people heavy ? Do we not often hear doleful complaints ? Is not this world apparently a stage of continual trouble and grief ? Did not the Preacher, upon a diligent survey of “ all the works done under the sun,” truly proclaim, “ All is vanity and vexation of spirit ? ” Where, I pray, is any full or firm content ? Where is solid and durable joy to be found ?

It is true that men, after a confused manner, are very

eager in the pursuit of joy; they rove through all the forest of creatures, hoping to catch it either in natural endowments and improvements of soul, or in the gifts of fortune, or in the acquirements of industry; in temporal possessions, in sensual enjoyments, in amusements, in gratifications of their appetites and passions; they all hunt for it, though following a different scent, and running in various tracks; some in plodding for rare notions; some compassing ambitious projects; some in amassing heaps of wealth; some in over-reaching subtleties; some in wrecking their malice, their revenge, their envy; some in venting frothy conceits, bitter scoffs, or profane railleries; some in jovial conversation, and quaffing the full bowls; some in music and dancing; some in gallantry and courting; some in all kinds of riotous excess, and dissoluteness; but all in vain, finding at most, instead of it, some faint shadows, or transitory flashes of pleasure, which soon flag and expire: their short enjoyment being also tempered with regret, being easily dashed by any cross accident, soon declining into a nauseous satiety, and in the end degenerating into gall and bitter remorse: so that, indeed, the usual delights which men seek, are such, that we should not if we could, and we could not if we would, constantly entertain them; such rejoicing evermore, being equally unreasonable and impossible.

Wherefore there is ground more than enough, that we should be put to seek for a true, substantial, and consistent joy; it being withal implied, that we should look for it another way, than commonly men do; who therefore are so generally disappointed, because they would have it upon impossible or undue terms; and least expect it there, where it is only to be had.

It is a scandalous mistake, vulgarly admitted, concerning religion, that it is altogether sullen and sour, requiring a dull, lumpish, morose kind of life, barring all delight, all mirth, all good humour: whereas, on the contrary, it alone is the never-failing source of true, pure, steady joy; such as is deeply rooted in the heart, immoveably

founded in the reason of things, permanent like the immortal spirit wherein it dwelleth, and like the eternal objects whereon it is fixed; which is not apt to fade or cloy, and is not subject to any impressions apt to corrupt or impair it: Whereas, in our text, and in many texts parallel to it, we see, that our religion doth not only allow us, but even doth oblige us, to be joyful as much and often as can be; not permitting us to be sad for one minute, banishing the least fit of melancholy, charging us in all times, upon all occasions, to be cheerful; supposing, consequently, that it is in some manner possible to be so, and affording power to effect what it requires.

Such, indeed, is the transcendent goodness of our God, that he maketh our delight to be our duty, and our sorrow to be our sin; adapting his holy will to our principal instinct: he would have us resemble himself, as in all other perfections, so in a constant state of happiness, as he hath provided a glorious heaven for us hereafter, he would have us enjoy a comfortable paradise here. He accordingly hath ordered the whole frame of our religion in a tendency to produce joy in those who embrace it; for what is the Gospel, but “good tidings of great joy to all people?” How doth God represent himself herein, but as “the God of love, of hope, of peace, of all consolation;” cheerfully smiling in favour on us, graciously inviting us to the most pleasant enjoyments, bountifully dispensing most comfortable blessings of mercy, of grace, of salvation to us? For what doth our Lord call us to him, but ‘that he may give us rest, and refreshment to our souls; that he may wipe away all tears from our eyes; that he may save us from despair, and settle us in a blessed hope; that we may enter into our Master’s joy; that our joy may be full, and such as no man can take from us?’

What is the great overture of the Gospel, but the gift of a most blessed Comforter, “to abide with us for ever;” cheering our hearts with his lightsome presence, and ravishing consolations? Wherein doth the Kingdom of heaven consist? “Not in meat and drink, but in right-

eousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST." What are the prime fruits sprouting from that root of christian life, the Divine SPIRIT? They are, as ST. PAUL telleth us, "love, joy, and peace." Are there not numberless declarations, importing a joyful satisfaction, granted to the observers of GOD's commandments; that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart?" Doth not our LORD pronounce a special beatitude to the practiser of ev'ry virtue? And if we scan all the doctrines, all the institutions, all the precepts, all the promises of Christianity, will not each appear pregnant with matter of joy, will not each yield great reason, and strong obligation, to "rejoice evermore?"

Wherefore a Christian (according to the design of his religion, and in proportion to his compliance with its dictates) is the most cheerful person in the world; continually bearing a mind well satisfied, a light heart and calm spirit, a smooth brow and serene countenance, a grateful accent of speech, and a sweetly composed tenor of carriage. No black thought, no irksome desire, no troublesome passion, should lodge in his breast; any furrow, any frown, any cloud, doth sit ill upon his face: the least fretful word, or froward behaviour, doth utterly misbecome him. If at any time it appear otherwise, it is a deflexion from his character; it is a blemish and wrong to his profession; it argued a prevarication in his judgment, or in his practice; he forgetteth that he is a Christian, or hath not preserved the innocence belonging to that name. For, if a Christian remembereth what he is, or is sensible of his condition; if he reflecteth on the dignity of his person, the nobleness of his relations, the sublimity of his privileges, the greatness and certainty of his hopes, how can he be out of humour? Is it not absurd for him that is at peace with heaven, with his own conscience, with all the world; for the possessor of the best goods, and the heir of a blessed immortality; for the friend, the favourite, the Son of GOD, to fret and wail?

He that is settled in a most prosperous state; that is (if

he pleaseth) secure of its continuance; that is well assured of its improvement; that hath whatever good he can wish in his reach, and more than he can conceive in sure reversion; what account can be given that he should be sad?

He that hath the inexhaustible spring of good for his portion; that hath his welfare entrusted in GOD'S most faithful hand; that hath GOD'S infallible word for his support; that hath free access to him, "in whose presence is fulness of joy;" that hath frequent tastes of GOD'S goodness, in gracious dispensations of Providence, in intercourses of devotion, in the influences of grace; that hath the infinite beauty and excellency for the perpetual object of his contemplation and affection; that enjoyeth the serenity of a sound mind, of a pure heart, of a quiet conscience, of a sure hope,—what can he want to refresh or comfort him?

If a true Christian hath no care to distract him, having discharged all his concerns on GOD'S providence; if he hath no fear to dismay him, being guarded by the Almighty protection from all danger and mischief; if he hath no despair to sink him, having a sure refuge in the divine mercy and help; if he hath no superstitious terrors or scruples to perplex him, being conscious of his own upright intentions to please GOD, and confident of GOD'S accepting him; if he hath no incurable remorse to torment him, the stings of guilt being pulled out by the merits of his SAVIOUR, applied by his faith and repentance; if he hath no longing desires to disquiet him, being fully satisfied with that he doth possess, or may expect from GOD'S bounty,—all other things being far beneath his ambition, or coveting; if he hath no contentions to inflame him, knowing nought is here worth passionately striving for, and being resolved to hold a friendly good-will toward all men; if he hath no repining envy, seeing that none can be more happy than he may be, and that every man's good by charity, is made his own; if he hath no fretful discontent, since he doth gladly acquiesce in the condition and

success allotted him, resigning his will to God's pleasure, taking all for best which thence doth occur, being assured, that "all things shall work together for his good" and advantage; if he hath no spiteful rancours to corrode his heart, no boisterous passions to ruffle his mind, no inordinate appetites, perverse humours, or corrupt designs to distemper his soul;—whence then may sorrow come, or how can sadness creep into him?

What is there belonging to a Christian, whence grief naturally can spring? From God, "our exceeding joy," the fountain of happiness; from heaven, the region of light and bliss; from divine truth, which illustrateth and cheereth the soul; from God's law, which rejoiceth the heart; from wisdom, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace;" from virtue, which cureth our afflictive distempers, and composeth our vexatious passions? From these things, I say, about which a Christian, as such, is only conversant, no sorrow can be derived; from these sweet sources, no bitter streams can flow: but hell, the flesh, the world, darkness, error, folly, sin, and irreligion, (things with which a Christian should have nothing to do, from which he should keep aloof, which he doth renounce and abandon,) these, these alone, are the parents of discomfort and anguish.

Wherefore, there is the same reason, the same obligation, the same possibility, that we should "rejoice evermore," as that we should always be Christians, exactly performing duty, and forbearing sin: for innocence and mental ease go together; both together making paradise: perfect virtue and constant alacrity, are inseparable companions; both constituting beatitude.

Indeed to exercise piety, and to rejoice, are the same things, or things so interwoven, that nothing can disjoin them. Religious practice is like that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," "the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High;" that is, every pious soul. No good deed can be performed without satisfaction: each virtue hath a peculiar delight annexed to it; whence

the acts of joy, which upon various objects, grounds, and occasions, we may exert, being numberless, I shall only touch a few instances.

I. We should evermore rejoice in the exercise of our faith ; according to that prayer of our Apostle for the Romans : “ Now the GOD of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing.”

Every kind of faith (that which embraceth divine truths, that which applieth GOD’s mercy, that which ensureth GOD’s promises, that which confideth in GOD’s Providence, each of them) is a clear spring of joy, ever standing open to us, which “ he that drinketh, shall never thirst.”

I. The faith which embraceth GOD’s heavenly truth, doth not only enlighten our minds, but affect our hearts ; there being no article of faith, or mystery of our religion, which doth not involve some great advantage, some happy occurrence dispensed to us by the goodness of GOD, which faith doth apprehend and convey to our spiritual taste. Is it not sweet with faith to contemplate the rich bounty of GOD in the creation of the world, and producing so goodly a frame, so copious a store of things, with a special regard to our sustenance and accommodation ? Is it not satisfactory to believe that GOD, by his Almighty hand and vigilant care, with the same benign regard, doth uphold and govern the same ? Is it not extremely pleasant with faith to reflect on that great honour and happiness, which GOD did vouchsafe to confer on mankind, by sending down from heaven his only SON, to assume our nature, to converse with men, that we might be advanced to a participation of the divine nature, and to an enjoyment of communion with GOD ? How without delight can we believe that our SAVIOUR, by his meritorious obedience and passion, hath appeased GOD’s wrath, and inclined his favour toward us ; hath satisfied justice, hath expiated our offences, hath rescued our souls from the dominion of sin and SATAN, from death and corruption, from hell and everlasting torment ; hath purchased immortal life, and

endless bliss for us? What comfort is there in being assured by the resurrection and triumph of our LORD over death, that our souls are indeed immortal, that our bodies shall be raised from the dust, that our persons are capable of an eternal subsistence in happiness? Will it not much please us with an eye of faith to behold our Redeemer sitting in glorious exaltation at GOD's right hand, governing the world for the benefit of his Church, dispensing benediction and grace to us; interceding as "our merciful and faithful High Priest," for the pardon of our sins, the acceptance of our prayers, the supply of our needs, and the relief of our distresses? If we be fully convinced, that our LORD JESUS is the CHRIST, our LORD and SAVIOUR, "the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him," how can we otherwise than follow those, of whom ST. PETER saith, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?" So from the hearty belief of every evangelical truth, we may suck consolation; each of them is food to our soul; and to believe it is to eat it, which how can we do without a most savoury relish?

2. At least methinks, that faith greatly should exhilarate us, which applieth those verities, (so "worthy of all acceptance,") wherein GOD doth open his arms wide to embrace us, proposing most kind invitations, and favourable overtures of mercy, upon the fairest terms possible; together with effectual remedies for all the maladies and miseries of our souls: for if we are sensible of our heinous guilt; if we are laden with the heavy burthen of our sins; if our heart is galled with sore compunction for our misdeeds; if we are struck with "the terrors of the LORD," and tremble with the fear of GOD's judgments; how comfortable must it be to be persuaded that GOD is fully reconcilable to us, is very desirous to show us mercy, and gladly will accept our repentance; that "we have an Advocate with the FATHER," who hath propitiated for our sins, doth mediate for our peace, hath both full power and

certain will, if we sincerely believe, wholly to remit them? So that, “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” and that, “being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST:” Will not this belief revive us, and “make the broken bones to rejoice?” Will not the Gospel of peace be hence in truth “a joyful sound” to us? Might it not hence well be proclaimed in the Prophet ISAIAH, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.”

And if we find ourselves in soul grievously distempered, labouring under great impotency and blindness, overborne and oppressed with the prevalency of corruption, pestered with unreasonable desires and passions, unable to curb our inclinations and appetites, to resist temptations, to discharge our duty in any tolerable measure; is it not then comfortable to believe, that we have a most faithful and skilful Physician at hand, to cure our distempers; that we have a powerful succour to relieve our infirmities; that GOD is ready to impart an abundant supply of grace, of light, of spiritual strength, to direct and assist us; that if any man “lack wisdom,” he is encouraged with faith to “ask it of GOD, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not?” If any man want strength, GOD’S Almighty SPIRIT is promised to those, who with humble earnestness implore it; so that we may “be able to do all things (incumbent on us) by CHRIST who strengtheneth us.”

3. And what more hearty satisfaction can we feel, than in a firm persuasion concerning the real accomplishment of those “exceeding great and precious promises,” whereby we become capable of the most excellent privileges, the most ample benefits, the most happy rewards? How can the belief that as sure as truth itself, an eternal inheritance, a treasure that cannot fail, a glory that cannot fade, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a felicity surpassing all expression, is reserved for us, in recompense of our faithful

obedience ; how, I say, can that be a dead, dull, dry belief, void of sprightly comfort and pleasure ?

Likewise, the faith of confidence in God's good Providence, and paternal care over us, (whatever our condition or circumstances be,) will infuse a cheerful refreshment of heart into us.

It is in Scripture frequently asserted, that he who placeth his trust in God, is a very blessed and happy person ; and can we without great satisfaction, partake of that beatitude ?

Can we, by such a trust, disburden all our solicitous cares, all our anxious fears, all the troubles of our spirit, and pressures of our condition upon God, with strong assurance, that from his mighty power and watchful care, in due time, in the most expedient manner, we shall receive a competent supply of our wants, a riddance from our grievances, a protection from all danger, a blessing upon all our good endeavours, without feeling much ease and peace in our hearts ?

What can be more cheering than a persuasion, that all our concerns are lodged in the hands of such a friend, so wise, so able, so faithful, so affectionate, so readily disposed to help us, and further our good ? They who trust in God, are said " to abide under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY," and " to be covered with his wings ;" God is often styled their rock, their fortress, their shield and buckler, their defence and refuge ; and are they not then impregnably safe ? Why then, should they fear ? At what occurrence should they be disturbed ? Have they not huge reason to say with the Psalmist, " In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice ; the LORD is my strength and my shield, my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped ; therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise him."

II. We should evermore rejoice in the practice of christian hope, making good that aphorism of SOLOMON : " The hope of the righteous shall be gladness ;" and obeying those Apostolical injunctions, that we should

“rejoice in hope;” that we should “retain the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end.” Those excellent and most beneficial truths, those sweet proposals of grace and mercy, those rich promises, which faith doth apprehend as true, in general, to all Christians, hope doth apply particularly to ourselves, improving the knowledge of our common capacity, into a sense of our special interest in them. **God**, saith our faith, will assuredly receive all penitent sinners to mercy, will crown all pious Christians with glory, will faithfully perform whatever he hath graciously promised to all people, hath a tender care for all that love and fear him: **But God**, saith our hope, will have mercy on me, will “render to me the wages of righteousness,” will “verify his good word to me his servant,” will protect, will deliver, will bless me in all exigencies. If so, being conscious of our sincere endeavour to serve and please **God**; if discerning from a careful reflection upon our heart and ways, that in some good measure we have discharged the conditions required of us, we can assume a propriety in his regard, how can we forbear conceiving joy?

All hope, in proportion to the worth of its object, and the solidity of its ground, is comfortable; it being “the anchor of the soul,” which stayeth and supporteth it in undisturbed rest: it appeaseth unquiet desires, setting absent good before us, and anticipating future enjoyments by a sweet foretaste: seeing, then, if we have a good conscience, and “our heart doth not condemn us,” our hope is grounded “on the Rock of Ages;” (on the immutable nature, and the infallible word of **God**;) seeing it is the hope of the most worthy, the most sublime, the most incomparable and inestimable good,—it must be extremely delightful.

If it much pleaseth men to know themselves heirs to a fair estate, to have the reversion of a good office, or a great preferment, (although death may intercept, or other accidents may obstruct the accomplishment of such hopes,) how much more shall that “lively hope of an inheritance,

incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," breed a most cheerful satisfaction, far transcending all other pleasures, which spring from the most desirable fruitions here; according to that admonition of our LORD: "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

III. We should evermore rejoice in Charity; both that to God, and that to our neighbour.

Love is the sweetest of all passions; and when, by the conduct of wisdom, it is directed in a rational way toward a worthy attainable object, it cannot otherwise than fill the heart with ravishing delight.

And such (in all respects superlatively such) an object is God. He, infinitely beyond all things, deserveth our affection, as most perfectly amiable and desirable, as having obliged us by innumerable and inestimable benefits, all the good that we have ever enjoyed, or that we can ever expect, being derived from his pure bounty; all things in the world, in competition with him, being pitifully mean and loathsome; all things without him being vain, unprofitable, and hurtful to us; so that the Psalmist might well say, "Who in heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I can desire beside thee." He alone can satisfy the vast capacity of our minds, and fill our boundless desires.

He, of all lovely things, most certainly and easily may be attained; for whereas, commonly men are crossed in their affection, and their love is embittered from their loving things imaginary, which they cannot reach, or things which disdain and reject their affection; it is concerning God quite otherwise: for,

He is most ready to impart himself, and "will not reject any that cometh unto him;" he most earnestly desireth and woeth our love; he is not only most willing to corre-

spend in affection, but doth prevent us therein: for “we love him, (saith the Apostle,) because he first loved us.”

He doth cherish and encourage our love by sweet influences, and most comfortable embraces; by kindest expressions of favour, by most beneficial returns, ordering “that all things shall work together for good to those who love him:” And whereas all other objects in the enjoyment, fail our expectation, he doth ever far exceed it.

Wherefore, in all affectionate motions of our hearts toward God, in desiring him, or seeking his favour; in embracing him, or setting our confidence on him; in enjoying him by meditation and prayer; in a reflexive sense of our interest and propriety in him; in that mysterious union of spirit, hereby we are (as it were) inserted in him; in a hearty complacence in his benignity, a grateful resentment of his kindness, and a zealous desire of yielding some requital for it,—we cannot but feel very pleasant transports, assuring to us the truth of that saying in the Psalm: “They that love thy name shall be joyful in thee;” and disposing us to cry out with the Psalmist, “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O LORD:” “Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”

Indeed that celestial flame (kindled in our hearts by the Spirit of love) cannot be void of warmth; we cannot fix our eyes upon infinite beauty, we cannot taste infinite sweetness, without perpetually rejoicing in the first daughter of love to God, charity toward men; which, in complexion and cheerful disposition, doth most resemble its mother: for it doth rid all those gloomy, turbulent imaginations and passions, which cloud our mind, which fret our heart, which discompose the frame of our soul; from burning anger, from storming contention, from gnawing envy, from rankling spite, from racking suspicion, from distracting ambition and avarice. It consequently settles our mind in an even temper, in a sedate humour, in an harmonious order, in that pleasant state of tranquillity,

which naturally results from the conquests of irregular passions.

And who can enumerate or express the pleasures which wait on every kind, on each act of charity ?

How triumphant a joy is there in doing good ? Whereby we gratify our best inclinations ; whereby we oblige our brethren, and endear ourselves to them ; whereby we most resemble the divine goodness ?

ST. PAUL telleth us, that " GOD loveth a cheerful giver ; " and he prescribeth, that " he who sheweth mercy, " should do it with cheerfulness : and in the law it is commanded, " Thine heart shall not grieve, when thou givest to thy poor brother. " And who indeed can out of love give alms, or show mercy, without cheerfulness ? seeing he thereby doth ease his own bowels ; considering that in doing good to his neighbour, he receiveth far more good to himself ; that he then doth put forth his stock to great and certain advantage ; that he dischargeth an office acceptable to GOD, doth render him a debtor, doth engage him abundantly to requite that beneficence.

What satisfaction is there in forgiving offences ; whereby we discharge our souls from vexatious inmates ; (black thoughts, and rancorous animosities ;) whereby we clear ourselves from the troubles attending feuds and strifes ; whereby we imitate our most gracious Creator, and transcribe the pattern of our meek Redeemer ; whereby we continue ourselves capable of divine mercy ; according to that divine word : " If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly FATHER will forgive you. " .

How unconfinedly and inexhaustibly vast is that delight which a charitable complacence in the good of our neighbour (" a rejoicing with those that rejoice ") may afford ? A man thence engrossing all the good in the world, and appropriating to himself all the successes, all the entertainments, all the satisfactions of his neighbour. Even a charitable sympathy in the adversities of our neighbour, is not destitute of content ; for the soul is thereby melted

into a gentle temper, susceptible of the best impressions : we share in the comfort which we minister to others ; we are refreshed in that kindly submission to the good pleasure of God, in that lightsome contemplation of God's mercy, in those comfortable hopes of a happy issue, which we suggest to the afflicted ; we are disposed to a grateful sense of God's goodness, in preserving ourselves from those calamities, and in qualifying us to comfort our brethren ; we feel satisfaction in reflecting upon this very practice, and observing that we act conformably to the will of God, therein discharging a good conscience, and enjoying a portion of that " continual feast."

I should, if the time would permit, farther declare how we should find delight in the contemplation of all God's attributes, of his works, of his word ; in thankful resentment of all God's benefits ; in willing obedience to all God's laws ; how joy is a proper fruit, growing on the practice of humility, of justice, of temperance, of devotion, of every virtue : more particularly I should have evidenced how from a patient submission to God's afflicting hand, from penitential contrition of heart, from a pious fear and solicitude in working out our salvation, most sweet consolations spring : but in recommending joy, I would not produce grief ; and therefore shall not farther annoy your patience.

SERMON VII.

OF WATCHFULNESS.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence.

THE words, “with all diligence,” admit a threefold acceptation. They may (1.) denote Absolutely the intenseness in degree, or extension in kind, of the performance required: Keep thy heart with all custody, that is, with all sorts, or, with all degrees, of care and diligence. They may (2.) signify Comparatively keep thy heart above all keeping; that is, more than thou keepest any other thing; “because from it are the issues of life;” that is, because it is the principal part and fountain of all vital operations, and therefore deserveth the best custody. They may be also (3.) Taken, so as to denote the Universality of the object or matter of this keeping, or the adequate term and bound thereof; keep thy heart from every thing which it should be kept from; from every thing offensive or hurtful to it: But I mean only to insist upon the substance of the precept; the nature of which being duly considered, will infer, that it is to be observed according to the manner and measure prescribed, understood according to any of those senses, or according to all of them conjointly.

As for the meaning of the words, “Keep thy heart;” two inquiries may be made: 1. What the heart is? 2. What to keep it doth import.

To the *First*, I answer, that in the style of Scripture, the heart doth commonly import the whole inward man, the ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, “the man within us;” (as ST. PAUL speaketh;) “the hidden man of the heart;” (as ST. PETER

calleth it,) comprehending all the thoughts and imaginations, all the inclinations and dispositions, all the judgments and opinions, all the passions and affections, all the resolutions and purposes, formed within us ; in short, all interior, whether tendencies to move, or actual motions, of the human soul. Because the heart in a man's breast, is most inwardly seated, most secluded from sight, guarded from access, fenced from danger, thence whatever is inmost, most invisible, most inaccessible in any thing, is called the heart thereof ; and all a man's secret thoughts, inclinations, opinions, affections, designs, are involved in this name : sometimes all, or divers of them, conjunctly, are called his heart, sometimes any of them singly : instances in every kind are innumerably many, and therefore I shall not spend time in producing any, but shall suppose, that here the word may be understood in its utmost extent ; so as to comprehend all the particulars intimated ; there being no apparent reason for preferring or excluding any ; all of them being capable of a moral quality, both immediately in themselves, and consequentially, as they may be the principles of good or bad actions ; and because all of them may be, need to be, ought to be, the objects of the keeping here enjoined.

But then, what is this keeping ? I answer, The word applied to this, is especially capable of three senses.

1. It may imply, to keep it under a constant view, to mark, to inquire into, and study, our heart. So, " My Son," saith the Wise Man, " give me thine heart ; and let thine eyes keep (or observe) my ways." The same word which here is used both in Hebrew and Greek, and can there signify no other custody, but that of attending to ; it being the office of the eye only to look, and observe. Likewise, " Observe," saith God in the law, " and hear all these words which I command thee : " that is, hear them attentively : And so in divers other places.

2. It may also denote the good management of our hearts ; keeping all the motions thereof in good order ; applying them to good, and restraining them from bad

things. So the Psalmist useth the word, when he saith, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle:" that is, I will so rule and curb it, that no evil language shall issue from it. So when the Wise Man adviseth to "keep our foot when we go to the house of God;" by keeping it, he means rightly to guide and order our proceedings; or well to dispose ourselves when we address ourselves to religious performances. So again, "He," saith he, "that keepeth the fig-tree, shall eat of the fruit thereof:" that is, he that dresseth and ordereth it to advantage for bearing fruit.

3. Again, Keeping may be taken for preserving, guarding, securing from mischief, which, indeed, is the most common use of the word.

Now any of these senses may be intended here, or all of them together; and they indeed are, in the nature of the thing, so dependant one on the other, that any of them can hardly be practised without the rest: for without heedfully observing our heart we cannot well govern it; and an ill governed heart cannot easily be attended to; and without both watchful observation, and skilful management of it, we cannot guard it from evil; and reciprocally without guarding it, we cannot well rule it, or duly mind it: such a complication there is in these three custodies.

I shall discourse concerning the first of them only, which seems, in the nature of things, to precede. According to this exposition, when it is said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," we may understand it, as if each of us were thus advised: With a most constant and wary care observe all the interior propensions and motions of thy soul; whatever is done, or, designed within thee; whither thy desires lean, what thy affections are stirred by, to what thy judgment of things doth lead thee, with great attention mark and ponder it.

It is a peculiar excellency of human nature, which seemeth more to distinguish a man from any inferior rank of creatures than bare reason itself, that he can reflect upon all that is done within him, can discern the tendencies of

his soul, is acquainted with his own purposes. Were he not conscious of his own opinions, how could he weigh and examine them; how could he conform his actions to them, or practise according to the dictates of his conscience? It is therefore plainly needful that man should be endued with this power; for without it he can neither perform the duty required of him, nor enjoy the benefits he is designed for: our Maker, therefore, hath conferred it upon us, our duty consists in its right use, our advantage ariseth from the constant and careful exercise of this faculty: constant and careful, I say: constant; for observation implies so much: for, if ever we shut our eyes, or turn our heads aside, what we look to may be gone; much will pass unobserved by us; especially such quick and fleeting things as are the interior motions of our soul: wherefore a continual vigilancy is requisite to a keeper of the heart. It must also be careful; as the keeper of a thing so nimble and slippery must not sleep, so he must not slumber; he must be very intent upon his charge; superficial glances upon the outward face, as it were, of the soul, will not suffice: to observe, is with earnest care to look through the matter; to discern whatever lurketh therein; to pierce into the very depth and bottom of it; to spy through every corner therein: otherwise it is but slightly viewed rather than truly observed: especially so subtle, so intricate, so obscure a thing as a man's heart is, requireth an extraordinary application in observing it with fruit.

This is then our duty: To be continually, with extreme diligence, looking inward upon ourselves; observing what thoughts spring up within us; what imaginations find most welcome harbour in our breasts; what objects most affect us with delight or displeasure; (what it is that we love and readily embrace; what we distaste and reject;) what prejudices possess our minds; wherefore we propose to ourselves such undertakings; conversing with ourselves, and, as it were, discoursing in this manner: What is it that I think upon? Are my thoughts serious, seasonable, and pure? Are my inclinations compliant to **God's** law?

What judgments do I make of things? Are my apprehensions clear, solid, and sure? What doth most easily stir me, and how is my heart moved? Are my affections calm, orderly, and well placed? What projects am I driving on? Are my designs good; are my intentions upright and sincere? Let me thoroughly inquire into these points; let me be fully satisfied in them. Thus should we continually be doing. The Holy Scripture doth often bid us judge ourselves, examine our works; to search and try, to weigh, to heed, to watch over our ways. "If," saith ST. PAUL, "we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged;" we should avoid those miscarriages which bring the divine judgments upon us. "Let us," saith the Prophet, "search and try our ways, and turn unto the LORD;" and, "I said, I will take heed to my ways," saith the Psalmist; and, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established," is the Wise Man's advice. Search our ways, and ponder our paths: this implies, that we first examine and weigh our hearts; for there our ways begin, thence is motion derived to our feet, and to our hands also; all our actions depend as effects of them, all receive their moral quality thence; whatever in our doings is good or bad, doth, as our LORD expresseth it, issue from within us; our actions are but streams, sweet or bitter, clear or foul, according to the tincture they receive at those inward sources of good or evil inclinations, of true or false judgments, of pure or corrupt intentions; there, consequently, we are principally obliged to exercise the scrutiny required of us.

Such is the duty; and the practice thereof is of huge profit, bringing many great advantages with it; the neglect of it is attended with many grievous mischiefs: and for persuading to the one, dissuading from the other, I shall propound some of them.

The most immediate advantage rising hence is this: That by such a constant and careful inspection of our hearts, we may arrive to a competent knowledge of, and a true acquaintance with, ourselves; (a most useful knowledge, a

most beneficial acquaintance ;) neither of which is otherwise attainable. "The heart" (as you know the Prophet says) "is deceitful above all things;" and "who," adds he, "can know it?" Who can know it? None, it seems, but **God** that made it, and the man that hath it. He that hath it, must, I say, be able competently to know it; even in regard to him, the question may intimate some difficulty, but it doth not denote an impossibility: hard it may be for us to know the heart, by reason of its deceitfulness; but the sliest imposture, if narrowly looked into, may be detected. It is a very subtle and abstruse, a very various and mutable thing; the multiplicity of objects it converses with, the divers alterations it is subject to, from bodily temper, custom, company, example, other unaccountable causes; especially its proneness to comply with, and to suit its judgments of things to present circumstances without, and present appetites within, render it such: wherefore it is not easy to know it, but yet possible it is; for under severe penalties we are obliged not to be deceived by it: "Let no man," saith **ST. PAUL**, "deceive himself." "See that ye be not deceived," saith our **SAVIOUR**. "Take heed," saith **MOSES**, "to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived." Such precepts there are many, obliging us to know our hearts, and to discover the fallacies put on them, or upon us by them; carrying with them directions how to compass it; that is, by looking about us, and taking heed. It is, therefore, a feasible thing to avoid being imposed upon, and well to understand ourselves; but as other abstruse pieces of knowledge, so this especially cannot be attained without industrious application and constant observations to find the corners wherein the deceit lurks; we must pursue its secret windings, we must trace it step by step, as hunters do wild beasts, into the utmost recesses of its first desires, and most deeply rooted prejudices; we must do as **DAVID** did when he strove to free himself from distrust and impatience: "I communed with my own heart," saith he, "and my spirit made diligent search;" by which practice

he found, as he farther acquaints us, that it was "his infirmity" which moved him to doubt of GOD's mercy and benignity towards him.

All men are inquisitive after knowledge; the being enudued therewith passeth for a goodly ornament. Men are commonly ashamed of nothing so much as ignorance; but if any knowledge meriteth esteem, this, next to that concerning Almighty GOD, may best pretend thereto: if any ignorance deserveth blame, this certainly is most liable thereto.

I proceed to the particular advantages of the practice of this duty, and the inconveniences of the neglect of it.

1. The constant and careful observation of our hearts will serve to prevent immoderate self-love and self-conceit; to render us sober and modest in our opinions concerning, and in our affections towards, ourselves; qualifying us to comply with the apostolical precept, not to overween or overvalue ourselves, and our own things: for he that by serious inspection upon his own heart, shall discern how many fond, impure, and ugly thoughts swarm within him, how averse his inclinations are from good, and how prone to evil; how much his affections are misplaced and dis-tempered; how clouds of darkness, error, and doubt, hover upon the face of his soul, so that he quickly taketh up opinions, and soon layeth them down, and often turneth from one mistake to another; how unsettled his resolutions are, especially in the pursuance of the best good, and what corrupt mixtures cleave to his best purposes; who taketh notice how backward and how cold in devotions toward GOD, how little sensible of his goodness, or fearful of his displeasure, or zealous for his honour, or careful of performing his duty toward him; how little he desireth or delighteth in the good, pitieth and grieveth at the evil of his neighbour; how sluggish also and remiss he is in the pursuance of his own best affairs, and highest concernments; he that doth, I say, frequently with heedfulness regard these things in his own heart, how can he be ravished with self-love? How can he be taken with himself? Can any man dote upon such deformity,

admire such weakness and naughtiness? No surely. That men are so amorous of themselves, so haughty and arrogant in their conceits, arises from not reflecting on their own hearts; not beholding themselves in that mirror; not considering how little lovely or worthy they are: if they did practise that, they would see reason to despise, to loathe, to pity themselves.

2. Upon that advantage is consequent, that this practice will dispose us with patience to bear all crosses and grievances; so producing not only an excellent virtue, but a considerable solace to us; for the being conscious of so much unworthiness, which observation of our heart will necessarily discover, will not only justify the Providence, but commend the benignity of God unto us. It will prompt us heartily to confess, that our punishments are less than our deservings; to acknowledge that God "hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;" to say with JEREMIAH, "It is of the LORD'S mercy that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not."

3. Particularly this practice will fence us against immoderate displeasure at men's hard opinions, or harsh censures of us: for he that by inquiry into himself perceives so many defects, will not so easily nor so greatly be offended, if some of them (or some like them) be objected to him, since he finds in himself many more and greater.

4. Likewise this practice will defend us, as from the discomforts of harsh censure, so from the mistakes and miscarriages to which the favourable opinions of men may expose us.

The common nature of men disposeth them to be credulous when they are commended or esteemed by others. Every ear is tickled with this sweetest music of applause; but we are not to rely upon others' ill-grounded judgment, so much as upon our own more certain knowledge concerning ourselves.

Take no man's word before thine own sense in what concerns thine own character: for that a man in questions

of this kind is able to be a skilful umpire between himself and others ; that he is neither elevated nor depressed by external weights, but keepeth himself equally poised by his own well-informed conscience ; that neither his heart is exasperated with the bitterest gall of reproach, nor his head intoxicated with the sweetest wine of flattery,—is an invaluable convenience of life ; or rather it is a virtue arguing a most strong and healthful constitution of soul.

5. Likewise, this will conduce to qualify our opinions, and moderate our passions, toward others ; so that without anger or bitterness we may bear the faults, errors, and infirmities of our brethren ; that we shall be benign in our carriage, and gentle in our censures, even towards them who do not behave themselves so wisely as they should. ST. PAUL thus admonisheth the Galatians : “ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual ” (the more spiritual whether in truth, or in our own esteem, the more especially are we obliged hereto) “ restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted : ” Looking upon, or spying into thyself. Such considering ourselves, taking notice of our infirmity within, perceiving how subject we are to the impressions of temptation, and that hence it may be our own case to fall, if occasion concur with our weakness ; discerning this, I say, as it will be a reason obliging, so it may be an instrument conducing, to a mitigation of spirit toward those whom we see overtaken with mistake or frailty.

6. The observation of our heart is very conducive to render men truly wise and prudent ; in those things especially which most nearly concern them : giving them to see before them, and to understand what they do ; as contrarily, the neglect thereof rendereth men unadvised and uncertain in their doings. A main point of prudence consisteth in suiting a man’s undertakings to his powers and capacities, in not attempting things surpassing his ability or fitness, and in not declining such attempts as he may well compass. Some are over bold in setting upon things

beyond their strength to accomplish, or skill to manage; whence commonly with shame and sorrow they are defeated in their enterprises: others are overbackward; so as not to adventure upon what they may with good advantage, perhaps ought to perform: both which inconveniences usually proceed from the not looking into and studying the heart: for the greatest impediments of action lie there; being grounded upon inward indispositions, or disagreeableness of men's temper, capacity, inclination, to the matters to which they apply themselves. A tender foot will be galled, if you set it in rugged paths; a weak head will turn, if you place it high; a soft spirit cannot well comport with boisterous employment; he that naturally affects calm and quiet must not hope to come off well, if he engage himself in affairs exposed to abundance of care and tumult: nor will he, if he be well studied this way, and rightly understand himself, adventure thereupon.

7. Near to that lies another considerable benefit attending this practice; which is, that it will help to render us ready in our resolutions, and constant to them; consistent with ourselves, and uniform in our proceedings; whence will arise both great convenience to ourselves, and satisfaction to others with whom we converse: as, on the contrary side, from the neglect thereof, we shall become slow in deliberation, doubtful in resolution, and unstable in performance. When any occasion of acting is presented, we shall be ready to close with what is best for us, if by due study and experience we are acquainted with ourselves: that acquaintance is a certain preparation to a speedy choice, and we shall upon the same grounds constantly adhere to our choice, standing upon so firm a base, and so shall neither discompose ourselves, nor disappoint others by our irresolution and inconstancy.

8. A serious inspection into our hearts doth much avail toward the reformation of our hearts and lives; curing the distempers and correcting the vices of them: for to the curing any disease, it is requisite to know the complexion and temper of the patient, and the part affected,

and the next causes thereof. As the most grievous of bodily diseases are seated in, or proceed from the entrails, but not all of them from the same entrail, and the same disease sometimes depends upon the distemper of one, sometimes of another among them; so do all vices (as our SAVIOUR expressly teacheth) issue from the heart, or interior man; some from one, some from another part or region thereof, and the same from different parts: sometimes natural temper, sometimes false opinion, sometimes evil custom, is the root of the same kind of disease; and it is expedient we should know distinctly which of them in particular cases is the root, that, accordingly, we may understand what method of cure to use; whence to fetch the remedy; where to apply it: for unskilfulness in these points may frustrate our endeavours of amendment.

9: This practice farther doth particularly serve to regulate our devotions and performances more immediately spiritual; by showing us what we need to pray for, what we are obliged to give thanks for, what it becomes us to confess and deprecate: for want thereof we shall be apt not only to neglect, but to confound, yea, miserably pervert, these duties;—to confound them, by praying for what is already given us, for which therefore we are to render thanks; also by giving thanks formally for that which perhaps we are far from possessing, and do most want;—so I say we shall be apt to confound our spiritual addresses, as wanting due ground and object; yea, to pervert them, by asking for things really prejudicial to us, (in the circumstances we stand,) and thanking GOD for what in anger he dispenseth to us, (so indeed are many appearing goods,) as also deprecating things most beneficial and healthful to our souls, neglecting to return thanks for what GOD disposeth in mercy. Thus from ignorance of ourselves, and what we truly need, are we apt to pervert our devotions; not only defeating ourselves of the advantages they might yield us, but (if GOD be not more gracious than to hearken to us, and grant our wishes) bringing lamentable mischief on ourselves. The two sons of

ZEBEDEE, conceiting our **LORD** would shortly become a great Prince, did confidently sue for the next place of dignity about him : our **LORD** repressed their fond ambition, by downright telling them first, that “they knew not what they asked ;” then, by demanding of them whether they were able to undergo the trials they should meet with ; implying, what they should have requested, that they more needed humility and patience, than pomp and pleasure. And it was the same two persons, whose intemperate zeal he elsewhere checked, with, “Ye know not of what spirit ye are.” And no wonder, if they who knew not what they were, did ask they knew not what ; that, being ignorant of their own hearts, they should make absurd petitions ; that, in such a case, they should desire things not only inconvenient, but dangerous and destructive to themselves.

10. I add lastly, that universally this practice is necessary for the well governing of our heart. Politicians inculcate much, that to the well governing of a people, the nature and humour of that people should be well understood ; for that the grave Romans and light Greeks, the soft Persians and stout Germans, the subtile Africans and gross Scythians, could not well be managed in the same manner. So to govern any man’s heart, (since the hearts of men, as their faces, and as their voices, differ according to diversities of complexion, of age, of education, of custom and manner of living,) it conduceth to know how it is disposed from any of those, or the like causes. I conclude with the good Psalmist’s requests : “Teach us thy way, O **LORD** : unite our hearts to fear thy name. Give us understanding, and we shall keep thy law ; yea, we shall observe it with our whole heart. Search us, O **GOD**, and know our hearts ; try us, and know our thoughts ; see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.” Amen.

SERMON VIII.

OF INDUSTRY IN GENERAL.

ECCLES. ix. 10.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy
might.*

INDUSTRY in general, touching all matters which our "hand findeth to do," that is, which Providence doth offer, or reason embraceth, for employing our powers of soul and body, the Wise Man doth here recommend; and to the pressing the observance of his advice, I shall presently apply my discourse, proposing divers considerations apt to excite us thereto: only first let me briefly describe it, for our better apprehension of its true nature.

By industry we understand, a serious and steady application of mind, joined with a vigorous exercise of our faculties, in prosecution of any reasonable, honest, useful design, in order to the accomplishment or attainment of some considerable good.

Industry doth not consist merely in action: for that is incessant in all persons; our mind being a restless thing, never abiding in a total cessation from thought or from design: (being like a ship in the sea, if not steered to some good purpose by reason, yet tossed by the waves of fancy, or driven by the winds of temptation.) But the direction of our mind to some good end, without roving, in a straight and steady course, drawing after it our active powers in execution thereof, doth constitute industry; which therefore usually is attended with labour and pain; for our mind (which naturally doth affect variety and liberty, being apt to loathe familiar objects, and to be weary of any constraint) is not easily kept in a constant attention

to the same thing ; and the spirits employed in thought, are prone to flutter and fly away, so that it is hard to fix them ; and the corporeal instruments of action, being strained to a high pitch, or detained in one tone, will soon feel a lassitude : whence labour or pain is commonly reckoned an ingredient of industry ; and laboriousness is a name signifying it ; upon which account, this virtue (as involving labour) deserveth a peculiar commendation ; it being then most laudable to follow the dictates of reason, when so doing is attended with difficulty.

Such, in general, I conceive to be the nature of industry ; to the practice whereof, the following considerations may induce.

1. Industry doth preserve and perfect our nature, keeping it in good tune and temper, improving and advancing it toward its best state. The labour of our mind in attentive meditation and study, doth render it capable and patient of thinking upon any object, or occasion ; doth polish and refine it by use ; doth enlarge it by accession of habits ; doth quicken and rouse our spirits, dilating and diffusing them into their proper channels. The very labour of our body doth keep the organs of action sound and clean, discussing superfluous humours, opening passages, distributing nourishment, exciting vital heat. Barring the use of it, no good constitution of soul or body can subsist ; but a foul rust, a dull numbness, a resty listlessness, a heavy unwieldiness must seize on us ; our spirits will be stifled, our hearts will grow faint and languid, our parts will flag and decay ; the vigour of our mind, and the health of our body, will be much impaired.

It is with us as with other things in nature, which by motion are preserved in their native purity and perfection, in their sweetness, in their lustre ; rest corrupting, debasing, and defiling them. If the water runneth, it holdeth clear, sweet, and fresh ; but stagnation turneth it into a noisome puddle. If the air is fanned by winds, it is pure and wholesome ; but from being shut up, it groweth thick and putrid. If metals be employed, they abide smooth

and splendid; but lay them up, and they soon contract rust. If the earth is laboured with culture, it beareth corn; but lying neglected, it will be over-grown with brakes and thistles; and the better the soil is, the ranker weeds it will produce. All nature is upheld in its being, order, and state, by constant agitation; every creature is incessantly employed in action, conformable to its end and use: in like manner, the preservation and improvement of our faculties depends on their constant exercise.

2. As we naturally were composed, so, by divine appointment, we were originally designed for industry. God did not intend that man should live idly even in his best state, or should enjoy happiness without taking pains; but did provide work enough in Paradise itself: For, "The Lord God," saith the text, "took man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it;" so that had we continued happy, we must have been ever busy, by our industry sustaining our life, and securing our pleasure; otherwise weeds might have over-grown Paradise, and that of SOLOMON might have been applicable to ADAM: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof."

3. By our transgression and fall, the necessity of industry (together with a difficulty of obtaining good, and avoiding evil) was increased to us; being ordained both as a just punishment for our offence, and as a remedy of our needs: For thereupon "the ground was cursed, to bring forth thorns and thistles to us;" and it was our doom, pronounced by God's own mouth, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground;" so that now, labour is fatally natural to us. Now "man," as JOB saith, "is born to labour as the sparks fly upward:" (or, 'as the vulture's chickens soar aloft,' according to the Greek interpreters.)

4. Accordingly our condition and circumstances in the world are so ordered, as to require industry; so that without it we cannot support our life in any comfort or con-

venience; wherefore **ST. PAUL**'s charge upon the Thessalonians, that "if any man would not work, neither should he eat," is, in a manner, a general law imposed on all mankind by the exigency of our state; according to that of **SOLOMON**: "The idle soul shall suffer hunger; and the sluggard, who will not plough by reason of the cold, shall beg in harvest, and have nothing."

Of all our many necessities, none can be supplied without pains, wherein all men are obliged to bear a share. Every man is to work for his food, for his apparel, for his accommodations; either immediately and directly, or by commutation and equivalence: For the gentleman himself cannot (at least worthily and inculpably) obtain them otherwise, than by redeeming them from the ploughman and artificer, by compensation of other cares and pains conducible to public good.

The wise poet, **VIRGIL**, did well observe, when he said,

. *Pater ipse colendi*
Haud facilem esse viam voluit . . .

And **ST. CHRYSOSTOM** doth propose the same observation, that **GOD**, to whet our mind, would not that we should easily come by the fruits of the earth, without employing much art and pains; in order thereto, there must be skill used, in observing seasons, and preparing the ground; there must be labour spent in manuring, in delving and ploughing, in sowing, in weeding, in fencing it; there must be pains taken in reaping, in gathering, in laying up, in threshing, and dressing the fruit before we can enjoy it. So much industry is needful to get bread; and, if we list to fare more daintily, we must either hunt for it, using craft and toil to catch it out of the woods, the water, the air; or we must carefully wait on those creatures of which we would serve ourselves; feeding them that they may feed us: such industry is required to preserve mankind from starving. And to guard it from other inconveniences, mischiefs, and dangers surrounding us, it is no

less requisite. For to shelter us from impressions of weather, we must spin, we must weave, we must build; and in order thereto, we must scrape in the bowels of the earth to find our tools; we must sweat at the anvil to forge them for our use; we must frame arms to defend our safety and our store from the assaults of wild beasts, or more dangerous neighbours, wild men. To furnish accommodations for our curiosity and pleasure, or to provide for the convenience and ornament of our life, still greater measures of industry are demanded: to satisfy those intents, a thousand contrivances of art, a thousand ways of trade and business serve, without which they are not attainable. In whatever condition any man is, in what state soever he be placed, whatsoever calling or way of life he doth embrace, some peculiar business is imposed on him, which he cannot with any advantage, with any grace, with any comfort to himself, or satisfaction to others, manage without industry. Nothing will go on of itself, without our care to direct it, and our pains to hold it, and forward it in the right course: all which things show, that Divine Wisdom did intend we should live in the exercise of industry, or not well without it; having so many needs to be supplied, so many desires to be appeased thereby; being exposed to so many troubles and difficulties, from which we cannot extricate ourselves without it. But farther yet:

5. Let us consider, that industry hath annexed thereto, by divine promise, the fairest fruits, and the richest rewards. All good things are the fruits of industry, ordered to sprout from it, under the protection and influence of God's blessing.

All good things, indeed, are the gifts of God, and freely dispensed by his hand; but he doth not give them absolutely without condition, nor miraculously, without concurrence of ordinary means. By supporting our active powers, and supplying needful aid to our endeavours; by directing and upholding us in the course of our action; by preventing or removing obstacles that might cross us; by granting

that success which dependeth on his pleasure, he confers them on us: our hand commonly is GOD's hand, by which he worketh good, and reacheth out benefits to us; governing and wielding it as he pleaseth.

GOD indeed could not well proceed otherwise in dispensing his favours to us; not well, I say, that is, not without subverting the method of things which himself hath established; not without slighting and voiding his own first bounty, or rendering his common gifts (our reason, our senses, our active powers) vain and useless; not without making us incapable of any praise, or any reward, which supposed works achieved by our earnest endeavour; not without depriving us of that sweet content, which springeth from enjoying the fruit of our labour.

Hence it is, that whatever in Holy Scripture is called the gift of GOD, is otherwise affirmed to be the effect of industry; it being the condition upon which, and the instrument whereby divine Providence conveyeth good things to us: what GOD said to JOSHUA, doth imply the general method of his proceeding: "Only be thou strong and courageous, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

Hence whatever we are directed to pray for, we are also exhorted to work for; declaring thereby, that we are serious in our devotion, and do not mock GOD, asking that of him, which we deem not worth our pains to acquire. It was well said of CATO in SALLUST: *Vigilando, agendo, consulendo prosperè omnia cedunt; ubi socordiæ te atque ignaviæ tradideris, nequicquam Deos implores, irati infestique sunt.* We are bid to pray even for our daily bread, yet we may starve if we do not work for it; and, in ST. PAUL's judgment, deserve to do so.

Hence we are bound to thank GOD for all those things, for the want of which we must thank ourselves, and condemn our own sloth.

Hence, although we should cast our care on GOD, and rely on his providence, being solicitous for nothing; yet we must not so trust him as to tempt him, by neglecting

the means which he doth offer of relieving ourselves ; to be presumptuously slothful being no less blameable, than to be distrustfully careful.

Hence God in all such cases, when we need any good thing, is said to be our helper to the obtaining it ; which doth imply, that we must co-operate with him, and join our forces to those which he doth afford ; so that as we can do nothing without him, so he will do nothing without us ; yea, so that sometime we are said also to help God : “ Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” If ever God doth perform all, without human labour conspiring, it is only in behalf of those who are ready to do their best, but unable to do any thing, being overpowered by the insuperable difficulty of things ; but he never doth act miracles, or control nature, he never doth stretch forth his arm, or interpose special power, in favour of wilful and affected sluggards.

In fine, it is very plain, both in common experience, (declaring the course of Providence,) and in Holy Scripture, (expressing God’s intention,) that Almighty God doth hold forth all good things, as the prizes and recompenses of our vigilant care and painful endeavour ; as by surveying particulars we may clearly discern.

Nothing is more grateful to men than success in their undertakings, whereby they attain their ends, satisfy their desires, save their pains ; this commonly is the effect of industry, and scarce ever is found without it. An industrious person, who, as such, is not apt to attempt things impossible or impracticable, can hardly fail of compassing his designs, because he will apply all means requisite, and bend all his forces thereto, striving to break through all difficulties, and to subdue all oppositions thwarting his purposes ; but nothing of worth or weight can be achieved with half a mind, with a faint heart, with a lame endeavour : any enterprise undertaken without resolution, managed without care, prosecuted without vigour, will

easily be dashed, ending in disappointment, damage, and dissatisfaction. So the Wise Man doth assure us : “ The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” The one pineth away with ineffectual desires ; the other thriveth upon prosperous success.

Plentiful accommodations for our sustenance and convenience, men will agree to be desirable ; and these are indeed the blessings of Him “ who visiteth the earth and enricheth it, who crowneth the year with his goodness, and whose clouds drop fatness ;” but they are so dispensed by Heaven, that industry must concur therewith in deriving them to us, and sloth will debar us of them : For “ he,” saith the Holy Oracle, “ that tilleth his land, shall be satisfied with bread ; and the thoughts of the diligent alone tendeth to plenteousness : but the sluggard shall beg in harvest, and have nothing ; and the idle soul shall suffer hunger.”

Wealth is that which generally men are wont to desire, as the great storehouse of their needs and conveniences ; and most evident it is, that in the natural course of things, industry is the way to acquire it, to secure it, to enlarge it ; which course, pursued innocently and modestly, God will be so far from obstructing, that he will further and bless it : indeed it would be a flaw in Providence, if honest industry, using the means it affordeth, should fail of procuring a competency ; which, joined with a pious contentedness, in ST. PAUL’S computation, is great wealth. Wherefore, although SOLOMON telleth us, that “ the blessing of the LORD is that which maketh rich,” yet he doth not forget or contradict himself when he doth also affirm, that “ the hand of the diligent maketh rich ;” and that “ he who gathereth by labour shall increase,” because God blesseth the industrious ; and by his own hand, as the most proper instrument, maketh him rich.

Another yet more precious good, far surpassing all external advantages, is wisdom ; I mean, right judgment about matters of highest importance to us. Now this is

the prize of industry, and not to be gained without it. Nature conferreth little thereto; fortune much less; it cannot be bought at any rate; "it cannot," saith **JOB**, "be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; it cannot be valued with the gold of **Ophir**, with the precious onyx, or the sapphires;" it is the offspring of watchful observation and experience, of serious meditation and study; of careful reflection on things, marking, comparing, and weighing their nature, their worth, their tendencies, and consequences. These are needful to the getting of wisdom; because truth, which it seeketh commonly, doth not lie in the surface, obvious to a superficial glance, nor only dependeth on a simple consideration of few things, but is lodged deep in the bowels of things, and under a knotty complication of various matters; so that we must dig to come at it, and labour in unfolding it: nor is it an easy task to avoid the prejudices springing from inclination and temper, from education or custom, from passion and interest, which cloud the mind, and obstruct the attainment of wisdom.

If we will have it, we must get it as **SOLOMON** himself did, that great Master of it. How was that? "I gave," saith he, "my heart to know wisdom." He, who made it his choice before all things; who so earnestly and so happily prayed for it; upon whom it is so expressly said, that **GOD** in a plentiful measure did bestow it; who averreth **GOD** to be the sole donor of it; (for "the **LORD**," saith he, "giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,") even he did first give his heart to it, before it was given into his heart: he did not only gape for it, to receive it by mere infusion, but he worked and studied hard for it; he was indeed a great student, an inquisitive searcher into nature, a curious observer of the world, a profound considerer and comparer of things; and by that industrious course, promoted by divine blessing, he arrived at that stock of renowned wisdom.

And the same method it is which he prescribeth to us: exhorting us, that "we incline our ear unto wisdom, and

apply our heart to understanding ;” that we “cry after knowledge, and lift up our voice for understanding ;” that we “seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures :” In following which course he doth assure us of good success : for “then,” saith he, “shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of GOD ;” which is the chief part of wisdom.

This indeed is the only way : idleness is not capable of so rich and noble a purchase. A slothful person may be conceited, but he can never be wise. “A sluggard,” saith SOLOMON, “is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason :” this conceit of wisdom is a natural issue of his ignorance, and it is indeed no small part of his folly that he doth not perceive it ; being no less stupid in reflection on his own mind, than in considering other matters. Being always in a slumber, he will often fall into such pleasant dreams ; and no wonder that he should presume upon abundance of knowledge, who, not listing to take any pains in the search of things, doth snatch the first appearances ; doth embrace every suggestion of his fancy, every conceit gratifying his humour, for truth.

What should I speak of learning, or the knowledge of various things, transcending vulgar apprehension ? Who knoweth not that we cannot otherwise reach any part of that than by assiduous study and contemplation ? Who doth not find that all the power in the world is not able to command, nor all the wealth of the Indies to purchase one notion ? Who can be ignorant that no wit alone, or strength of parts, can suffice, without great industry, to frame any science, to learn any one tongue, to know the history of nature, or of Providence ? It is certainly by HORACE’S method,—

Multa tulit, fecitque puer,

by much exercise and endurance of pains, that any one can arrive to the mark of being learned or skilful in any sort of knowledge.

But farther yet: Virtue, the noblest endowment and richest possession whereof man is capable; the glory of our nature, the beauty of our soul, the goodliest ornament and the firmest support of our life; that also is the fruit and blessing of industry; that of all things most indispensably doth require it. It doth not grow in us by nature, nor befall us by fortune; for nature is so far from producing it, that it yieldeth mighty obstacles to its birth; there being in the best dispositions much averseness from all good, and great proneness to all evil. Fortune doth not further it, but casteth in rubs and hinderances thereto; every condition presenting its allurements, or its affrightments from it: all things within us and about us conspire to render its production and its practice laborious.

It is, it is true, a gift of Heaven, and cannot be obtained without a special influence of divine grace; but it is given as children are, (of whom it is said, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD, and the fruit of the womb is his reward,) not without sore travail and labour of the mother; not without grievous difficulty and pangs in the birth. In our conversion to embrace virtue, GOD doth guide us; but to what? To sit still? No: to walk, to run in his ways. Grace doth move us; but whereto? To do nothing? No: but to stir and act vigorously. "THE HOLY SPIRIT doth help our infirmities:" but how could it help them, if we did not conjoin our best, though weak endeavours, with its operations? To what doth it *συνάντιλαμβάνειν*, or co-help us, but to strive against sin, to work righteousness, to perform duty with earnest intention of mind, and laborious activity? 'GOD,' saith ST. CHRYSOSTOM, 'hath parted virtue with us, and neither hath left all to be in us, lest we should be elated to pride, nor himself hath taken all, lest we should decline to sloth.'

Accordingly, our growth in grace implies the most difficult efforts of soul; the extirpating rooted prejudices and notions from our understanding; the bending a stiff will, and rectifying crooked inclinations; the overruling a

rebellious temper; curbing eager and importunate appetites; taming wild passions; withstanding violent temptations; surmounting many difficulties, and sustaining many troubles; the struggling with various unruly lusts within, and encountering many stout enemies abroad, which assault our faith, and “war against the soul.” On such exercises its growth, its subsistence dependeth; so that from any discontinuance or remission of them it would soon decay, languish away, and perish.

What attention, what circumspection and vigilancy of mind, what intention of spirit, what force of resolution, what command and care over ourselves doth it require to keep our hearts from vain thoughts and evil desires; to guard our tongue from wanton, unjust, uncharitable discourse; to order our steps uprightly and steadily in all paths of duty! ‘And what,’ (as ST. CHRYSOSTOM asketh,) ‘of all things belonging to virtue, is not laborious?’ It is no small task to know it, wherein it consisteth, and what it demandeth of us; it is a far more painful thing to conform our practice unto its rules and dictates.

If travelling in a rough way, if climbing up a steep hill, if combating stern foes, and fighting sharp battles, if crossing the grain of our nature and desires, if continually holding a strict rein over all our parts and powers, be things of labour and trouble, then greatly such is the practice of virtue.

Indeed each virtue hath its peculiar difficulty, needing much labour to master it: Faith is called *ἔργον πίστεως*, “the work of faith:” and it is no such easy work as may be imagined, to bring our hearts unto a thorough persuasion about truths crossing our sensual conceits, and controlling our peevish humours, unto a perfect submission of our understanding, and resignation of our will to whatever God teacheth or prescribeth; to a firm resolution of adhering to that profession which exacteth of us so much pains, and exposeth us to so many troubles.

Charity also implies a laborious exercise of many good

works, and he that will practise it must in divers ways labour hardly. He must labour in voiding from his soul many dispositions deeply radicated therein by nature, opinion, and custom; envy, frowardness, stubbornness, perverse and vain selfishness, from whence wrath, revenge, spite, and malice, spring forth: he must labour in effectual performance of all good offices, and in catching all occasions of doing good; he must exert that "labour of love," whereof ST. PAUL speaketh; he must (as that holy Apostle directeth, not only in precept, but by his own practice) work with his own hands, that he may supply the wants of his neighbour.

Hope itself (which one would think, when grounded well, should be a no less easy than pleasant duty) doth need much labour to preserve it safe and stable, among the many waves and billows of temptation assaying to shake and subvert it: whence "patience of hope" is recommended to us, and we so often are exhorted to hold it fast, to keep 'sure, firm, and unshaken to the end.

Temperance also demandeth no small pains: it being no light business to check our greedy appetites, to shun the enticements of pleasure, to escape the snares of company and example, to support the ill will and reproaches of those zealots and bigots for vice, who cannot tolerate any non-conformity to their extravagancies; but, as ST. PETER expresseth it, "think it strange if others do not run with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of them."

What should I speak of meekness, of patience, of humility, of contentedness? Is it not manifest how laborious those virtues are, and what pains are necessary in the obtaining, in the exercise of them? What pains, I say, they require in the suppression of forward humours, in the quelling fierce passions, in the brooking grievous crosses and adversities, in the bearing heinous injuries and affronts!

Thus doth all virtue require much industry, and it therefore necessarily must itself be a great virtue, which is the mother, the nurse, the guardian of all virtues; yea,

which indeed is an ingredient and constitutive part of every virtue : for if virtue were easily obtainable, or practicable without a good measure of pains, how could it be virtue ? What excellency could it have, what praise could it have, what reward could it expect ? GOD hath indeed made the best things not easily attainable ; hath set them out of our reach, to exercise our industry in getting them ; that we might raise ourselves up to them ; that, being obtained, they may the more deserve our esteem, and his reward.

Lastly, The sovereign good, the last scope of our actions, the top and sum of our desires, happiness itself, or eternal life in perfect rest, joy, and glory, although it be the supreme gift of GOD, and special boon of divine grace ; (the gift of GOD's grace is eternal life :) yet it also, by GOD himself, is declared to be the result or reward of industry : for we are commanded to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling ;" and to "give diligence in making our calling and election sure ;" and "GOD," saith ST. PAUL, "will render unto every man according to his works ; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life ;" and in the close of GOD's book it is proclaimed, as a truth of the greatest moment, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." It is plainly industry which climbeth the holy mount ; it is industry which taketh "the kingdom of heaven by force ;" it is industry "which so runneth as to obtain the prize, which so fighteth as to receive the crown," which so watcheth as to secure our everlasting interest to us.

Thus do the choicest good things of which we are capable, spring from industry, or depend upon it ; and no considerable good can be attained without it. Thus all the gifts of GOD are by it conveyed to us, or are rendered in effect beneficial to us : for the gifts of nature are but capacities which it improveth ; the gifts of fortune or Providence are but instruments, which it employeth to our use ; the gifts of grace are the supports and succours of it ; and the very gift of glory is its fruit and recompense.

SERMON IX.

OF INDUSTRY IN OUR CALLING.

ROM. xii. 11.

Not slothful in business.

INDUSTRY is a very eminent virtue, being an ingredient (or the parent) of all other virtues, of constant use upon all occasions, and having influence upon all our affairs.

For it is our nature framed ; all our powers of soul and body being fitted for it, requiring it for their preservation and perfection.

We were designed for it in our first happy state ; and upon our lapse thence were farther doomed to it, as the sole remedy of our need, and the inconveniences to which we became exposed. For,

Without it we cannot well sustain or secure our life in the enjoyment of any comfort or convenience ; we must work to earn our food, our clothing, our shelter, and to supply every indigency of accommodations which our nature doth crave.

To it God hath annexed the best, and most desirable rewards : success to our undertakings, wealth, wisdom, virtue, salvation, all which, as they flow from God's bounty, and depend on his blessing ; so from them they are usually conveyed to us through our industry, as the ordinary channel and instrument of attaining them.

It is requisite to us even for procuring ease, and preventing a necessity of immoderate labour.

It is in itself sweet and satisfactory, as freeing our mind from distraction, and racking irresolution ; as feeding

us with good hope, and yielding a foretaste of its good fruits.

It furnisheth us with courage to attempt, and resolution to achieve, things needful, worthy of us, and profitable to us.

It is attended with a good conscience, and cheerful reflections, of having well spent our time, and employed our talents to good advantage.

It sweeteneth our enjoyments, and seasoneth our attainments with a delightful relish.

It is the guard of innocence, and barreth out temptations to vice, to wantonness, to vain curiosity, and pragmatism.

It is necessary for every condition and station, for every calling, for every relation : no man without it being able to deport himself well in any state, to manage any business, to discharge any sort of duty.

To it the world is indebted for all the culture which advanceth it above rude and sordid barbarism : for whatever in common life is comely, or useful, industry hath contrived it, industry hath composed and framed it.

It is recommended to us by all sort of patterns considerable : for all nature is continually busy and active in tendency toward its proper designs ; heaven and earth work in incessant motion ; every living creature is employed in procuring its sustenance ; the blessed spirits are always on the wing in dispatching the commands of God, and ministering succour to us ; God himself is ever watchful, and ever busy in preserving the world, and providing for the needs of every creature.

The lives of our blessed SAVIOUR, of all the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Saints, in this respect, have been more exemplary : no virtue being more conspicuous in their practice, than industry in performing the hard duties, and painful tasks, imposed on them for the service of God, and the benefit of mankind.

Such is the virtue upon which I have formerly discoursed in general, but shall now more specially consider, in reference

to its most proper matter, **Business**, explaining and pressing it accordingly.

“Be not slothful in business,” (that is, in discharge of it,) or to business: (that is, to undertake it:) this is the rule; the nature and needfulness whereof we shall declare.

By *σπουδή* (business) we may understand any object of our care and endeavours, which doth require them, and may deserve them; which by reason of its difficulty, cannot well be accomplished or attained without them; and which is productive of some fruit or recompense answerable to them.

The proper object of our industry is, true business; or that which is incumbent on a man to do, either in way of duty, being required by God; or by dictate of reason, as conducing to some good purpose; so that in effect it will turn to account, and, finally, will pay him for his labour of mind or body; that which the Wise Man did intend, when he advised, “Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might:” Whatever thy hand findeth; that is, whatever by divine appointment, (by the command or providence of God,) or which, upon rational deliberation, doth occur as matter of our action, comprising every good purpose and reasonable undertaking incident to us.

But our business, according to the holy Apostle’s intent, may be supposed especially to be the work of our calling; to which, each man hath a peculiar obligation; and which therefore is most properly his business.

Now this business, our calling, is double: Our general calling, which is common to us all as Christians; and our particular calling, which peculiarly belongeth to us, as placed in a certain station, either in the Church or State. In both which vocations, that we are much obliged and concerned to be industrious, shall be now my business to declare.

I. As to our general calling, (that sublime, that heavenly, that holy vocation,) in which, by divine grace, according to the evangelical dispensation, we are engaged, that

necessarily requireth, and most highly deserveth, from us a great measure of industry : the nature and design of it requireth, the fruit and result of it deserveth, our utmost diligence ; all sloth is inconsistent with discharging the duties, with enjoying the hopes, and obtaining the benefits, thereof. For,

It is a state of continual work, and is expressed in terms importing abundant, incessant, intense, care and pain : for to be indeed Christians, “ we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling ; ” we must, “ by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality ; ” we must “ walk worthy of the LORD to all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work ; ” we must “ be rich in good works, and filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by JESUS CHRIST, to the praise and glory of GOD : ” “ we are GOD’S workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

We have a mind to improve with virtue and wisdom, qualifying us for entrance into heaven, for enjoyment of GOD’S favour, for conversation with angels.

As Christians, we are assumed to be servants of GOD, and re-admitted into his family, from which, for our disloyalty, we had been discarded ; so that as he was our natural Lord, so he is now such also by special grace ; who did make us, who doth maintain us, under whose protection and at whose disposal we subsist ; whence we are obliged to be faithfully diligent in his service : we must constantly wait upon him in devotional addresses ; we must carefully study to know his pleasure ; we must endeavour exactly to perform his will ; we must strive to advance his glory, to promote his interest, to improve all talents and advantages committed to us for those purposes ; we must (as ST. PAUL expresseth it) “ always abound in the work of the LORD.”

We must also look upon ourselves as servants of CHRIST our Redeemer, who by his blood hath purchased us to himself, that we might be “ zealous of good works ; ”

performing a service to him, which consisteth in a faithful discharge of manifold duties; and in pursuance of all virtue; with most intent application of mind, with expeditious promptitude, with accurate circumspection; "giving all diligence," (as ST. PETER speaketh,) in adding one virtue to another; "being ready (as ST. PAUL saith) to every good work;" and "seeing that we walk circumspectly," or behave ourselves exactly according to the rules of duty in all our conversation.

This service requireth of us assiduous attention on works of piety and devotion; that we "incessantly watch to prayers," that we "always give thanks," that we "continually offer up the sacrifice of praise to GOD."

It demandeth from us a continual "labour of charity;" that we "serve one another in love;" that we should, as "we have opportunity, work good to all men;" that we should "always pursue good toward one another, and toward all men."

It obligeth us "with all our powers, to pursue peace with all men;" (which, considering our natural peevishness, pride, and perverseness, is often no easy task;) and that we do *σπουδαζέειν*, "studiously endeavour, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

It chargeth on us, contentedly and patiently to undergo whatever GOD doth impose of burthen or sufferance, so that "patience have its perfect work;" and it is a crabbed work, to bend our stiff inclinations, to quell our refractory passions, to make our sturdy humour buckle thereto.

It doth exact that we should govern and regulate, according to very strict laws, all the faculties of our soul, all the members of our body, all internal motions, and all external actions, proceeding from us; that we should check our inclinations, curb our appetites, and compose our passions; that we should guard our hearts from vain thoughts and desires; that we should bridle our tongues from evil and from idle discourses; that we should order our steps in the straight way of righteousness, not defecting to the right hand or to the left.

In the discharge of this service, how many rough difficulties are there to be surmounted; how many great obstacles to be removed; how many stout oppositions to be encountered; how many potent enemies to be vanquished; how many sore hardships, crosses, and tribulations, to be endured?

How shrewd a task must we find it, to mortify our earthly members; to crucify our flesh, with its affections and lusts; to pull out our right eyes; and cut off our right hands; to renounce our worldly interests; to hate our nearest relations; to take up and bear our cross, whenever conscience calleth us thereto?

Our calling, therefore, doth require great industry; and the business of it, consequently, is well represented by those performances which demand the greatest intention, and laborious activity. It is styled exercise: (agonistic and ascetic exercise:) γύμναζε σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν, “exercise thyself to godliness;” and ἐν τετῶ δε αὐτὸς ἀσκῶ, “herein I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men;” Wrestling:—ἡμῶν ἡ πάλη, our wrestling is not only against “flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers;”—Running a race: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us;” “so run that we may obtain;” “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling;”—a Warfare, a combating: “war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience;” “fight the good fight;” “thou therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST;” “every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things;”—offering Violence: “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent take it by force;”—Watching: “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober;” “watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Hence the precepts importing the general tenor of Christian practice are usually couched in terms implying great sedulity and contention of soul: Ἀγωνίζεσθε, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate;” “let us labour therefore to

enter into that rest ;” “ labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life ;” “ give diligence to make your calling and election sure ;” “ gird up the loins of your mind ;” “ be sober, and hope to the end ;” “ wherefore, brethren, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

Such is the work of our general calling, and so much industry it challengeth from us ; with great reason, indeed, for that such work is needful to our happiness, and that our labour will certainly be rewarded therewith.

The work, indeed, of itself, is most worthy to employ us ; doth most become us, doth much adorn us, doth best befit our divine extraction and large capacity ; is the noblest, the sweetest employment that could take us up ; but we have also the greatest inducements and encouragements possible for our industry therein.

There are by the divine mercy wages assigned abundantly correspondent to our work, yea, infinitely surpassing it ; there is a great (or a manifold) hire for our slender and simple performances ; there are several noble prizes highly worth our striving for with our utmost strength and contention of soul.

In recompense thereof, we assuredly enjoy in this transitory state, the special favour and love of **God**, with his constant protection and care, for our good ; his faithful direction, and friendly assistance, to guide us, and uphold us in all our ways, to bless and prosper our undertaking, to supply us in our needs, and comfort us in our distresses ; so that we shall lack nothing that is good, that “ no evil shall happen to us,” that “ all things shall work together for our good.”

We shall thereby taste the satisfactions of a calm mind, and a sound conscience, quickened by the consolations of the divine Spirit ; “ the peace of **God** ruling in our hearts, which passeth all understanding.”

We shall, afterward, when this moment is passed over, and our short day’s work dispatched, receive from **God’s**

bountiful hand an inconceivable affluence of good things; an eternal permanence of life, undisturbed rest, indefectible wealth, ineffable joy, incorruptible glory, “a kingdom unshakeable.”

“He (saith our LORD) that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting.”

“To them (saith ST. PAUL) who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,” GOD, in recompense, will bestow “eternal life.” And,

“I have (saith the blessed labourer of himself) fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.”

What more effectual incentive can there be to industry in this business, than to consider that which ST. PAUL so often doth inculcate? “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same (a recompense for the same) he shall receive of the LORD; and knowing that (in consideration of our service done to the LORD) of the LORD we shall receive the reward of the inheritance.”

What exhortation can be more firmly grounded, or strongly backed, than is that of the Apostle: “Therefore my brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the LORD?”

May it not also much encourage us to industry, to be assured, that not only the kind of our work, but the degree of our labour, shall be considered and requited in just proportion; so that the harder we work, the higher we shall be rewarded: for “to each one (saith our LORD) the Son of Man shall render a reward, *κατὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ*, according to his performance;” “every one (saith ST. PAUL) shall receive, *ἰδίον μισθὸν κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον*, his proper reward according to his proper work:” whence we have reason to observe ST. JOHN’S advice: “Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those things which ye have gained, but that ye receive a full reward.”

To be negligent or slothful in such a case, for want of a little care and pains to forfeit such advantages, what a pity, what a folly is it? Were an opportunity presented by a little minding our business, and bestirring ourselves, to procure a fair estate, or good preferment, would not he be deemed mad, who should sit still, and forego that advantage? How much more wildness is it to be drowsy and sluggish in this case, thereby losing eternal bliss and glory? Well therefore might the Apostle say, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" How shall we escape not only the sin, and guilt of basest ingratitude toward him that graciously doth offer it, but the imputation of most wretched folly, in being so much wanting to our own interest?

Is it not a sad thing, to observe what pains men will throw away upon things of small or no concernment to them? Yea, what toil and drudgery they will sustain in the service of SATAN, in pursuit of sin, in the gratification of their vanities and lusts?

What pains will a covetous wretch take in scraping for pelf, how will he rack his mind with carking solicitude to get, to keep, to spare it? How will he tire his spirits with restless travel? How will he pinch his carcase for want of what nature craveth? What infamy and obloquy will he endure for his niggardly parsimony and sordidness?

How much labour will an ambitious man undergo for preferment, or vain honour? To how many tedious attendances, to how pitiful servilities, will he submit? What sore crosses and disappointments will he swallow, what affronts and indignities will he digest, without desisting from his enterprise?

How will a man, (as ST. PAUL observed,) *πάντα ἐγκρατεύσασθαι*, endure all painful abstinence and continence, in order to the obtaining "a corruptible crown," a fading garland of bays, a puff of vain applause?

What diligence will men use to compass the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures; how watchful in catching opportunities, how eager in quest of them will they be; what

difficulties will they undertake, what hazards will they incur, what inconveniences will they sustain, rather than fail of satisfying their desires?

What achings of head and heart, what pangs of mind, what anxieties of regret and fear, will every worker of iniquity undergo? So faithful friends hath this vain and evil world; so diligent servants hath the accursed lord thereof; so careful and laborious will men be to destroy and damn themselves. O that we could be willing to spend as much care and pains in the service of our God! O that we were as true friends of ourselves! O that we could be as industrious for our salvation! that is, in the business of our general calling; which having considered, let us proceed to the other business belonging to us; which is,—

II. The business of our particular calling; that, in reference whereto ST. PAUL doth prescribe, “Every man as the LORD hath called him, so let him walk. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called:” let him so abide, as faithfully to prosecute the work, and discharge the duty of it; the doing which he otherwise termeth, *πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια*, “to do our own business;” (working with our hands;) and enjoineth it in opposition to those two great pests of life, sloth and pragmatistical curiosity; or the neglect of our own, and meddling with other men’s affairs.

This the Apostle nameth “our calling,” because we are called, or appointed thereto by divine Providence; for he taketh it for granted, that to each man in this world GOD hath assigned a certain station, unto which peculiar action is suited; in which station, he biddeth him quietly to abide, until Providence fairly doth translate him; and during his abode therein, diligently to execute the work thereof.

Every man is a member of a double body: Of the civil commonwealth, and of the Christian church; in relation to the latter whereof ST. PAUL telleth us, (and what he saith, by parity of reason, may be referred likewise to the former,) that “GOD hath set the members every one in

the body as it pleaseth him ; ” and as it is in the natural, so it is in every political and spiritual body, every member hath its proper use and function : “ All members (saith ST. PAUL) have not the same office,” or the same work and operation ; yet every one hath some work. There is no member designed to be idle or useless, conferring no benefit to the whole ; but “ the whole body (saith the Apostle) fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying itself in love : ” each member doth conspire and co-operate to the strength, nourishment, thriving, and welfare of the whole.

Every man (who continueth a man ; in his senses, or in any good degree of natural integrity) is by GOD endued with competent abilities to discharge some function, useful to common good : to every one some talent is committed, which, in subordination to GOD’S service, he may improve, to the benefit of the world, GOD’S temporal, or of the Church, GOD’S spiritual, kingdom.

It is plainly necessary, that the greatest part of men should have a determinate work allotted to them, that they may support their life, and get their food, without being injurious, offensive, or burthensome to others : for their living they must either follow some trade, or they must shark and filch, or they must beg, or they must starve.

And the rest are obliged to do somewhat conducive to public good ; that they may deserve to live : for a drone should not be among the bees, nor hath right to devour the honey. If any man doth pretend, or presume, that he hath nothing to do but to eat, to sleep, to play, to laugh ; to enjoy his ease, his pleasure, his humour, he thereby doth, as it were, disclaim a reasonable title of living among men, and sharing in the fruits of their industry.

Such a one in the body of men, what is he but an unnatural excrescence, sucking nutriment from it, without yielding ornament or use ? What is he but a wen, deforming

and encumbering the body; or a canker, infesting and corrupting it?

As no man (at least with decency, convenience, and comfort) can live in the world without being obliged to divers other men for their help, in providing accommodations for him, so justice and ingenuity (corroborated by divine sanction) require of him, that in commutation, he, one way or other, should undertake some pains, redounding to the benefit of others.

So hath the great Author of order distributed the ranks and offices of men, in order to mutual benefit and comfort: then one man should plough, another thresh, another grind, another labour at the forge, another knit or weave; another sail, another trade, another supervise all these, labouring to keep them all in order and peace; that one should work with his hands and feet, another with head and tongue; all conspiring to one common end, the welfare of the whole, and the supply of what is useful to each particular member. Every man so reciprocally obliging and being obliged; the Prince being obliged to the husbandman for his bread, to the weaver for his clothes, to the mason for his palace, to the smith for his sword; those being all obliged to him for his vigilant care in protecting them; for their security in pursuing the work, and enjoying the fruit of their industry.

So every man hath a calling, and proper business; whereto that industry is required, I need not much to prove, the thing in reason and experience being so evident; for what business can be well dispatched, what success can be expected to any undertaking, in what calling can any man thrive without industry? What business is there that will go on, or proceed to any good issue, if we do not carefully look to it, steadily hold it in its course, constantly push and drive it forwards? It is true as in nature, so in all affairs, nothing moveth without being moved.

Our own interest should move us to be industrious in

our calling, that we may obtain the good effects of being in a comfortable subsistence; that we may not suffer the damages and wants, the disappointments and disgraces ensuing on sloth; but the chief motive should be from piety and conscience; for that it is a duty which we owe to God. For God having placed us in our station; he having apportioned to us our task, we being in transaction of our business his servants, we owe to him that necessary property of good servants, without which fidelity cannot subsist: for how can he be looked on as a faithful servant, who doth not effectually perform the work charged on him; or diligently execute the orders of his master?

ST. PAUL doth enjoin servants, that they should "in all things obey their masters," with conscientious regard to God, as therein performing service to God, and expecting recompense from him; and of Princes he saith, that they in dispensation of justice, enacting laws, imposing taxes, and all political administrations, are "the ministers of God attending constantly upon this very thing:" and if these extremes, the highest and lowest of all vocations, are services of God; if the highest upon that score be tied to so much diligence, then surely all middle places, upon the same account of conscience toward God, exact no less.

If he that hath one talent, and he that hath ten, must both improve them for God's interest; then he that hath two, or three, or more, is obliged to the same duty proportionably.

Every one should consider the world as the family of that great *Pater-familias*, ("of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,") and himself as an officer or servant therein, by God's will and designation constituted in that employment, into which Providence hath cast him; to confer in his order and way somewhat toward a provision for the maintenance of himself, and of his fellow-servants. Of a superior officer, our Lord saith, "Who is that faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath

made ruler over his household, to give them their meat in due season?" So the greatest men are as stewards, treasurers, controllers, or purveyors; the rest are inferior servants in their proper rank and capacity.

And he that with diligence performeth his respective duty (be it high and honourable, or mean and contemptible, in outward appearance) will please **GOD**, as keeping good order, and as being useful to his service; so that upon the reckoning, **GOD** will say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy **LORD**." But he that doeth otherwise, (behaving himself carelessly, or sluggishly in his business,) will offend **GOD**, as committing disorder, and being unprofitable.

He committeth disorder, according to that of **ST. PAUL**: "We hear there are some, which walk among you disorderly, not working at all." His sentence and doom will be, according to our **LORD**, "O thou wicked and slothful servant,"—"Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness;" which words are spoken in relation to one, who, being a loiterer or sluggard in his calling, did not improve the special talent entrusted with him for **GOD**'s service.

In fine, if we are conscientiously industrious in our vocation, we shall assuredly find the blessing of **GOD** thereon; and that he thereby will convey good success, comfort, competent wealth, all desirable good unto us: for as all these things are promised to industry, so the promise, especially, doth belong to that industry, which a man doth exercise in an orderly course of action in his own way; or rather in **GOD**'s way, wherein divine Providence hath set him.

An irregular or impertinent laboriousness, out of a man's calling or sphere; a being diligent in other men's affairs, invading their office, may not claim the benefit of those promises, or the blessings of industry: but a husbandman, who (with conscientious regard to **GOD**, and confidence in

him) is painful in tilling his ground, may expect a good crop; a merchant, who (upon the same principle, with the like disposition) earnestly followeth his trade, may hope for safe voyages and good markets; a Prince, carefully minding his affairs, may look for peace and prosperity to his country; a scholar studying hard may be well assured of getting knowledge, and finding truth; all, who with honest diligence constantly pursue their own business, may confidently and cheerfully hope to reap the advantages suitable to it from the favourable blessing of God. So that we have all reason to observe the Apostle's precept, "Not to be slothful in business."

Now "the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through our blessed SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; to whom for ever be all glory and praise. Amen."

SERMON X.

THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

ROM. xi. 33.

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

THESE words are the close of a disputation, wherein ST. PAUL was engaged with the advocates of Judaism, concerning GOD'S Providence towards his ancient people, in rejecting the greatest part of them, upon their refusal to embrace the christian doctrine; and in admitting the Gentile world to favour, upon its compliance with the overtures thereof, proposed in the Gospel. In this proceeding, those infidels could not discern GOD'S hand, nor would allow such a dispensation worthy of him, advancing several exceptions against it: GOD, said they, having espoused and consecrated us to himself; having to our fathers, in regard to their piety, made so absolute promises of benediction on their posterity; how can it consist with his wisdom, with his justice, with his fidelity, with his constancy, to abandon us? Doth not this dealing argue his former affections to have been misplaced; doth it not implead his ancient covenant; doth it not supplant his own designs, and unravel all that he for so many ages hath been doing? Upon such accounts did this dispensation appear very strange and scandalous to them: but ST. PAUL being infallibly assured of its truth, undertakes to vindicate it from all misprisions, rendering a fair account of it, and assigning for it many satisfactory reasons, drawn from the general equity of the case, from the nature of GOD, his attributes, and his relations to men; from the congruity of this proceeding, to the tenor of GOD'S Provi-

dence, to his most ancient purposes, to the true intent of his promises, to his express declarations and predictions; to the state of things in the world, and the pressing needs of all mankind: such reasons, I say, (which I have not time explicitly to relate,) doth the Apostle produce in favour of this great dispensation; which sufficed to clear it from all their objections; yet, notwithstanding, after he had steered his discourse through all these rocks, he thought it safe to cast anchor; winding up the contest in this modest intimation, that whatever he could say might not perhaps exhaust the difficulty, that therefore in this and in all such cases, for entire satisfaction, we should have recourse to the incomprehensible wisdom of God, who frequently in the course of his Providence doth act upon grounds, and ordereth things in methods, transcending our ability to discover or trace: To consider some causes and reasons of which incomprehensibility, and to ground thereon some practical advices, will be the scope of my discourse: the reasons may be these:—

1. As the dealings of wise men sometimes are founded upon maxims, and admit justifications, not obvious nor penetrable by vulgar minds; so may God act according to rules of wisdom and justice, which it may be impossible by our faculties to apprehend.

As there are natural modes of being and operation, (such as God's necessary subsistence, his production of things from nothing, his eternity without succession, his immensity without extension, his prescience without necessitation of events, his ever acting, but never changing, and the like,) so there may be prudential and moral rules of proceeding far above our reach. So God himself telleth us: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Some of them we may be incapable to know, because of our finite nature; they being peculiar objects of divine wisdom, and not to be understood by any creature: for as God cannot impart the power of doing all things possible, so may he not communicate the faculty of knowing all

things intelligible ; that being indeed to ungod himself, or to deprive himself of his peerless supremacy in wisdom : hence, is he styled “the only wise GOD ;” hence, he “chargeth the angels with folly ;” hence, the most illuminate Seraphim veil their faces before him.

Other such rules we may not be able to perceive from the meanness of our nature, or our low rank among creatures : for beneath omniscience there being innumerable forms of intelligence, in the lowest of these we sit, one remove from beasts ; being endued with capacities, suitable to that inferior station, and to those meaner employments, for which we were designed, and framed. Hence, our mind hath a pitch beyond which it cannot soar ; and things clearly intelligible to more noble creatures, moving in a higher orb, may be dark and inexplicable to us. “As an angel of GOD, so is my Lord the King, to discern good and bad,” was an expression importing this difference, how those glorious creatures overtop us in intellectual capacities.

Also divers notions, not simply passing our capacity to know, we are not yet in condition to know, by reason of our circumstances here, in this dark corner of things, to which we are confined, and wherein we lie under many disadvantages of attaining knowledge. He that is shut up in a close place, and can only peep through clincks ; who standeth in a valley, and hath his prospect intercepted ; who is encompassed with fogs, who hath but a dusky light to view things by, whose eyes are weak or foul ; how can he see much or far ? how can he discern things remote, minute, or subtle, clearly and distinctly ? Such is our case ; our mind is pent up in the body, and looketh only through those clefts by which objects strike our sense. Its intuition is limited within a very small compass ; it resideth in an atmosphere of fancy, stuffed with exhalations from temper, appetite, passion, interest ; its light is scant and faint ; (for sense and experience reach only some few gross matters of fact ; light infused, and revelation imparted to us, proceed in measures fixed by GOD ;) our ratiocina-

tion consequently, from such principles, must be very short and defective : nor are our minds ever thoroughly sound or pure, and defecate from prejudices ; hence, no wonder, that now we are wholly ignorant of divers great truths, or have but a glimmering notion of them, which we may, and hereafter shall, come fully and clearly to understand : so that even Apostles, the secretaries of heaven, might say, “ We know in part, and we prophesy in part ; we now see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.”

In fine, those rules of equity or expedience, which we use in our transactions with one another, (being derived from our original inclinations to like some good things, or from notions stamped on our soul, when GOD made us according to his image, from common experience, from any kind of rational collection, from the prescription of GOD’s word,) if they be applied to the dealings of GOD, will be found very incongruous, or deficient ; the case being vastly altered from that infinite distance in nature and state between GOD and us ; and from the immense differences which his relations toward us have from our relations to one another.

Wherefore, in divers inquiries about Providence, to which our curiosity will stretch itself, it is impossible for us to be resolved, and launching into them we shall soon get out of our depth, so as to swim in dissatisfaction, or to sink into distrust. Why GOD made the world at such an instant, no sooner or later ; why he made it thus, not exempt from all disorder ; why he framed man (the prince of visible creatures) so fallible and frail, so prone to sin, so liable to misery ; why so many things happen offensive to him ; why his gifts are distributed with such inequality ; such questions we are apt to propound and to debate ; but the resolution of them our mind perhaps was not made to apprehend : however in this state we by no means can come at it ; it at least being kept among those things, of which it is said, “ Secret things belong unto the LORD our GOD ;” in distinction from others, about which it is added,

“But those which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.”

In such cases the absolute will, the sovereign authority, the pure liberality of GOD, supply the place of reasons, sufficient, if not to satisfy the minds of men fondly curious, yet to stop the mouths of those who are boldly peremptory; which are alleged, not with the intent to imply that GOD ever acteth unaccountably, or without highest reason; but that sometimes his methods of acting are not fit subjects of our conception or discussion; for otherwise GOD appealeth to the verdict of our reason, when the case is such that we can apprehend it, and the apprehension of it may conduce to good purposes.

2. As the standing rules of GOD's acting, so the occasional grounds thereof are commonly placed beyond the sphere of our apprehension.

GOD is obliged to prosecute his own decrees, “working all things,” as the Apostle saith, “according to the counsel of his' own will;” which how can we any wise come to discover? Can we climb up above the heaven of heavens, and there unlock his closet, rifle his cabinet, and peruse the records of everlasting destiny, by which the world is governed? No: “Who knoweth his mind, or hath been his counsellor? Who,” saith the Prophet, “hath stood in the counsel of the LORD; or hath perceived and heard his word?”

He doth “search the hearts, and try the reins of men;” he doth “weigh their spirits, and their works;” he doth “know their frame,” he doth “understand their thoughts afar off;” he perceiveth their closest intentions, their deepest contrivances, their most retired behaviours; he, consequently, is acquainted with their true qualifications, capacities, and merits; unto which he most justly and wisely doth accommodate his dealings with them; which therefore, must often thwart the opinions and expectations of us, who are ignorant of those particulars, and can only view the exterior face or semblance of things. For, as

SAMUEL said in the case of preferring DAVID before his brethren, "GOD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but GOD looketh on the heart."

GOD also hath a perfect foresight of contingent events; he seeth upon what pin each wheel moveth, and with what weight every scale will be turned. He discerneth all the connexions, all the entanglements of things, and what the result will be upon the combination, or the clashing, of numberless causes; in correspondence to which perceptions, he doth order things consistently and conveniently; whereas we, being stark blind, or very dim sighted in such respects, (seeing nothing future, and but few things present,) cannot apprehend what is fit and feasible, or why that is done which appeareth done to us.

GOD observeth in what relations, and what degrees of comparison (as to their natures, their virtues, their consequences,) all things stand, each toward others; so poising them in the balance of right judgment, as exactly to distinguish their just weight; whereas we cannot tell what things to compare, we know not how to put them into the scale, we are unapt to make due allowances, we are unable to discern which side doth overweigh. In the immense variety of objects, our knowledge extends to few things eligible, nor among them can we pick out the best competitors for our choice: hence, often must we be at a great loss in scanning the designs, or tracing the footsteps of Providence.

3. We are also incapable throughly to discern the ways of Providence from our moral defects, from our stupidity, our sloth, our temerity, our impatience, our impurity of heart, our perverseness of will and affections. We have not the perspicacity to espy the subtle tracts, and secret reserves of divine Wisdom; we have not the industry, with steady application of mind, to regard and meditate on GOD's works; we have not the temper and patience to wait upon GOD, until he discover himself in the accomplishment of his purposes; we have not that "blessed

purity of heart," which is requisite to the seeing God in his special dispensations; we have not that rectitude of will, and government of our passions, as not to be scandalized at what God doeth, if it thwarteth our humour: such defects are observable even in good men; who therefore have misapprehended, have disrelished, have murmured at, the proceedings of God. We might instance in JOB, in DAVID, in ELIAS, in JONAH, in the holy Apostles themselves; by whose speeches and deportments in some cases it may appear, how difficult it is for us who have "eyes of flesh," as JOB speaketh, and hearts too, not quite freed of carnality, to see through, or fully to acquiesce in, the dealings of God.

It is indeed a distemper incident to us, which we can hardly shun or cure, that we are apt to measure the equity and expedience of things according to our opinions and passions; affecting consequently to impose on God our silly imaginations as rules of his proceedings, and to constitute him the executioner of our sorry passions: what we conceit fit to be done, that we take God bound to perform; when we feel ourselves stirred, then we presume God must be alike concerned. To our apprehensions, every slight inconvenience is a huge calamity, every scratch of fortune is a ghastly wound: God therefore, we think, should have prevented it, or must presently remove it; every pitiful bauble, every trivial accommodation, is a matter of high consequence, which if God withhold, we are ready to clamour on him, and wail as children for want of a trifle. Are we soundly angry? Then "fire must come down from heaven;" then thunderbolts must fly about. Are we pleased? Then showers of blessings must descend on the heads, floods of wealth run into the laps, of our favourites; otherwise we are not satisfied, and scarce can deem God awake, or mindful of his charge. We beyond measure hate or despise some persons; and to those God must not afford any favour, any mercy. We excessively admire or dote on others; and those God must not touch or cross: if he doth not proceed thus, he is in danger to

forfeit his authority : he must hardly be allowed to govern the world, in case he will not square his administrations to our fond conceit, or froward humour. Hence, no wonder that men often are stumbled about Providence ; for God will not rule according to their fancy or pleasure ; neither indeed could he do so if he would ; their judgments and their desires being infinite ; various, inconsistent, and repugnant. Again,

4. The nature of those instruments, which divine Providence doth use in administration of human affairs, hindereth us from discerning it. It is an observation among Philosophers, that the footsteps of divine wisdom are, to exclusion of doubt, far more conspicuous in the works of nature, than in the management of our affairs ; so that some, who by contemplation of natural appearances were convinced of God's existence and his protection of the world, reflecting on the course of human transactions, have staggered into distrust, whether a divine wisdom doth sit at the helm of our affairs. Many hardly would admit God to be concerned in them, but suppose him to commit their conduct to a casual fluctuation of obvious causes : one great reason of this difference may be, that whereas the instruments of divine power in nature are in themselves merely passive, or act only as they are acted by pure necessity, (as a pen in writing, or a hammer in striking,) being thence determinate, uniform, constant, and certain in their operation ; whenever any footsteps of counsel, any tendency to an end, and deviation from the common tracts of motion do appear, such effects cannot reasonably be imputed merely to natural causes, but to a superior wisdom, wielding them in such a manner, and steering them to such a mark : but the visible engines of Providence in our affairs are self-moving agents, working with knowledge and choice ; which, as in themselves they are indeterminate, irregular, and uncertain, so they may be diversified in numberless unaccountable ways, according to various representations of objects, or by influence of divers principles inclining to judge and choose differently.

Temper, humour, passion, prejudice, custom, example, together with contingencies of occasion, (depending on like principles in adjacent free causes,) move singly or combinedly, in ways so implicate, to the production of so various events, that nothing hardly can fall out, which may not with some plausible colour be derived from some one of those sources, or from a complication of them. Nothing can appear so uncouth or extravagant, which may not be fathered on some fetch of wit, or some hit of fancy, some capricio of humour, some transport of passion, some lucky advantage, or on divers of those conspiring : whence in accounting for the reason of such events, men deem they may leave out Providence as superfluous ; especially considering, that usually disorders and defects, only imputable to man's will, accompany and further such events.

For instance; what other cause would many think needful to assign for the conveyance of JOSEPH into Egypt, than the envy of his brethren ; for SHIMEI's reviling DAVID, than his base malignity ; for DAVID's numbering the people, than his wanton pride ; for JEROBOAM's revolt, than his unruly ambition ; for JOB's being robbed, than the thievish disposition of the Arabs ; for his being diseased, than a redundance of bad humours ; for our LORD's suffering, than the spiteful rage of the Jewish rulers and people ; together with the treacherous avarice of JUDAS, and the corrupt easiness of PILATE ? Yet these events are all of them ascribed to GOD's hand and special ordination ; but men could not see, or avow it in them. What need, will men ever say in such cases, to introduce GOD's aid, when human means suffice ?

5: Indeed, as in nature, the influences of heaven, and of inferior causes, so commonly in the production of these events, divine and human agency are so knit and twisted one with the other, that it is not easy to discriminate them, so as to sever the bounds of common and special Providence ; or to discern what GOD performeth by natural instruments, what by superior efficacy ; when the balance

turneth on our inclinations, when it is cast from a grain thrown in by divine interposition. The management of these affairs being a concert, wherein God's wisdom beareth one part, man's free will playeth another; occasion also strikes in; we, not seeing the first, are prone to ascribe all the harmony to the last, which are most obvious.

6. The more apt we are to do thus, because the manner of divine efficacy is ever very soft and gentle. God disposeth things *fortiter et suaviter*, so as to perform what he designeth, but in the most sweet and easy way. His Providence doth not hurry along like an impetuous torrent; but glideth on as a smooth and still current, with an irresistible but imperceptible force carrying things down therewith; without any clatter, by a nod of his head, by a whisper of his mouth, by a turn of his hand, he doth effect his purposes; winding up a close spring, he setteth the greatest wheels in motion, and thrusting in an insensible spoke, he stoppeth the greatest wheels in their career; injecting a thought, exciting a humour, presenting an occasion, insinuating a petty accident, he bringeth about the most notable events. He doth so fashion the hearts of men, so manage their hands, so guide their steps, that even they who are acted by him, cannot feel the least touch upon them. For, "the King's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water he turneth it wheresoever he will:" that is, by secret pipes, by obscure channels, God conveyeth the minds and wills of the greatest persons (the chief engines of his Providence) unto such points of resolution as he pleaseth; so that they seem to flow thither of their own accord, without any exterior direction. Hence his most effectual operations slip by us without making impression on our minds, which are wont to apprehend things, as with a gross palpability they incur the senses: so that the Preacher, comparing the methods of Providence with the most occult proceedings in nature, might well say, "As thou knowest not the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that

is with child, so thou knowest not the works of GOD, who maketh all." Again,

7. GOD, in his progress toward the achievement of any design, is not wont to go in the most direct and compendious ways, but commonly windeth about, and taketh a large compass, enfolding several other co-incident purposes, some whereof may be no less considerable than is that which we deem most necessary. But this course seemeth tedious to us, who have not the wit to perceive that complication of ends, nor the temper to wait for the completion of them. If GOD, when we seem to need, doth not instantly appear in our favour; if he doth not presently vindicate truth and right; if he doth not nip wicked designs in the bud; if for a while he suffereth the "tabernacles of robbers to prosper, and iniquity to lift up its horns;" then he is in a slumber, quite unmindful and insensible of us; then he turneth aside his face, or doth behold what passeth as an unconcerned spectator; then he standeth aloof, unready to help us; then doth he hold off his hand, not meddling in our affairs: In such cases we are apt to cry out, *Estis ubi, ó superi*: "How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget? How long wilt thou hide thy face? LORD, how long wilt thou look on? Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? Why standest thou afar off? Why withdrawest thou thy hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. Return, O LORD, how long?" Such are our prayers, such our expostulations; so is our blind impatience prone to murmur; not considering how many good designs GOD is carrying on in a calm and steady pace, by well-measured steps, all which in due season, when they are ripe for accomplishment, shall undoubtedly be effected; for "the LORD," as ST. PETER saith, "is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but 'is long-suffering toward all men;" that is, he certainly will express his faithful benignity toward good men, yet so as also to extend his merciful patience toward others; he so will tender the interests of some, as concurrently to

procure the welfare of all, and accordingly will time his proceedings, allowing the leisure and opportunities requisite thereto. He can, although we cannot, “wait to be gracious;” for as in him there are no passions to precipitate action, so to him there are no sensible differences of time: “One day being with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

8. Again, GOD (as is the property of every wise agent) is wont to act variously, according to the state and circumstances of things, or to the dispositions and capacities of persons; so as to do the same thing for different ends, and different things for the same end; to apply one instrument to several uses, and by several instruments to work one purpose. So he afflicteth good men out of love, for trial and improvement of their virtues; bad men in displeasure, to illustrate his power and justice on them; he encourageth and blesseth the one, he punisheth and curseth the other with prosperity; he reclaimeth both from error and sin by either of these methods, as their temper and their circumstances require. Whence it is very difficult for us ever, from the kind of accidents befalling men, to divine how far GOD is concerned in them, or to what particular scope they are aimed; so that well might the Preacher, upon a careful observation of such occurrences, establish this rule: “No man knoweth love, or hatred,” (that is, the special regard of GOD toward men,) “by all that is before them;” because, “all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.” Farther,—

9. There are different ends which Providence in various order and measure doth pursue, which we by reason of our dim sight and short prospect cannot descry. GOD, as the universal and perpetual Governor of the world, in his dispensation of things, respecteth not only the good of this or that person, of one nation, or one age; but often (in some degree waiving that, or taking care for it in a less remarkable way) hath a provident regard to the more extensive good of a whole people, of the world, of posterity; as he

ordered his friend ABRAHAM to wander in a strange land for the benefit of his seed; JOSEPH to be sold, calumniated, and fettered, for the preservation of his family; our LORD to suffer those grievous things for the redemption of mankind; the Jews to be rejected for the salvation of the Gentiles. In such cases, purblind men, observing events to cross particular and present ends, but not being aware how conducive they may prove to general, remote, and more important designs, can hardly be satisfied how GOD should be concerned in them: the present, or that which lieth adjacent, is all that we can or will consider, and therefore must be ill judges of what is done by all-provident Wisdom.

10. Again, GOD permitteth things bad in their own nature, with regard to their instrumental use and tendency; for often the worst things may be ordainable to the best ends; things very bitter may work pleasant effects; upon the wildest stock divine husbandry can ingraft excellent fruit. Sin really and suffering reputedly are the worst evils; yet even from them much glory to GOD, and great benefit to men, may accrue. Even from the most wicked act that ever was committed, from the most lamentable event that ever happened, fruits admirably glorious and immensely beneficial sprung: yet usually so blind are we as to be offended at such things, and from them to raise exceptions against Providence.

11. Also the expediency of things to be permitted or crossed doth frequently consist not in themselves singly taken, as particular acts or events, but in their reference to others, with which they may become subservient toward a common end; so that divers things, in themselves extremely bad, may, by combination or collision, engender good effects, and thence prove fit weapons or tools of Providence; as the most deadly poisons may be so mixed, that curbing one another's force, they may constitute a harmless mass, sometimes a wholesome medicine. But we, poring on the simple ingredients, and not considering how

they may be tempered, or how applied by a skilful hand, can hardly deem the toleration of them congruous to wisdom. Farther,—

12. That Providence sometimes is obscure and intricate, may be attributed to the will of God, upon divers good accounts designing it to be such: “Verily,” saith the Prophet, “thou art a God that hidest thyself; O God of Israel, the Saviour.”

God commonly doth not intend to exert his hand notoriously; for that whereas every special interposition of his hand is in effect a miracle, (surmounting the natural power, or thwarting the ordinary course of inferior causes,) it doth not become him to prostitute his miraculous power, or to exert it otherwise than upon singular occasions, and for most weighty causes. It is not conformable to the tenor of his administrations to convince men against their will, or by irresistible evidence to wring persuasion from stubborn and stupid minds; but to exercise the wisdom, and to prove the ingenuity of well-disposed persons, who upon competent intimations, shall be capable to spell out, and forward to approve his proceedings.

13. He will not glare forth in discoveries so bright as to dazzle, to confound our weak sight; therefore he veileth his face with a cloud, and wrappeth his power in some obscurity; therefore “clouds and darkness are round about him: he maketh darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him is dark waters and thick clouds of the sky.”

14. He meaneth thereby to exalt and improve our faith, being the less seen, that he may be the more believed; faith never rising higher than when it doth soar to objects beyond our sight; when we can approve God’s wisdom and justice in occurrences surmounting our conceit; when we can rely upon God’s word and help, although the stream of his proceedings seemeth to cross our hopes.

15. It is fit also that God should act many times designedly in ways surpassing our apprehension, and apt to baffle or puzzle our reason, that he may appear God indeed,

infinitely transcending us in perfection of wisdom and justice; or that we, not comprehending the reason of his actings, may not imagine our wisdom comparable, our justice commensurate to his; yea, that we in those respects exceed him: for "that," as TERTULLIAN discourseth, "which may be seen, is less than the eyes that survey it; that which may be comprehended, is less than the hands that grasp it; that which may be valued, is less than the senses which rate it." It is GOD's being inestimable that makes him worthily esteemed; his being incomprehensible, rendereth him adorable.

16. The obscurity of Providence doth indeed conciliate an awful reverence toward it; for darkness naturally raiseth a dread of invisible powers: we use to go on tremblingly when we cannot see far about us; we regard none so much as those whose wisdom we find to overreach ours, and whose intentions we cannot sound. It was ELIHU's observation, "With GOD is terrible majesty; the ALMIGHTY we cannot find him out; men do therefore fear him."

17. It is also requisite that GOD should dispose many occurrences cross to our vulgar notions, and offensive to our carnal sense, that we may thence be prompted to think of GOD, driven to seek him, engaged to mark him interposing in our affairs: men, from disorderly and surprising accidents, preposterously conceive doubts about Providence, as if it managing things, nothing odd or amiss would occur; whereas, if no such events did start up, they might be proner to question it, they would at least come to forget or neglect it: for if human transactions passed on as do the motions of nature, in a smooth course, without any rub or disturbance, men commonly would no more think of GOD than they do when they behold the sun rising, the rivers running, the sea flowing; they would not depend on his protection, or have recourse to him for succour. It is difficulty and distress, seizing them, which compel men to implore GOD for relief; which dispose men to see his hand, reaching it forth unto them; according to

that in the Psalmist: "When he slew them, then they sought him; they returned and inquired early after God; they remembered that God was their Rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer." Again,—

18. It is needful that the present course of Providence should not be transparently clear and satisfactory, that we may be well assured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a resolution of all such emergent doubts and difficulties: for if all accounts were apparently stated and discharged here,—if now right did ever prevail, and iniquity were suppressed,—if virtue were duly crowned, and vice deservedly scourged, who would hope or fear an after-reckoning?

This indeed is the grand cause why Providence now doth appear so cloudy. Men consider not that our affairs have no complete determination or final issue here; things now are doing and not done, in a progress and tendency toward somewhat beyond, not in a state of consistence and perfection; this not being the place of deciding causes or dispensing rewards, but a state of probation, of work, of travel, of combat, of running for the prize, of sowing toward the harvest; a state of liberty to follow our own choice, and to lay the ground of our doom; of falling into sin, and of rising thence by repentance; of God's exercising patience, and exhibiting mercy: wherefore, as we cannot well judge of an artificial work by its first draughts, or of a poem by a few scenes, but must stay until all be finished or acted through; so we cannot here clearly discern the entire congruity of providential dispensations to the divine attributes; the catastrophe or utmost resolution of things is the general judgment, wherein the deep wisdom, the exact justice, the perfect goodness of God will be displayed to the full satisfaction or conviction of all men; when God's honour will be thoroughly vindicated, his despised patience and abused grace will be avenged, every case will be rightly tried, every work will be justly recompensed, all accounts will be set straight: in the mean time divers things must occur unaccountable to us,

looking upon things as they now stand absolutely before us, without reference to that day. Considering this may induce us to suspend our opinion about such matters, allowing GOD to go through with his work before we censure it, not being so quick and precipitate as to forestall his judgment; and surely would we but observe that reasonable advice of ST. PAUL, "Judge nothing before the time, until the LORD come," our chief doubts would be resolved, our shrewdest exceptions against Providence would be voided.

These are the chief reasons of the point: Divers practical applications may be made; which the time will but allow me to name.

1. It should render us modest and sober in our judgment about providential occurrences; not pretending thoroughly to know the reasons of GOD's proceedings, or to define the consequences of them: for it is plainly fond arrogance, or profane imposture, to assume perfect skill in that which passeth our capacity to learn.

2. It should make us cautious of grounding judgment or censure upon present events about any cause, or any person; for it is notorious temerity to pass sentence upon grounds incapable of evidence.

3. It should repress wanton curiosity, which may transport us beyond our bounds, in speculation of these mysteries; so that we shall lose our labour and time, shall discompose our minds, shall plunge ourselves into vain errors, or anxious doubts.

4. It should keep us from confidence in our own wisdom; for how can we conceit highly of that, or much confide in it, which we find so unable to penetrate the reason of most common and obvious appearances; so *non-plussed* in its inquiries, so defeated in its expectations, so mistaken in its judgments of things?

5. It should preserve us from infidelity, and from despair upon account of any cross accidents occurring here; for it is unreasonable to disbelieve a notion, otherwise well grounded, because we cannot answer scruples or cavils

drawn from matters inscrutable to us; it is foolish to despair of a good event, upon appearances, whereof we cannot apprehend the full reason, or final result.

6. It should prevent our taking offence, or being discontented at any events rising up before us; for to be displeased at that, which a superior wisdom, unsearchable to us, doth order, is to be displeased at we know not what, or why, which is childish weakness; to fret and wail at that, which, for all we can see, proceedeth from good intention, and tendeth to good issue.

7. It should guard us from security, or from presuming upon impunity for our miscarriages; for seeing God doth not always clearly and fully discover his mind, it is vain from God's reservedness to conclude his unconcernedness; or, because he is now patient, that he never will be just in chastising our offences.

8. It should quicken our industry in observing and considering the works of Providence; for since they are not easily discernible, and the discerning them in some measure is of great use, it is needful that we be very diligent in contemplation of them: the fainter our light is, the more intent we should be in looking; the knottier the subject, the more earnest should be our study on it.

9. It should oblige us to be circumspect and wary in our conversation; for the darker the way is, the more careful should be our walking therein, lest we err, lest we stumble, lest we strike on somewhat hurtful to us.

10. It should engage us constantly to seek God, and to depend on him, for the protection and conduct of his grace, which is the only clew that can lead us safely through this intricate labyrinth of worldly contingencies.

11. In fine, it should cause us humbly to admire and adore that wisdom which governeth the world in ways no less great and wonderful, than just and holy. For "great and marvellous are thy works, O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. Just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints."

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHRIST

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE:

OR,

A SHORT DISCOURSE,

POINTING THE WAY OF

Making use of Christ for Justification,

AND MORE PARTICULARLY

FOR SANCTIFICATION



BY THE REV. JOHN BROWN.

CHRIST

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

JESUS saith unto them, I am the way, and the truth, and the life :
No man cometh unto the FATHER but by me. JOHN xiv. 6.

CHAPTER I.

The Introduction, with some general observations.

IT is always necessary for the children of GOD to know the right way of making use of CHRIST, who is made all things to them which they need, even "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." But it is never more necessary for believers to be clear in this matter, than when SATAN is seeking to pervert the right ways of the LORD, and one way or other to lead souls away, and draw them off CHRIST; knowing that, if he prevail here, he hath gained his point. And therefore he endeavoureth not only to darken it by error, either more gross or more subtle, but also to darken it by mistakes and prejudices; whence it cometh to pass, that not only strangers are made to wander out of the way, but often many of his own people are walking in darkness, and remain lean through want of the real exercise of the life of faith, which would make them fat and flourishing, because it would make them "strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might," and to "grow in CHRIST in all things."

The clearing up of this truth, then, cannot but be most seasonable now, when Satan is prevailing with many, whom he cannot get tempted to looseness, to sit down

upon something which is not CHRIST, and to rest upon something within themselves, distinct from him, both in the matter of justification and sanctification. This subtle adversary is now setting some to work, to cry up, by preaching, speaking, and printing, a way to heaven which is not CHRIST; a kind of morality and outward holiness, whereupon the soul is to rest: and this holiness, not wrought through the strength of JESUS, by faith, sucking life from him, but through their own art and skill, which in effect is nothing but an extract of refined Popery, devised and broached on purpose to draw the soul off CHRIST, that he may stand upon his own legs, and walk by his own power, and thank himself, at least in part, for the crown at length.

Through the great goodness of GOD, the true way of a soul's justification is admirably seared up; and many are, at least theoretically, acquainted therewith; and many also practically, to the quieting of their awakened consciences, and stopping the mouth of their accusers, and obtaining of peace, joy, and the lively hope of the everlasting crown. Yet many profess their unacquaintedness with the solid way of using CHRIST for growth in grace, and true sanctification; therefore some discovery of the truth here cannot but be useful, seasonable, yea, and acceptable unto them. If He who is the truth, would give grace to understand and to unfold this so necessary a truth, and would help to explain this truth by faith in him, who is here said to be the Truth, then should we have cause to bless and magnify his name: but if he, because of sin, shall hide himself, and not let out those beams of light, whereby we might discover light, we shall but "darken counsel with words without knowledge," and leave the matter as unclear as ever. Therefore it is necessary, there be both in him that writeth, and in such as read, a single dependance on him, "who is given for a leader," (*Isai. lv. 5,*) and hath promised "to bring the blind by a way which they knew not, and to lead them in paths that they had not known, and to make darkness light before them;" that thus, by

faith on him, we may find the truth of this verified, *viz.*, That “ he is the way; the truth, and the life.”

Our LORD JESUS, from the beginning of this chapter, is laying down some grounds of consolation, to comfort his disciples against the sad news of his death, and to encourage them against the fears they had of much evil to befall them, when their LORD and Master should be taken from them; which is a sufficient proof of the tender heart of JESUS, who alloweth all his followers “ strong consolation ” against all fears, hazards, troubles, and perplexities. He “ will not leave them comfortless; ” and therefore he layeth strong grounds of consolation, to support their drooping and fainting hearts; as loving to see his followers “ rejoicing always in the LORD, and singing in the ways of Sion.”

In prosecution of which design, he told them, that they “ knew whither he went,” (*ver. 4.*) and the way also he was to take, and by which he was to bring them to the FATHER, and so to life eternal. But THOMAS, rashly and incredulously, (as too usually he did,) venteth himself, and little less than contradicteth his Master, saying, “ We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way ? ” (*Ver. 5.*)

Whereupon CHRIST, after his usual manner, taketh occasion to clear up that ground of consolation further, and to let them see the true way of coming to the FATHER, that thereby they might be helped to see that they were not such strangers unto the way as they supposed: and withal, he layeth out the properties and excellencies of this way, as being the only true and living way; and that in such a manner, as they might both see the way to be perfect, full, safe, and satisfying; and also learn their duty of improving this way always, and in all things, until they come home to the FATHER, saying, “ I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the FATHER but by me.”

CHRIST then saying, that he not only is the way to the FATHER, even the true way; but that he is so the true

way, as that he is also truth itself in the abstract, and so the living way, that he is life itself in the abstract, giveth us ground to consider after what manner he is the truth and the life, as well as the way, and that for the discovering of his being an absolutely perfect, transcendently excellent, and fully satisfying way, useful to believers in all cases, all distresses, all difficulties, all trials, all temptations, all doubts, all perplexities, and in all causes or occasions of distempers, fears, faintings, discouragements. And this will lead us to clear up the duty of believers on the other hand, and to show how they should, in all their various cases and difficulties, make use of CHRIST, as the only all-sufficient way to the FATHER, and as truth and life in the way : and so we will speak of CHRIST'S being to his people all that is requisite for them here in the way, whether for justification or sanctification ; and how people are to make use of him, as being all, or as being "made of GOD to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.)

Before we come to the words in particular, we should look upon them as having relation to THOMAS'S words in the preceding verse, wherein he did little less than contradict what CHRIST had said in the 4th verse, and learn several comfortable points of doctrine, as,—

First, That JESUS CHRIST is very tender of his followers, and will not cast them off, nor upbraid them for every escape, whereby they may provoke him to anger, and grieve his SPIRIT ; but gently passeth by many of their failings, when he findeth they are not obstinate in their mistake, nor perverse in their way. For how gently and meekly doth he here pass over THOMAS'S unhandsome expression, finding that THOMAS spoke here, not out of obstinacy, but out of ignorance. And the reason is, because, 1. CHRIST knoweth our infirmity and weakness, and is of a tender heart, and therefore "will not break the bruised reed." (*Isai. xliii.*) Well knoweth he that rough and untender handling would crush us, and break us all in pieces. And, 2. He is full of bowels of mercy,

and can “have compassion on them that are out of the way, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (*Heb.* iv. 15; and v. 2.)

Which truth, as upon the one hand it should encourage all to choose him for their leader, and give up themselves to him, who is so tender of his followers; so, upon the other hand, it should rebuke such as are ready to entertain evil and hard thoughts of him, as if he were a hard master, and ill to be followed; and put all from entertaining the least thought of his untenderness and want of compassion. But moreover,—

Secondly, We see, that weaknesses breaking out in believers, when they are honestly and ingenuously laid open before the LORD, will not scare him away, but rather engage him the more to help and succour. Much of THOMAS’S weakness appearing in what he said; yet the same being honestly laid open to CHRIST, not out of a spirit of contradiction, but out of a desire to learn, CHRIST is so far from thrusting him away, that he rather condescendeth the more, out of love and tenderness, to instruct him better, and to clear the way more fully. And that because, 1. He knoweth our mould; how frail we are, and that, if he should deal with us according to our folly, we should quickly be destroyed. 2. He is not as man, hasty, rash, proud; but gentle, loving, tender, and full of compassion. 3. It is his office and proper work, to be an instructor to the ignorant, and a helper of our infirmities and weaknesses; a Physician to bind up and cure our sores and wounds.

Who would not then willingly give up themselves to such a Teacher, that will not thrust them to the door, nor give them up to themselves, always when their corruptions would provoke him thereunto? And what a madness is this in many, to stand back from CHRIST because of their infirmities, when, the more corruption we find, the more should we run to him? And it is soon enough to depart from CHRIST, when he thrusts us away, and saith, he will have no more to do with us: yea, he will allow us to stay,

after we are, as it were, thrice thrust away. Only let us take heed, that we approve not ourselves in our evils; that we hide them not, as unwilling to part with them; that we obstinately maintain them not, nor ourselves in them; but that we lie open before him, and deal with him, with honesty, ingenuity, and plainness.

Thirdly, We see further, that ignorance ingenuously acknowledged and laid open before CHRIST, puts the soul in a fair way to get more instruction. THOMAS having candidly, in the simplicity of his heart, professed his ignorance, is in a fair way now to get instruction; for this is CHRIST's work, "to instruct the ignorant, to open the eyes of the blind."

Why then are we so foolish, as to conceal our ignorance from him, and to hide our condition from him? And why doth not this commend CHRIST's school to us so much the more? Why do we not tarry as ingenuous scholars, really desirous to learn? But,—

Fourthly, We may learn, that our ill condition, put into CHRIST's hand, will have an advantageous issue; seeing CHRIST taketh occasion from THOMAS's laying open his condition, to clear up the truth more fully than it was before. For hereby, 1. CHRIST giveth an open declaration of the glory of his power, mercy, goodness, wisdom. 2. He hath occasion to give a proof of his glorious skill of healing diseased souls, and of making broken bones stronger than ever they were. 3. Thus he effectually accomplisheth his noble designs, and perfecteth his work, in a way tending to abase man, by discovering his infirmities, and to glorify himself in his goodness and love. 4. Thus he triumphed more over SATAN, and in a more glorious manner destroyeth his works. 5. Thus he declareth how wonderfully he can make "all things work together for good to them that love him," and follow him. 6. Yea, thus he engageth souls to wonder more at his divine wisdom and power; to despair less in time coming, when cases would seem hard; to acknowledge his great and wonderful grace, and his infinite power and wisdom,

that can bring death out of life; and also to be more sensible of the mercy, and thankful for it.

O believer, what matter of joy is here? How happy art thou, that hast given up thyself to him! Thy worst condition can turn to thy advantage. He can make thy ignorance, vented with a mixture of corruption, turn to the increase of thy knowledge. Bless him for this, and with joy abide at his school: and withal, be not discouraged, be thy state of ignorance and corruption what it will; lay it out before him with sincerity and singleness of heart, and then thou mayest “glory in thine infirmities, that the power of CHRIST may rest on thee:” for thou shalt see, in due time, what advantage infinite love and wisdom can bring to thy soul thereby.

May not this be a strong motive to induce strangers to give up themselves to Him, who will sweetly take occasion at their failings to help them forward in the way? And what excuse can they have, who say in effect, they will not go to CHRIST because their case is not good? And O that believers were not sometimes led away with this error of flying from CHRIST, because of infirmities seen and discovered!



CHAPTER II.

Of the Words in general.

WE come now to the words themselves, wherein CHRIST asserts that he is, 1. The Way; 2. The Truth; 3. The Life; and 4. That “no man cometh to the FATHER but by him.”

In them we learn these two things in general:—

I. The misery of wretched man by nature. This cannot be in a few words expressed. The particulars thereof we will but mention.

1. That he is born an enemy to, and at a distance

from, **GOD**, by the curse of the broken covenant made with **ADAM**.

2. That he neither can nor will return to **GOD** of himself. His way is not of himself: he hath need of another to be his way.

3. That he is a blind wandering creature, ready to take by-ways; yea, he loveth to wander: he goeth astray as soon as he is born.

4. He cannot discern the true way, but is blinded with prejudice thereat: he is nothing but a lump of error.

5. He is dead legally and really; how can he then come home? How can he walk in the way, though it were pointed out to him?

6. He, even when entered into the way, is subject to so many faintings and swoonings, that, except he get new quickening, he must lie by the way and perish.

In a word, his misery is such as cannot be expressed; as little as it is laid to heart, or seen and lamented.

Now, for a ground to our following discourse, I would press the solid, thorough apprehension of this, without which there is no application of **CHRIST**: for "the whole need not a physician, but the sick;" and **CHRIST** "is not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Yea, believers themselves should live within the sight of this, and not forget their frailty: for though there be a change wrought in them, yet they have need of **CHRIST**, as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" until he bring them in, and set them upon the throne. And O happy they, who must not walk one foot without this Guide leading them by the hand, or rather carrying them in his arms! Let all them, who would make use of **CHRIST**, remember what they were, and what they are, and keep the sense of their frailty and misery fresh; that seeing their need of him, they may look out to him for help and supply, and be more distinct in their application of him.

II. The second general is, That **CHRIST** is a complete Mediator, thoroughly furnished for all our necessities. Are we at a distance from the **FATHER**? He is a Way to bring

us together. Are we wandered out of the way? He is the Way to us. Are we blind and ignorant? He is the Truth. Are we dead? He is the Life. Concerning this completeness of his, we would mark,—

1. That he is thoroughly furnished with all things we stand in need of: “The Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He hath eye-salve, clothing, gold tried in the fire: for “the Spirit of the LORD is upon him, and hath anointed him.” (*Isai. lxi. 1.*)

2. He is suitably qualified, not only having a fulness, and an all-fulness, so that whatever we need is to be had in him; but also, a suitable fulness, answering our case to the life.

3. He is richly qualified with this suitable good. He hath not only wisdom and knowledge, but treasures of it; yea, all “the treasures thereof.” (*Col. ii. 3.*) There is fulness in him; yea, “it hath pleased the FATHER, that in him should all fulness dwell.” (*Col. i. 19.*) Yea, the “fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily.” (*Col. ii. 9.*)

4. There is here that which will answer all the objections of a soul, and these sometimes are not few. If they say they cannot know the way to the FATHER, then he is Truth to teach them that, and so to enter them into it: and if they say, they cannot walk in that way, nor advance in it one step, but will faint and fall; he answereth, that he is the Life, to put life and keep life in them, and to cause them to walk, by putting a new principle of life in them, and breathing anew on that principle.

O thrice happy they who have fled to Him for refuge! It is easy for them to answer all objections and cavils of SATAN, and of a false heart: It is easy for them to put CHRIST to answer all. And, on the other hand, who can tell the misery of such as are strangers to JESUS? How shall their wants be made up? How shall they answer accusations, temptations, doubts, fears, objections, and discouragements cast in their way?

O should not this endear the way of the Gospel to us,

and make CHRIST precious unto us! Is it not a wonder that such an all-sufficient Mediator, "who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to GOD through him," should be so little regarded and sought unto, and that there should be so few that embrace him, and take him, as he is offered in the Gospel?

How can this be answered in the day of accounts? What excuse can unbelievers have? Is not all to be found in CHRIST that their case calleth for? Is he not a complete Mediator, thoroughly furnished with all necessaries? Are not the riches of his fulness written on all his dispensations? The mouths then of unbelievers must be forever stopped.



CHAPTER III.

How CHRIST is the Way in general.

WE come now to speak more particularly to the words: And, 1, Of his being a Way. Our design being to point at the way of using CHRIST, in all our necessities and difficulties which are in our way to heaven; and particularly, to point out the way how believers should make use of CHRIST in all their exigencies, and so live by faith in him, walk in him, grow up in him, advance and march forward toward glory in him. It will not be amiss to speak of this fulness of CHRIST in reference to unbelievers, as occasion offereth; because this will help to clear the other.

Before we can clear up how any can make use of CHRIST, we must speak something of their necessity of him, and of his being furnished fully, richly, and satisfyingly for their case; and this will make the way of using CHRIST more plain.

While CHRIST then says, "I am the Way;" he points out these two things to us:—

First, That man is now estranged from the LORD. He

hath departed from GOD; he is revolted and gone. "They are all gone out of the way." (*Rom.* iii. 12.) "They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (*Psa.* lviii. 3.)

Nay, not only so, but we love to wander, and to run away from GOD; as JEREMIAH complaineth of that wicked people; (*Jer.* xiv. 10;) naturally, "with the dromedary, we traverse our ways," (*Jer.* ii. 23,) and run hither and thither, but never look towards him. Nay, we are like those spoken of: "We desire not the knowledge of his ways; we will have none of him, nor of his reproofs." (*Job* xxi. 14.)

O how sad is this! And yet how is it more sad that this is not believed, nor once considered! And that it is not believed is manifest: for,

1. How rare is it to meet with persons that are not very well pleased and satisfied with themselves and their condition! They have no complaints; they see no wants, nor necessities; they wonder what makes folk complain of their condition, of their evil heart, or of their hazard and danger; they understand not these matters.

2. Do we not find people very quiet and at rest, though "they remain in the congregation of the dead?" (*Prov.* xxi. 16.) They sleep in a sound skin, because they see no hazard; the thoughts of their condition never bereave them of one night's rest; all is at peace with them, for "the strong man keeps the house."

3. How rare is it to see any soul broken in heart, and humbled because of this; who is walking under this, as under a load; whose soul is bleeding upon the consideration of this! Is there any mourning for this?

Secondly, It pointeth out to us this: That "the way of man is not in himself;" (*Jer.* x. 23:) that is, that nothing that he can do, can or will prove a way to him to the FATHER; for CHRIST is the Way, excluding all other ways. And that man can do nothing to help himself into the way, is clear; for,—

1. His way is darkness. (*Prov.* iv. 19.) He knoweth no

better; he is satisfied therewith: there he sleepeth and resteth.

2. He cannot, nor doth desire to return. He hateth to be reformed.

3. Yea, he thinketh him safe; no man can convince him to the contrary: The way he is in "seemeth to be right to him, though the end thereof be death."

4. Every man hath his own particular way, to which he turneth; (*Isai.* liii. 6;) one thing or other that he is pleased with, and that he thinks will abundantly carry him through: and what these ordinarily are, we shall hear presently.

5. In this his way, which yet is a false way, he trusteth. (*Hos.* x. 13.) He leanteth upon it; little knowing that it will fail him at length, and that he and his confidence shall perish.

But what are those false and lying ways which men weary themselves in, and all in vain; and which they choose and trust unto, and yet are not the way which will prove safe and sure?

Answer. It will not be easy to reckon them up. We shall name some that are most ordinary; such as,—

1. Good purposes and resolutions; with which many deceive themselves, supposing that to be all which is required. And, alas, all their purposes are like Ephraim's goodness; "like the early cloud, and morning dew, that soon vanisheth." Their purposes are soon broken off, and soon disappointed, because made without counsel. (*Prov.* xv. 22.) Many foolishly rest here: that they have a mind to do better, and to amend their ways, and they purpose, after such a time or such a time, they shall begin a new manner of life: but their purposes never come to any effect, and so at length they and their purposes perish.

2. Some convictions. The word now and then pierceth them so far, and sharp dispensations from the LORD so far affect their heart, that they see it is not well with them: but they advance no farther; those convictions either die again, or work no further change; and, poor souls, they

think, because at such a sermon or such a communion they had some such convictions, therefore all is well ; when a **JUDAS** may have convictions sharper than ever they had.

3. Convictions followed with some sort of amendment. Some may dreadfully deceive themselves with this, and conclude that all is right with them, and that the way they are in is safe and sure, because they have had convictions which have been so effectual as to cause them to amend many things ; when, alas, their way is a way of darkness still ; it is not **CHRIST**, they have never come to him.

4. Many rest upon their outward civility and morality, or negative holiness ; they cannot be challenged for gross faults, and that is the way they rest in. Alas ! could not a Pharisee say as much as they ; viz., “ That he was no extortioner, no unjust person, nor adulterer.” How many Heathens, as to this, shall outstrip such as profess themselves Christians ? And yet they lived and died strangers to the right way to happiness.

5. Some may attain a kind of outward holiness, an outward performance of the duties of religion ; such as hearing, reading, prayer, communicating, and rest there, and yet perish : for that is but their own way ; it is not the right way.

6. Much knowledge doth deceive many. They think, because they can talk of religion, speak to cases of conscience, handle places of Scripture, and the like, that therefore all is right with them ; when, alas, that is but a slippery ground to stand upon. The Pharisees sat in **MOSES**'s seat, and taught sometimes sound doctrine, and yet were enemies to **JESUS**. And will not many think to plead themselves into heaven, by saying, that they “ have prophesied in his name ?” Knowledge, I grant, is good ; but it is not **CHRIST** ; and so it is not “ the way to the **FATHER** :” and many, alas, lean to it, and are deceived at last.

7. A kind of seriousness in the performance of duties, and in seeking of **GOD**, deceiveth many. They think, because they are earnest in what they do, that therefore

all is well. Many consider not that there is a secret hypocrisy that some may be under, and not know it ; as well as gross hypocrisy and dissimulation, which may be easily observed. Will not “many seek to enter in, that shall not be able?”

8. Many may deceive themselves with this : That they are looked on by others, (godly, discerning persons, and Ministers,) as serious Christians, and that they carry so handsomely, that no man can judge otherwise of them. But, alas, the day is coming which will discover many things, and many a one will be deceived, both of themselves and others. “Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom God approveth :” (2 Cor. x. 18 :) therefore PAUL exhorts TIMOTHY, to “study to shew himself approved unto GOD.” Men look only to the outside, and cannot see into the heart ; but GOD searcheth the heart : and it is an easy matter to deceive men ; but GOD will not be deceived.

9. Some may suppose themselves in a safe and sure way, if they outstrip others in religious duties, and be much in extraordinary duties ; when, alas, for all that, the heart may be rotten. The Pharisee “fasted twice a week,” and yet was but an enemy to CHRIST.

10. Quietness of conscience may deceive some ; and they may suppose that all is right with them, because their heart doth not accuse them of falsehood and dissimulation in their way with GOD or man. No doubt that young man spoke according to his judgment, when he said, “All these things have I observed from my youth.” (Luke xviii. 21.)

11. A way of zeal may deceive many ; who may think their case unquestionable, because they are zealous for their way ; and, as they think, their zeal is pure zeal for GOD. Was not PAUL, while a Pharisee, very zealous, when out of zeal to his way he persecuted the Church ? (Phil. iii. 6.) “See my zeal for the LORD,” could JEHU say ; and the Jews had a zeal of GOD, but not according to knowledge ; and CHRIST tells us, that such as should perse-

cute the Apostles unto death, would think they did God good service.

Many such false ways, wherein men please themselves, might be mentioned. By these every one may see cause of searching and trying over and over. It is a dreadful thing to be deceived here, and it is best to put it to a trial, when there is a possibility of getting the matter helped; and many may fear and tremble when they see they are not yet come the length of many such as sit down without CHRIST, and lose all their labour. O if this could put people to a serious trial of themselves, and of the nature of that way wherein they rest at present!

Thirdly, We might here observe, that this true and living Way is but one for all. There is but "one Mediator betwixt God and man;" one Mediator for both the Old and New Testament,—the Seed of the woman. Howbeit, the LORD's dispensations with his people in that one way may be various; as his way with his people under the Law, is different from his way with his people under the Gospel; and his dispensations with individual believers, whether under the Law or under the Gospel, is not the same in all things.

And this should teach us to relinquish our own ways, and to enter into this one way; and it should move such as are in this way to study unity and agreement among themselves, and yet not suppose that God's way with them must be in all things alike; yea, though the LORD's way with them be different from his way with others, and more dark, disconsolate, and bitter, yet let them be quiet and silent before the LORD, and acknowledge his goodness that hath brought them into the one way, JESUS CHRIST.

But, *fourthly*, The main thing here, and which is obvious, is this, that JESUS CHRIST is the way to the FATHER, the one and only way, the sovereign and excellent way; and he alone is this way; there is not another. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none

other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (*Acts* iv. 12.)

For clearing of this, we shall speak a little to four things:—1. What is our case, and what need we have of a way. 2. How CHRIST answereth this our case, and is a fit way for us. 3. How he alone is this way. 4. What are the advantages of this way. And this will make way for our clearing up how CHRIST is made use of as a way by poor sinners.

For the *first* of these, our present case and necessity, something was spoken of it before; we shall reduce all to these two heads: The first is our state of guilt, and separation from GOD because of sin and guilt; the next is our state of wickedness and enmity against GOD.

As to the first, we may take notice: 1. That sin, original and actual, hath separated us from GOD, and cast us out of his favour, out of that station of favour and friendship which once we were advanced to in ADAM. 2. That we are under GOD's curse and wrath, and excommunicated from the presence of the LORD by a sad, yet just sentence according to law, and so are under death.

As to the next thing, we may take notice: 1. That we are impure and polluted with sin and daily iniquity. 2. That we are ignorant of the right way of returning into favour with GOD, seeking to ourselves many inventions. 3. That we are impotent for any good work or commanded duty. 4. That not only so, but we are unwilling to do any thing that is good, or to enter into the way, when pointed out unto us; yea, we are enemies to GOD by wicked works, and have an innate hatred to all his ways. 5. We desire not to be out of the condition wherein we are: there we love to sleep, and desire not to be awakened. 6. We are under the power of SATAN, who leadeth us out of the way, yea, and driveth us forward in the wrong way, to our perdition. These things are plain and undeniable, and need no further confirmation.

For the *second*, how CHRIST answereth this our case.

He is a way to us, to help us out of both these ; both out of our state of guilt and separation, and out of our state of wickedness and enmity.

And, first, he helpeth us out of our state of guilt and separation.

1. By taking away our guilt and sin ; being “made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of GOD in him.” (*2 Cor. v. 21.*) He hath filled the great gap betwixt GOD and us with his body, and hath made of it, as it were, a bridge, by which we may go over unto the FATHER : “We enter now into the holiest by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” (*Heb. x. 19, 20.*) We are now “brought near by his blood ;” (*Eph. ii. 13 ;*) so that through him we are restored again to friendship with GOD, and made one with him : for CHRIST the Mediator hath “made both one, reconciling Jews and Gentiles unto GOD in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity.” (*Eph. ii. 16.*)

2. By taking away the curse and wrath that was due to us, being “made a curse for us ;” (*Gal. iii. 13 ;*) so that he is become our peace, and through him “we have access by one SPIRIT unto the FATHER, and are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of GOD.” (*Eph. ii. 14, 18, 19.*) He is “set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” (*Rom. iii. 25 ; 1 John ii. 2, and iv. 10.*) “By him have we now received the atonement.” (*Rom. v. 11.*)

Next, he helpeth us out of our state of wickedness and enmity.

1. By taking away our impurity and uncleanness, by washing us and cleansing us in his blood : (*Eph. v. 26, 27 ; Col. i. 22 :*) having purchased grace for us, (*Eph. i. 3,*) we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in him. He applieth his merits, and layeth the foundation of grace and holiness in the soul, and carrieth on the work of mortification and vivification ; and so, killing the old man by his Spirit, both meritoriously and efficiently he cleanseth and washeth.

Hence, we are said to be “baptized with him in his death, and buried with him by baptism into death,” that we should “walk in newness of life :” and so “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (*Rom.* vi. 3, 4, 6.) And for our daily infirmities, whereby we pollute ourselves, his blood is a fountain opened to the house of DAVID, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness, and to this fountain he bringeth, by the Spirit of repentance, which he, as an exalted Prince, bestoweth, and by faith. So, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the FATHER.” (1 *John* ii. 1.)

2. As for our ignorance and blindness, he taketh that away, being “given for a light to the Gentiles :” (*Isai.* xlii. 6, and xlix. 6 ; *Luke* ii. 32 :) He is sent to open the blind eyes, (*Isai.* xlii. 7,) to bring out the prisoners from their dark prisons. So that such as walk in darkness see a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light hath shined.

3. He is qualified for taking away our impotency, so that through him we can do all things. When we are weak, we are strong in him, who is our strength, and liveth in us. Hence, “he worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

4. He also taketh away our natural averseness, unwillingness, and hatred of his ways ; making his people “willing in the day of his power,” he taketh away “the enmity that is in us,” and reconcileth us to GOD, and to his ways, that our hearts do [sweetly comply with them, and we become most willing and glad to walk in them ; yea, and “to run the way of his commandments through his enlarging our hearts.” (*Psa.* cxix. 32.)

5. He likewise taketh away that desire and willingness which we have to lie still in our natural condition ; by convincing us of the dreadful hazard thereof, through the spirit of conviction, whereby he convinceth the world of it, and circumciseth their ear to hear, and maketh them willing to hearken to the counsel of GOD.

6. As for the power and dominion of SATAN, he breaketh that, by "leading captivity captive," (*Eph.* iv. 8; *Psa.* lxxviii. 18,) and "spoiling the strong man's house. For he is come to destroy the works of the Devil;" (*1 John* 3, 8;) "and he spoileth principalities and powers." (*2 Col.* 15.) Thus, as Captain of salvation, he leadeth them out as a conqueror; having paid the price, he delivereth also by power and authority from the hand of this gaoler.

And thus we see how he answereth our case, and is a fit Way for us.

The *third* particular, That he alone is this Way, and answereth our case herein, is clear and manifest, confirmed by the experience of all generations, and the disappointment of fools, who have been seeking other ways. Angels in heaven cannot do our business; they cannot satisfy justice for us, nor have they any power over our heart to turn it as they will. The blood of bulls and goats cannot do it; for the Apostle tells us, that it is impossible that that should take away sin. That blood shed according to the law, did cleanse ceremonially; but it is only the blood of JESUS, typified by that, which cleanseth really: so that "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all." (*Heb.* x. 10.) No pains or labour of ours can avail here. The LORD will not be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil; "he will not take our first born for our transgression, nor the son of our body for the sin of our soul." (*Mich.* vi. 7.) Ordinances and means will not do it, nor any invention of our own. "No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to GOD a ransom for him; for the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever." He alone hath laid down the price; all our sufferings, prayers, tears, labours, penances, and the like, signify nothing here; they cannot satisfy justice for one sin.

As to the *fourth* particular, *viz.*, the singularity of this way; these things make it manifest.

1. This is such a Way, as can discover itself, and make itself known to the erring traveller. CHRIST JESUS is such a way as can say to the wandering soul, "This is the way, walk in it." (*Isai. xxx. 21.*) No way can do this. This is comfortable.

2. This Way cannot only discover itself to the wandering traveller, but also can bring folk into it. CHRIST can bring souls unto himself, when they are running on in their wandering condition. He can move their heart to turn into the right way, put grace in their soul, begin resolutions in them, and sow the seed of faith; and so stay their course which they were violently pursuing, and make them consider what they are doing. As the former was good news to poor blind creatures that were wandering and knew not whither they were going; so this is good news to poor souls that find their hearts inclining to wander, and loving to go astray.

3. This Way can cause us to walk in it: If we be rebellious and obstinate, he can command with authority; for he is given for a Leader and a Commander. (*Isai. lv. 4.*) How sweet should this be to the soul, that is weighted with a stubborn, untractable heart, that he is a King, Governor, and Commander; can with authority draw, or drive, and cause us to follow and run.

4. This Way is Truth, as well as the Way; so that the soul that keepeth in it is safe: no wandering here: "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err" in this way. (*Isai. xxxv. 8.*)

5. This Way is also Life, and so can revive the fainting and weary traveller. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Yea, "He renews their strength, and makes them mount up with wings as eagles, and not be weary, and walk and not faint;" (*Isai. xl. 29, 31;*) and so he giveth legs to the traveller: Yea, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom." (*Isai. xl. 11.*) O who would not walk in this way? What can discourage the man that walketh here? What can he

fear? No way can quicken or refresh the weary man; this way can do it: yea, it can quicken one that is as dead, and cause him to march on with fresh alacrity and vigour.



CHAPTER IV

How CHRIST is made use of for Justification as a Way.

What CHRIST hath done to procure our justification before GOD is mentioned already; *viz.*, That he stood in the room of sinners; engaging for them, undertaking and at length paying down the ransom; becoming sin, or a sacrifice for sin, and a curse for them, and so laying down his life to satisfy divine Justice. And this he hath made known in the Gospel, calling sinners to accept of him as their only Mediator, and to rest upon him for life and salvation.

Now, for such as would make use of CHRIST as the Way to the FATHER in the point of justification, these things are requisite:—

1. There must be a conviction of sin and misery; a conviction of original guilt, whereby we are banished out of GOD's presence and favour, and are in a state of enmity and death; are "come short of the glory of GOD," (*Rom.* iii. 23,) becoming dead, or under the sentence of death, through the offence of one; (*Rom.* v. 15,) being made sinners by one man's disobedience, (*ver.* 19,) and therefore under the reigning power of death; (*ver.* 17;) and under that judgment which came upon all men to condemnation; (*ver.* 18,) and of original innate wickedness, whereby the heart is filled with enmity against GOD, and is a hater of him and of all his ways; standing in full opposition to him and to his holy laws; loving to contradict and resist him in all his actings; despising and undervaluing all his

condescensions of love; obstinately refusing his offers of mercy, and peremptorily persisting in rebellion and heart-opposition; not only not accepting his kindnesses, but trampling them underfoot also: there must be a conviction of our actual transgressions, whereby we have corrupted our ways yet more, run further from God, brought on more wrath upon our souls, according to that sentence: "Cursed is every one that abideth not in all that is written in the Law to do it." (*Gal.* iii. 10.) What way this conviction is begun and carried on in the soul, I cannot now stand to explain: Only, in short, know, it is a heart-reaching conviction; not general and notional, but particular, plain, and pinching; affecting the heart with fear and terror, making the soul seriously to mind this matter, to be taken up with the thoughts of it, and earnestly to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?"

2. There must be some measure of humiliation. Under this conviction the man is bowed down and made mute before God; no more boasting of his goodness; no high thoughts of his righteousness, for all are now to be looked on "as filthy rags." "What things were as gain before" to the soul, must now "be counted loss," yea, and "as dung." The man must be cast down, and far from high thoughts of himself, or any thing he ever did, or can do: "For the LORD resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (*James* iv. 6.)

3. There must be a despair of help or relief out of this condition by ourselves, or any thing we can do; a conviction of the unprofitableness of all things under the sun for our relief; no expectation of help from our supposed good heart, good purposes, good deeds, works of charity, many prayers, commendation of others, sober and harmless walking, or any thing else within us; or without us, that is not CHRIST: for so long as we have the least hope or expectation of doing our own business without CHRIST, we shall never come to him. Our heart hangeth so after the old way of salvation through works, that we cannot yield to any other. Such is our antipathy to the way of salvation

through a crucified **CHRIST**, that we would choose any way but that, cost what it would. Therefore, before we can heartily close with **CHRIST**, and accept of him, we must be put from those refuges of lies, and see that there is nothing but a disappointment written on them all; that all our prayers, fasting, cries, duties, reformations, sufferings, good wishes, good deeds, are nothing in his eyes, but so many provocations to the eyes of his jealousy, and so, further causes of our misery.

4. There must be a deliberate and resolute relinquishing all those things in ourselves, on which our heart is ready to dote. The man being convinced of the vanity of all things by which he has been hoping for salvation, must now turn his back upon them, quit them with purpose of heart, and say to them, "Get you hence." This abandoning of all our former false props and subterfuges must be resolute, over much opposition within, from the natural inclinations of the heart; and much opposition without, from **SATAN**'s insnaring suggestions. It must be a real, rational act of the soul, upon solid and thorough conviction of their unprofitableness, yea, of their dangerousness and destructiveness.

5. There must be some knowledge of the nature of the Gospel covenant, and of the way which now **GOD** hath chosen whereby to glorify his grace in the salvation of poor sinners. That **GOD**, **FATHER**, **SON**, and **HOLY GHOST**, thought good, for the glory of free grace and wisdom, in a way of justice and mercy, to send **JESUS CHRIST** to assume man's nature, and so become **GOD** and **Man** in two distinct natures, and one person for ever; and to become under the law, to undergo the curse thereof, and to die the cursed death of the cross, to satisfy justice, and to pay the ransom for our redemption: So "the **LORD** laid on him," or caused to meet together on him, "the iniquity of us all." (*Isai.* liii. 6.) So in due time, "he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: He was cut off out of the land

of the living, and stricken for the transgression of his people : He made his soul an offering for sin, and bore the iniquities of his people. Pouring out his soul unto death ; he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors ;" (*Isai. liii. 4, 5, 10—12*;) so that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, GOD sending his own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin," or by a sacrifice for sin, "condemned sin in the flesh," (*Rom. viii. 3*;) that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." (*ver. 4*.) Thus "he made him sin," or a sacrifice for sin, "that we might become righteous;" (*2 Cor. v. 21*;) and "he through the Eternal SPIRIT offered himself without spot to GOD;" (*Heb. ix. 14*;) and "his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree." (*1 Pet. ii. 24*.) There must, I say, be some knowledge of this great mystery, wherein is declared "the manifold wisdom of GOD," and the noble design of GOD in sending his SON after this manner, to die the death, that condemned sinners might live, and return to the bosom of GOD ; as redeemed, "not with gold, or silver, or corruptible things, but with the precious blood of CHRIST, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" (*1 Pet. xix. 18*;) and, being so "redeemed by blood, to become kings and priests unto GOD." The man must not be ignorant of this, else all will be in vain. I do not determine how distinct and full this knowledge must be ; but sure there must be so much knowledge of it, as will give the soul ground of hope, and expectation of salvation by this way.

6. There must be a persuasion of the sufficiency, completeness, and satisfactoriness of the way of salvation through this crucified Mediator ; else the soul will not be induced to leave its other courses, and betake itself to this alone. He must be sure that salvation is only to be had this way, and that undoubtedly it will be had this way ; that so with confidence he may cast himself on this way, and sweetly sing in hope. And therefore he must believe, that CHRIST is really GOD as well as Man, and a true Man

as well as GOD; that he is fully furnished for the work of redemption, having the SPIRIT given to him without measure, and endued fully and richly with all qualifications fitting him for all our necessities, and enabling him to “save to the uttermost, all that come unto GOD by him;” (*Heb.* vii. 25;) That “He is made of GOD to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification;” (*1 Cor.* i. 30;) That “all power in heaven and earth is given unto him;” (*Matt.* xxviii. 18;) That “all things are put under his feet,” and that “he is given to be the head over all things to the Church;” (*Eph.* i. 22;) That “in him dwelleth all fulness;” (*Col.* i. 19;) That “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” (*Col.* ii. 3;) That “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; who is the head of all principality and power.” (*Ver.* 9, 10.)

7. The soul must know, that he is not only an able and all-sufficient Mediator, but that he is willing and ready to save all that will come. For all the preceding particulars will but increase his sorrow, so long as he supposeth, that he hath no part in that redemption. Therefore it is necessary, that the soul conceive, not only a possibility, but also a probability of help this way; and that the dispensation of the Gospel of grace, and offer of this good news to him, speak out so much, that the patience of GOD waiting long, and his goodness renewing the offers, confirmeth this; that his serious pressing, his strong motives on the one hand, and his sharp threatenings on the other, his reiterated commands, his expressed sorrow and grief over such as would not come to him, his upbraidings of such as obstinately refuse, put his willingness to save such as will come to him out of all question: Yea, his obviating of objections, and taking all excuses out of their mouth, maketh the case plain and manifest; so that such as will not come, are left without excuse, and have no impediment lying in the way, but their own unwillingness.

8. The man must know on what terms and conditions CHRIST offereth himself in the Gospel, *viz.*, upon condition of believing in him; and that no other way can we

be made partakers of the good things purchased by CHRIST, but by accepting of him as he is offered in the Gospel, that is to say, freely, without price or money; absolutely, without reservation; wholly, and for all ends: for until this be known, there will be no closing with CHRIST; and until there be a closing with CHRIST, there is no advantage to be had by him. The soul must be married to him, as a husband; fixed to him, as the branches to the tree; united to him, as the members to the head; become one with him, one spirit. The soul must close with him for all things, adhere to him upon all hazards, take him and the sharpest cross that followeth him. Now, I say, the soul must be acquainted with these conditions; for it must act deliberately and rationally here. Covenanting with CHRIST is a grave business, and requireth deliberation, full purpose of heart, and satisfaction of soul; and therefore the man must be acquainted with the conditions of the new covenant.

9. There must be a satisfaction with the terms of the Gospel, and the heart must actually close with CHRIST, as he is offered in the Gospel. The heart must open to him, and take him in. (*Rev.* iii. 20.) The soul must embrace and receive him. (*John* i. 12.) The man must take him as his Lord and Master, King, Priest, and Prophet; must give up himself to him, as his Leader and Commander, and resolve to follow him in all things. For, until this be done, there is no union with CHRIST; and, until there be an union with CHRIST, there is no partaking of the fruits of his redemption, as to justification; no pardon, no acceptance, no access to the favour of GOD, nor peace, nor joy in the HOLY GHOST; no getting of the conscience sprinkled, no intimation of love or favour from GOD.

10. There must be a resting upon him and on his perfect sacrifice. The soul must sit down here as satisfied, and acquiesce in this complete mediation. This is to "believe on him, to rest on him," (*John* iii. 18; *1 Pet.* ii. 6,) as an all-sufficient help. This is to cast the burden of a

broken covenant, of a guilty conscience, of deserved wrath, of the curse of the Law, upon him, that he may bear away those evils from us. This is to "put on the LORD JESUS" in part; (*Rom. xiii. 14*;) to cover ourselves with his righteousness from the face of justice, to stand in this armour of proof against the accusations of SATAN, and an evil conscience. This is to flee to him as our city of refuge, that we may be safe from the avenger of blood; this is to make him our refuge from the storm of GOD's anger, and a shadow from the heat of his wrath;" (*Isai. xxv. 4*;) and our "hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (*Isai. xxxii. 2.*) When we hide ourselves in him as he that hath fully satisfied justice, and desire "to be found in him" alone, "not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of GOD by faith:" (*Phil. iii. 9*;) This is to lay our hand on the head of the sacrifice, when we rest on this sacrifice, and expect salvation from it alone. This is to cast ourselves in CHRIST's arms, as peremptorily resolving to go no other way to the FATHER, and to plead no other righteousness before GOD's bar but CHRIST's. That is faith, yea, justifying faith.

Thus, then, is CHRIST made use of as the way to the FATHER, in the point of justification, when the poor awakened sinner, convinced of his sin and misery; of his own inability to help himself, of the insufficiency of all means beside CHRIST; of CHRIST's all-sufficiency, readiness, and willingness to help; of the equity and reasonableness of the conditions on which he is offered, and life through him,—is now content and fully satisfied with this way, actually renouncing all other ways whatsoever; and doth with heart and hand embrace JESUS CHRIST, and take him as he is offered in the Gospel, to make use of him for all things, to rest upon him in all hazards, and particularly to refuge himself under his wings, and to rest there with satisfaction and delight, and hide himself from the wrath of GOD, and all accusations.

This is a business of great concernment ; yet many are not much troubled about it, deceiving themselves with foolish imaginations : for,—

1. They think they were believers all their days ; they never doubted of **God's** grace and good-will ; they had always a good heart for **God**, though they never knew what an awakened conscience, or sense of the wrath of **God**, meant.

2. Or they think, because **God** is merciful, he will not be so severe as to stand upon all those things that Ministers require ; forgetting that he is a just **God**, and a **God** of truth, that will do according to what he hath said.

3. Or they suppose it is an easy matter to believe ; not considering that no less power than that which raised **CHRIST** again from the dead, will work up the heart unto faith.

4. Or they resolve that they will do it afterward, at some more convenient season ; not perceiving the cunning sleight of **SATAN** in this, nor considering that faith is not in their power, but the gift of **God**, and that if they lay not hold on the call of **God**, but harden their hearts in their day, **God** may judicially blind them, so that these things shall be hid from their eyes.

To encourage poor souls to come unto **CHRIST**, all things are so well ordered in the Gospel, that nothing occurreth that can in the least prove a stumbling-block, or a just ground of excuse for their forbearing to believe ; all objections possible are obviated to such as are but willing. The way is cast up, and all stones of stumbling cast out of it ; so that such as will not come can pretend no excuse. They cannot object the greatness of their sins : for the greater their sins are, they have the greater need of one who is sent to take away sin, and whose blood purgeth from all sin. What great sinner did He ever refuse, that was willing to be saved by him ? Is there any clause in all the Gospel excluding great sinners ? Nor need they object their unworthiness ; for he doeth all freely, for the glory of his free grace. None ever got any good of him for their worth ; for no man ever had any worth. Nor

need they object their long refusing, and resisting many calls: for he will make such as are willing welcome at the eleventh hour. Him that cometh he will in no case put away. Nor can they object the difficulty or impossibility of believing; for that is CHRIST'S work. He is the "author and finisher of faith." (*Heb. xii. 2.*) Can they not with confidence cast themselves upon him? Yet if they can hunger and thirst for him, and look to him, he will accept of that: "Look to me," says he, "and be saved." (*Isai. xlv. 22.*) If they cannot look to him, nor hunger and thirst for him, yet if they be willing, all is well. Are they willing that CHRIST save them in his way, and therefore willingly give themselves over to him, and are content that CHRIST by his SPIRIT work more hunger in them, and "work both to will and to do according to his good pleasure?" It is well.

But it will be said, that the terms and conditions on which he offereth himself are hard. *Answer:* I grant the terms are hard to flesh and blood; but to such as are willing to be saved, so as GOD may be most glorified, the terms are easy, most rational, and satisfying: for,—

1. We are required to take him only for our Mediator, and to join none with him, and to mix nothing with him. Corrupt nature is averse from this, and would at least mix something of self with him, and not rest on CHRIST only. Corrupt nature would not have the man wholly denying himself, and following CHRIST only; and hence many lose themselves, and lose all, because, with the Galatians, they would mix the Law and the Gospel together, do something themselves for satisfaction of justice, and take CHRIST for the rest. Now, the LORD will have all the glory, as good reason is, and will have none to share with him: he will give of his glory to none. And is not this rational and easy? What can be objected against this?

2. We are required to take him wholly, that he may be a complete Mediator to us; as a Prophet to teach, as a King to subdue our lusts, to cause us to walk in his ways, as well as a Priest to satisfy justice for us, to die and

intercede for us. Is it not reason that we take him as GOD hath made him for us? Is there any thing in him to be refused? And is there any thing in him which we have no need of? Is there not all the reason, then, in the world for this, that we take him wholly? And what stumbling-block is here?

3. We are required to take him freely, "without money and without price." (*Isai.* lv. 1.) For he will not be bought any manner of way: that free grace may be free grace, therefore he will give all freely. True it is, corruption would be at buying, though it have nothing to lay out; pride will not stoop to a free gift. But can any say the terms are hard, when all is offered freely?

4. We are required to take him absolutely, without any mental reservation. Some would willingly quit all but one or two lusts; they would deny themselves in many things, but they would still most willingly keep a back door open to some beloved lust or other. And who seeth not what double dealing is here? And what reason can plead for this double dealing? Corruption, it is true, will think this hard; but no man can rationally say that this is a just ground of discouragement to any, or a sufficient ground to warrant them to stay away from CHRIST, seeing they cannot be supposed sincerely to desire redemption from any sin, who would not desire redemption from every sin. He that loveth any known lust, and would not willingly be delivered therefrom, hath no real hatred at any lust as such, nor desire to be saved; for one such lust would be his death.

5. We are to take him for all necessities; that is, with a resolution to make use of him as our all-sufficient Mediator. And is not this most reasonable? Ought we not to take him for all the ends for which GOD hath appointed him, and offered him to us? What then can any suppose to lie here, which should scare a soul from laying hold upon him? Nay, should not this be looked upon as a very great encouragement? And should not we bless the LORD, that hath provided such an all-sufficient Mediator?

6. We are to take him, and all the crosses that may attend our taking or following him. We must "take up our cross," be it what it will, that he thinketh good to appoint for us: for "he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after him, is not worthy of him." I know flesh and blood will take this for a hard saying; but they that consider CHRIST will bear the heaviest end of the cross, yea, all of it, and support them by his SPIRIT while they are under it; and how "he will suffer none to go his errand upon their own charges, but will be with them when they go through fire and water, so that they shall suffer no loss, neither shall the waters overflow them, nor the fire kindle upon them;" (*Isai. xliii. 2;*) and that "he who loseth his life for CHRIST's sake and the Gospel's shall save it;" (*Mark viii. 35;*) yea, that they "shall receive an hundred-fold" for all their losses, and that even with persecution; (*Matt. xix. 29;*) "and in the world to come eternal life:" (*Mark x. 30;*) they, I say, who consider this, will see no discouragement here, nor ground of complaint; nay, they will account it their glory to suffer any loss for CHRIST's sake.

7 Hence it followeth, that we are to take him so as to avouch him, and his cause and interest, on all hazards; stand to his truth, and not be ashamed of him in a day of trial. "Confession of him must be made with the mouth, as with the heart we must believe." (*Rom. x. 9.*) Let corruption speak against this what it will, because it is always desirous to keep the skin whole; yet reason cannot but say it is equitable, especially seeing he hath said, that "whosoever confesseth him before men, he will confess them before his FATHER which is in heaven." (*Matt. x. 32.*)

Hence then we see, that there is nothing in all the conditions on which he offereth himself to us, that can give the least ground in reason why a poor soul should draw back, and be unwilling to accept of this noble offer.

But there is one main objection which may trouble some, and that is, They cannot believe. Faith being the gift of God, it must be wrought in them. How then

can they go to **GOD** for this, and make use of **CHRIST** for this end?

To this I would say these things :—

1. It is true, that “faith is the gift of **GOD**,” and that it is **He** alone who “worketh in us both to will and to do.” And it is a great matter, and no small advancement, to have a thorough conviction of this our impotency; for thereby the soul will be brought to despair of salvation in itself, which is no small advantage to a poor soul that would be saved.

2. Though faith be not in our power, yet it is our duty. Our impotency to perform our duty, doth not loose our obligation to the duty; so that our not believing is our sin, and for this **GOD** may justly condemn us: his wrath abideth on all who believe not in his Son **JESUS**, and will not accept of the offer of salvation through the crucified Mediator. And though faith, as all other acts of grace, be efficiently the work of the **SPIRIT**, yet it is formally our work; we believe, but it is the **SPIRIT** that worketh faith in us.

3. The ordinary way of the **SPIRIT**'s working faith in us is, by pressing home the duty upon us, whereby we are brought to a despairing in ourselves, and to a looking out to **Him**, whose grace alone it is that can work it in the soul.

4. Not only hath **CHRIST** purchased this grace of faith, and all other graces necessary for our salvation, but **GOD** hath committed to him the administration and actual dispensation of all those graces which the redeemed stand in need of. Hence “**He** is a Prince, exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.” (*Acts* v. 31.) “All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him.” (*Matt.* xxviii. 18, 19.) Hence he is called “the Author and Finisher of faith.” (*Heb.* xii. 2.) And he telleth his disciples, that “whatever they shall ask in his name, he will do it.” (*John* xiv. 13, 14.) He is made “Prince and Saviour, having all judgment committed unto him,” (*John* v. 22,) and “he is **LORD** of all.”

5. Hereupon the sinner, being convinced of his lost condition through sin, of an utter impossibility of helping himself out of that state of death, of CHRIST's all-sufficiency and willingness to save all that come to him, and of his own inability to believe or come to him for life and salvation, and so despairing in himself, is to look out to JESUS, the author of eternal salvation, the foundation and chief corner-stone, "the Author and Finisher of faith:" I say, the sinner, being thus convinced, is thus to look out to JESUS. Not that that conviction is any proper qualification, pre-requisite as necessary either to prepare, dispose, and fit for faith, or far less to merit any manner of way, or bring on faith; but because this is CHRIST's method to bring a soul to faith by this conviction, to the glory of his grace. The soul naturally being averse from CHRIST, and utterly unwilling to accept of that way of salvation, must be reduced to that strait, that it shall see that it must either accept of this offer, or die. As the whole needeth not a physician, so CHRIST is come to save only that which is lost; and his method is to convince the world of sin, in the first place, and then of righteousness.

6. This looking to JESUS for faith, comprehendeth these things: 1. The soul's acknowledgment of the necessity of faith, to the end it may partake of CHRIST and his merits. 2. The soul's satisfaction with that way of partaking of CHRIST, by resting upon him by faith. 3. A conviction of the unbelief and stubbornness of the heart; or a seeing of his own impotency, yea, and unwillingness to believe. 4. A persuasion that CHRIST can over-master the infidelity and wickedness of the heart. 5. A hope, or a half hope, (to speak so,) that CHRIST, who is willing to save all poor sinners, and hath said that he will put none away in any case that cometh, will have pity upon him at length. 6. A resolution to lie at his door until he come with life, until he quicken, until he unite the soul to himself. 7. A lying open to the breathings of his SPIRIT, by guarding against every thing, (so far as we can,) that may grieve or provoke him, and waiting on him in all the ordinances he

hath appointed for begetting of faith ; such as, reading the Scriptures, hearing the word, conference with godly persons, and prayer. 8. A waiting with patience on Him, who “never said to the house of JACOB, Seek me in vain ;” still crying and looking to him, who hath commanded the ends of the earth to look to him, and waiting for Him who waiteth to be gracious ; remembering that they are all blessed that wait for him, and that “there is much good prepared for them that wait for him.” (*Isai. lxiv. 4.*)

7 The sinner should assay this believing in CHRIST, and set about it as he can, seriously, heartily, and willingly ; yea, and resolutely, over much opposition and many discouragements, looking to him who must help, yea, and work the whole work ; for GOD worketh in and with man, as a rational creature. The soul then should set the willingness it findeth on work, and wait for more ; and as the LORD is pleased to commend by his SPIRIT the way of grace more unto the soul, and to warm the heart with love to it, and a desire after it, strike the iron while it is hot, and looking to him for help, seize CHRIST, though with a trembling hand, and subscribe its name, though with fear and doubting, remembering that He who worketh to will, must work the deed also. (*Phil. ii. 13.*)

8. The soul assaying thus to believe in CHRIST's strength, and to creep when it cannot walk or run, should hold fast what it hath attained, and resolve never to recall any consent or half consent it hath given to the bargain, but still look forward, hold on, wrestle against unbelief, entertain every good motion of the SPIRIT for this end, and never admit of any thing that may quench its longings, desires, or expectation.

CHAPTER V.

How CHRIST is to be made use of, as a Way, for Sanctification in general.

HAVING shown how a poor soul, lying under the burden of sin and wrath, is to make use of JESUS CHRIST for justification, and so to make use of him, and apply him, as "he is made of GOD to us righteousness;" we come to show how a justified soul shall further make use of CHRIST for sanctification; this being a particular about which they are often much exercised and perplexed.

That we may therefore in some measure, through the help of his light and grace, clear up this great truth, we shall first speak a little to it in the general.

Before we speak of the matter in general, it should be remembered, that the person who only can make use of CHRIST for sanctification, is one that hath made use of him already for righteousness: for one who is a stranger to CHRIST, hath no access to CHRIST for sanctification. One must first be united to CHRIST by faith, before we can draw virtue from him for perfecting holiness; he must first be in him, before he can grow up in him, or bring forth fruit in him: and therefore, the first thing that souls should go about; should be to get a union with CHRIST, and be clothed with his righteousness by faith; and then they have a right to all his benefits.

This premised, we come to speak something in the general of believers using CHRIST, as "made of GOD to us sanctification." And, for this end, we shall only speak a little to two things:—First, we shall show upon what account it is, that CHRIST is called "our sanctification," or "made of GOD to us sanctification," as the Apostle's phrase is, (1 Cor. i. 30.) or what CHRIST hath done, as Mediator, to begin and carry on to perfection the work of sanctification in the soul. And, secondly, How the soul is to make use of what CHRIST hath done for this end,

“that it may grow in grace, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

As to the first, though the work of sanctification be formally ours, yet it is wrought by another hand as the principal efficient cause, even by the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. The FATHER is said “to purge the branches, that they may bring forth more fruit.” (*John* xv. 1, 2.) Hence we are said to be sanctified by God the FATHER. (*Jude* 1.) The SON is also called the Sanctifier : (*Heb.* ii. 11 :) “He sanctifieth and cleanseth the Church, with the washing of water by the word.” (*Eph.* v. 26.) The SPIRIT is also said to sanctify. (*2 Thess.* ii. 13; *1 Pet.* i. 2; *Rom.* xv. 16.) Hence we are said to be “washed and sanctified by the SPIRIT of God.” (*1 Cor.* vi. 11.)

But, more particularly, we are said to be “sanctified in CHRIST,” (*1 Cor.* i. 2,) and he is “made of God to us sanctification.” (*1 Cor.* i. 30.) Let us then see in what sense this may be true. And,—

1. He hath by his death and blood procured, that this work of sanctification shall be wrought and carried on : For “he suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.” (*Heb.* xiii. 12.) Thus our sanctification is the fruit of his death, and purchased by his blood : “He gave himself for his Church, that he might sanctify it.” (*Eph.* v. 25, 26.)

2. Hence it followeth, that our “old man is crucified with CHRIST, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” (*Rom.* vi. 6.) So that this old tyrant, that oppreseth the people of God, hath got his death-wounds in the crucifixion of CHRIST, and shall never recover his former vigour and activity, to oppress and bear down the people of God, as he did.

3. His resurrection is a pledge of this sanctification : for as he died as a public person, so he rose again as a public person. “We are buried with him by baptism, that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the FATHER, even so we should walk in newness

of life." (*Rom.* vi. 4.) And believers are said to be "planted together with him in the likeness of his resurrection;" (*ver.* 5;) and they "shall live with him;" (*ver.* 8;) "and therefore they are to reckon themselves alive unto GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD." (*Ver.* 11.) "We are raised up together." (*Eph.* ii. 6.)

4. This sanctification is promised in the covenant of grace: "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity." (*Jer.* xxxiii. 8.) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 25.) Now, all the promises of the covenant of grace are confirmed to us in the Mediator: For "in him all the promises are yea and amen." (*2 Cor.* i. 20.)

Yea, through Him are believers made partakers of the divine nature, which is a growing thing, young glory in the soul. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." (*2 Pet.* i. 3, 4.)

5. The SPIRIT is promised to "cause us to walk in his statutes." (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 27.) Now, all these promises are made good to us in CHRIST, who is the cautioner of the covenant: yea, he hath gotten now the dispensing and giving out of the rich promises of the covenant committed unto him, so as he is the great Lord Treasurer and Administrator of the glorious purchased blessings.

6. He standeth in relation to believers as a vine, or a root, in which they grow as branches; so that, by abiding in him, living by faith in him, and drawing sap from him, they bring forth fruit. (*John* xv. 1, 2, 4, 5.) Their stock of grace is in Him the Root; and he communicateth sap and life unto his branches, whereby they grow, flourish, and bring forth fruit to the glory of GOD.

7. When we defile ourselves with new transgressions and failings, he hath provided a fountain for us to wash

in, "a fountain open to the house of DAVID, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (*Zech.* xiii. 1.) And this fountain is his blood, "which cleanseth from all sin." (*Heb.* ix. 14; *1 John* i. 7; *Rev.* i. 5.)

8. He is set before us as a copy and pattern, that "we should walk even as he walked:" (*1 John* ii. 6 :) "He left us an example, that we should follow his steps." (*1 Pet.* ii. 21.) But we should beware to separate this consideration from the preceding, as antichristian Socinians do, who will have CHRIST only to be a copy.

9. As he hath purchased so hath he appointed ordinances, for the laying of the foundation, and carrying on this work of sanctification: both word and sacraments are appointed for that. The word, to convert and to confirm: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," said CHRIST. (*John* xvii. 17.) The word is given as the rule, and also through the means thereof are life and strength conveyed to the soul, "to perfect holiness in the fear of GOD." (*2 Cor.* vii. 1.) And the sacraments are given to strengthen and confirm the soul in the ways of GOD.

10. As he hath laid down strong encouragements to his followers to hold on in the way of holiness, "many great and precious promises," by which they are encouraged "to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and many motives to hold on; so hath he rolled difficulties out of the way, whether they be within us or without us, and thereby made the way easy and pleasant to such as walk in it; so that "they may now run the way of his commandments, walk and not weary, and run and not be faint."

These particulars, rightly considered, will discover unto us what a noble ground for sanctification is in CHRIST laid down for believers, which they may use by faith, "that they may grow in grace, and grow up in CHRIST to perfect holiness;" and what a wonderful contrivance of grace is this, wherein all things are made so sure for

believers, **CHRIST** becoming all things to them, and paying a royal and sure way for them ; sure for them, and glorious to himself.

As to the second particular, How believers are to make use of **CHRIST**, and of these grounds of sanctification in **CHRIST**, which we have mentioned.

First, There are some things which they should beware of, and guard against ; as,—

1. They should beware of giving way to discouragements, and hearkening to the language of unbelief, or the suggestions of **SATAN**, whereby he will labour to persuade them of the impossibility of the work of sanctification. **SATAN**, and a deceitful heart, can soon muster up many difficulties, and allege that there are many lions in the way, to discourage them from venturing forward : and, if **SATAN** prevail here, he hath gained a great point ; therefore the believer should keep up his head in hope, and beware of multiplying discouragements to himself, or of concluding the matter impossible ; for then shall he neither have heart nor hand for the work, but sit down and wring his hands, overcome with despondency of spirit.

2. They should beware of wilfully rejecting their own mercies, and forbearing to make use of the grounds of hope, of strength, and progress in the matter of sanctification, which **CHRIST** hath allowed them to make use of. There is such an evil amongst **GOD**'s children, that they scare at that which **CHRIST** out of great love hath provided for them, and dare not with confidence make use of the great and comfortable promises, to the end they might be encouraged : They will not take their allowance, as thinking themselves unworthy, and that it would be great presumption in them to challenge a right to such great things ; and they think it commendable humility in them, to stand back ; and so wilfully refuse the advantages that make so much for their growth in grace.

3. They should beware of a careless neglect of the means appointed for advancing in holiness ; for though the means do not work the effect, yet it is by the means **GOD**

hath chosen to work sanctification. Here "the hand of the diligent maketh rich ; and the field of the slothful is soon grown over with thorns ; so that poverty cometh as one that travelleth, and want as an armed man." (*Prov.* xxiv.) It is a sinful tempting of **GOD**, to think to be sanctified another way than **GOD** hath, in his deep wisdom, condescended to.

4. Yet they should beware of laying too much weight on the means and ordinances, as if they could effect the business. Though the **LORD** hath thought good to work in and by the means, yet he himself must do the work. Means are but means, and not the principal cause ; nor can they work, but as the principal agent is pleased to work by them. When we lean to the means, and to instruments, we prejudge ourselves, by disobliging **GOD**, and provoking him to leave us, that we may wrestle with the ordinances alone, and find no advantage.

5. Albeit the means can do nothing unless **He** breathe, yet we should beware not only of neglecting them, but also of a slighting way of performing them, without that earnestness and diligence that is required. "Cursed is he who doeth the work of the **LORD** negligently." (*Jer.* xlvi. 10.) Here then is the special art of Christianity, to be diligent, earnest, and serious in the means, as if they could effect the matter we were seeking ; and yet to be as much abstracted from them in our hopes and expectation, and as much leaning on the **LORD** alone, and depending on Him for the blessing, as if we were using no means at all.

6. They should beware of slighting and neglecting the motions of the **SPIRIT** ; for thereby they may lose the best opportunity. They should be always on the wing, ready to embrace the least motion, and stand always ready, waiting for the breathings of his **SPIRIT**, and open at his call ; lest afterward they be put to call and seek, and not attain what they would be at.

7 They should also guard against quenching the **SPIRIT**, or grieving the **SPIRIT**, by their unsuitable carriage ; for this will mar their sanctification. It is by the **SPIRIT** that

the work of sanctification is carried on in the soul: and when this SPIRIT is disturbed, and put from his work, how can the work go on?

Secondly, It were of great advantage for such as would grow in grace, and advance in the way of holiness, to be living in the constant conviction,—

1. Of the necessity of holiness, “without which no man shall see GOD.

2. Of their own inability to do any one act aright; how they “are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves, and that without CHRIST they can do nothing.

3. Of the insufficiency of any human help, or means, or way, to mortify aright one corruption, or to give strength for the right discharge of any one duty: For “our sufficiency is of GOD;” and it is “through the SPIRIT, that we must mortify the deeds of the body.”

4. And of the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart, which is bent to follow by-ways; being not only “deceitful above all things, but also desperately wicked.”—

That, by this means, the soul may be jealous of itself, and despair of doing any thing in its own strength; and so be fortified against that main evil, which is an enemy to all true sanctification, *viz.*, confidence in the flesh.

Thirdly, The soul should keep its eye fixed on these things:—

1. On CHRIST’s all-sufficiency to help in all cases; that “he is able to save to the uttermost.”

2. On his compassionateness to such as are out of the way, and readiness to help poor sinners; and this will keep the soul from fainting and despairing.

3. On the commands to holiness; such as these: “Cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts; Be ye holy, for I am holy;”—that the authority of GOD, and conscience to a command, may set the soul to work.

4. On the great recompense of reward that is appointed for such as wrestle on, and endure to the end; and on all the promises of great things to such as are sanctified,

whereof the Scriptures are full. That the soul may be encouraged to run through difficulties, to ride out storms, to endure hardness as a good soldier, and to persevere in duty.

5. On the other hand, on the many sad threatenings and denunciations of wrath against such as transgress his laws, and on all the sad things that such as shake off the fear of **GOD**, and the study of holiness, have to look for, of which the Scripture is full; that, by this means, the soul may be kept in awe, and spurred forward unto duty.

6. On the rule, the **WORD OF GOD**, by which alone we must regulate all our actions; and this ought to be our meditation day and night.

Fourthly, In all this study of holiness, the believer should level at a right end; and not design holiness for this end, that he might be justified thereby, or that he might thereby procure and purchase to himself heaven and **GOD'S** favour; (for the weight of all that must lie on **JESUS CHRIST**, who is our righteousness; and our holiness must not dethrone him, nor rob him of his glory, which he will not give to another;) but to the end he might glorify **GOD,—FATHER, SON, and Holy SPIRIT**; and thereby be made "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light," and be made a meet bride for such a holy Bridegroom, and a member to such a holy Head; that thereby others might be edified, the soul may look like a temple of the **HOLY GHOST**, and like a servant of **CHRIST**, bought with a price, and have a clear evidence of his regeneration and justification, and also that he may express his thankfulness to **GOD** for all his favours and benefits.

Fifthly, The soul should by faith lay hold on the ground of sanctification; that is to say, 1. What **CHRIST** hath purchased for his people: 2. What, as a public person, he hath done for them. And so by faith,—

1. Challenge a right to, and lay hold on, the promises of grace, strength, victory, in combating with corruption within, and **SATAN** and a wicked world without.

2. Reckon themselves dead unto sin, through the death

of **CHRIST**, and alive unto **GOD** through his resurrection.

That by this means they may be encouraged to continue fighting against a vanquished enemy, and not give over, notwithstanding disappointments, discouragements, prevailings of corruption, that the believer may know upon what ground he standeth, and what is the ground of his hope of victory, and so he “may run, not as uncertainly; and so fight, not as one that beateth the air.” (1 *Cor.* ix. 26.)

Sixthly, In this work of sanctification, the believer should be much in the lively exercise of faith; fight by faith; advance by faith; grow up and bring forth fruit by faith: And so,—

1. The believer should be oft renewing his hold of **CHRIST**, holding him fast by faith, and so abiding in him, that he may bring forth fruit.

2. Not only should he be keeping his union fast with **CHRIST**, but he should be also eyeing **CHRIST** by faith, as his store-house, and general Lord Dispensator of all the purchased blessings of the covenant which he standeth in need of; and looking on **CHRIST** as standing engaged by office to complete his work of salvation, and to present him with the rest, to himself, holy, without blemish, yea, and “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

3. He should, by faith, grasp the promises, both of the general stock of grace, the new heart of flesh, and the **SPIRIT** to cause us to walk in his statutes, (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 26, 27,) and of the several acts of grace that he standeth in need of; such as that, “I will cleanse them from all their iniquities.” (*Jer.* xxxiii. 8.)

4. As the believer should by faith draw out of **CHRIST**, through the conduit of the promises,—which are all “yea, and amen in him”—grace, strength, knowledge, courage, or whatever his fight in this warfare calleth for, to the end he may be “strong in the **LORD** and in the power of his might;” so he should by faith roll the weight of the whole work upon **CHRIST**; and thus cast himself and his care

and burden on Him who careth for him; and so go on in duty without anxiety, knowing who beareth the weight of all, and who hath undertaken to work "both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." Thus would the work be easy and safe, when by faith we roll the burden on Him, who is the chosen One fitted for that work, and leave it on him who is our strength, patiently waiting in hope.

Thus the believer makes use of CHRIST, as "made of GOD sanctification," when, in the use of means appointed, eyeing the covenant of grace, and the promises thereof, and what CHRIST hath done to sanctify and cleanse his people, he rolleth the matter on him, and expecteth help, salvation, and victory, through him.

But lest some should be discouraged, because they perceive no growth in grace for all this, I would say a few things to them.

1. Let them search and try, whether their disappointment doth not proceed from this, that the matter is not so cleanly cast over on CHRIST as it should be. Is it not oft found, that they go forth to the battle in their own strength, leaning to their own stock of grace, to their own knowledge, or to their duties? How then can they prosper?

2. Let them mourn as they get a discovery of this; and guard hereafter against that corrupt bias of the heart, which is still inclining them to an engagement without the "Captain of their salvation," and a fighting without "the armour of GOD."

3. Let them try and see, if in studying holiness they be not led by corrupt ends; and do not more labour after sanctification, that they may be accepted of GOD, as if this were any cause or condition of their justification, than that they may show their obedience to the command of GOD, and express their thankfulness to him, and glorify GOD. And, if so, they ought to acknowledge GOD's goodness in that disappointment, seeing thereby they see more and more a necessity of laying aside their own righteousness,

and of betaking themselves to the righteousness of CHRIST, and of resting on that alone for acceptance with GOD.

4. They should try and see if their negligence and carelessness in watching, and in the discharge of duties, do not occasion their disappointments. GOD sometimes thinks fit to suffer a lion of corruption to set on them, that they may look about them, and stand more vigilantly upon their watch-tower, knowing that they have to do with a vigilant adversary, the Devil, who as a "roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour;" and that they "fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places." It is not for nought that we are so often commanded to watch; *Matt.* xxiv. 42, and xxv. 13, and xxvi. 41, and xiv. 25; *Luke* xxi. 36; *Mark* xiii. 33—35, 37; *1 Cor.* xvi. 13; *1 Thess.* v. 6; *1 Pet.* iv. 7; *Col.* iv. 2. Through the want of this, we know what befell DAVID and PETER.

5. They should try and see, whether there be not too much self-confidence, which occasioned PETER's foul fall. GOD may, in justice and mercy, suffer corruption to break loose upon such, and tread them under foot, to learn them afterward to carry more soberly, and to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling." (*Phil.* ii. 12.) Remembering what a jealous, holy GOD he is, with whom they have to do; what an adversary they have against them, and how weak their own strength is.

CHAPTER VI.

How CHRIST is to be made use of, in reference to the killing and crucifying of the old man.

HAVING thus shortly pointed out some things in general, serving to the clearing the way of our using CHRIST for sanctification ; we come now more particularly to the clearing up of this business. In sanctification, we must consider, 1. The renewing and changing our nature ; and, 2. The washing and purging away our daily contracted spots. The first of these is commonly divided into two parts, *viz.* (1.) The mortification, killing, and crucifying of the old man of sin, which is within ; and, (2.) The vivification, renewing, quickening, and strengthening of the new man of grace ; and this is a growth in grace, and in fruitfulness and holiness.

As to the first of these, *viz.*, the mortification or crucifying the old man ; we know, that there is a principle of wickedness and enmity against GOD, in man by nature, since the fall, whereby the man is inclined to evil, and only to evil. This is called the old man, as being, like the body, made up of so many parts, joints, and members ; that is, so many corruptions and evil inclinations together, make up a body ; and they are fast joined and compacted together, as the members of the body, each useful and serviceable to another, and all of them concurring and contributing their utmost to the carrying on the work of sin ; and so it is the man of sin : And it is also called the old man, as having first possession of the soul before it is by grace renewed. This old man hath his members in our members and faculties, so that none of them are free : understanding, will, affections, and the members of our body, are all servants of unrighteousness to this old man. So we read of the motions of sin, which “ work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” (*Rom.* vii. 5.) And the old man is said to be corrupt, “ according to the deceitful lusts.” (*Eph.* iv. 22.) All which lusts and

affections are as so many members of this body of sin, and of this old man. And farther, there is herein a power, force, and efficacy, which this old man hath in us, to carry us away, and, as it were, constrain us, as by a forcible law. Hence we read of the “law of sin and death,” which only the “law of the spirit of life in CHRIST” doth make us free from. It is also called a “law in our members warring against the law of our mind.” So it is said to “lust against the Spirit.” All which point out the strength, activity, and dominion, of the soul; so that it is as “the husband over the wife.” (*Rom.* vii. 1.) Yea, it hath a domineering and constraining power, where its horns are not held in by grace. And as its power is great, so its nature is wicked and malicious; for it is pure “enmity against God,” so that it neither is nor can be reconciled, and therefore must be ‘put off and abolished, killed and crucified.’ Now, herein lieth the work of a believer, to be killing, mortifying, and crucifying, this enemy, or rather enmity; and delivering himself from under this bondage and slavery, that he may be CHRIST’s free man, through the SPIRIT.

Now, if it be asked, How shall a believer make use of CHRIST, to the end this old man may be crucified? How should a believer mortify this old man, and the lusts thereof, through CHRIST, or by the SPIRIT of JESUS? We answer,—

1. The believer should have his eye on this old man, as his arch enemy, as a deadly cut-throat, lying within his bosom. It is an enemy lodging within him, in his soul, mind, heart, and affections, so that there is no part free; and therefore is acquainted with all the motions of the soul, and is always opposing and hindering every thing that is good: it is an enemy that will never be reconciled to God, and therefore will not be reconciled with the believer as such; for it is called enmity itself: and so it is always seeking to promote the ruin of the soul, what by prompting, moving, and forcibly drawing or driving to evil; what by withstanding, resisting, opposing, counter-

working and contradicting what is good. Therefore, this being so dangerous, so constant and implacable an enemy, so active and close, so deadly and destructive, it is the believer's part to guard against, to have a vigilant eye upon it, to carry as an irreconcilable enemy thereunto; and never to come into terms of agreement therewith, never once to parley. And the believer should not have his eye upon this or that member of this body of death, so much as upon the body itself, or the principle of wickedness and rebellion against God; the head, life, spirit, or law, of this body of death: for there lieth its greatest wickedness and activity; and this is always opposing us, though not in every joint and member, but sometimes in one, sometimes in another.

2. Though the believer should have a main eye upon the body, this innate strong law of sin and death; yet should he have friendship with no part, member, or lust, of all this body: all the deeds of the body should be mortified; the least of them countenanced, entertained, and embraced, will work our ruin, and cut our soul's throat: therefore should the believer look on each of them, and on all of them, as his deadly enemies.

3. He should consider, that as it is a very unseemly thing for him to be a slave to that old tyrant, so it is dangerous and deadly: his life lieth at stake; either he must get it killed, or it will kill him; his life will go for its life; if this enemy escape, he is a gone man. The consideration of this should cause the believer to act here in earnestness and seriousness, with care and diligence, and set about this work of mortification, with labour and pains.

4. Much more must it be against all reason, to be making "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" to be strengthening the hands of, and laying provision to, this enemy, which is set and sworn against us. And here is much of spiritual wisdom required, to discern what may make for fostering of this or that corruption or member of the body of sin, and to withdraw that, as we labour to

take away provision of any kind from an enemy that is coming against us. PAUL acted herein as a wise combatant, when he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection. It were but to mock GOD, and to preach forth our own folly, to be looking to CHRIST for help against such an enemy, and in the mean time to be underhand strengthening, the hands of the enemy : this would be double-dealing and treachery against ourselves.

5. The believer should remember, that this enemy is not for him to fight against alone, and that his own strength and skill will make but a slender opposition : it will laugh at the shaking of his spear. It can easily insinuate itself on all occasions, because it lieth so close to the soul, always residing there, and is at the believer's right hand, whatever he be doing, and is always openly or closely opposing, and that with great facility. Man cannot know all the windings and turnings, all the drifts and designs, all the lurking and retiring places, all the falsehoods and double-dealings, all the dissimulations, lies, and subterfuges, all the plausible and deceitful pretexts and insinuations of his heart, acted and spirited by this law of sin and death. And, beside this sleight and cunning, it hath strength and power to draw by lusts into destruction and perdition, (1 *Tim.* vi. 9,) and to carry the soul headlong. All which shows, that the believer should call in other help than his own.

6. So that the believer must have his recourse for help and succour here ; unto " JESUS, the Captain of salvation ;" follow him, and fight under his banner ; make use of his weapons, which are spiritual ; fight according to his counsel and conduct, taking him as a leader and commander, and lying open for his orders and instructions, waiting for the motions of his Spirit, and following them : and thus oppose and fight against this deadly enemy, with an eye always on CHRIST by faith, depending on him for light to the mind, resolution to the will, and grace to the whole soul, to stand in the battle, and to withstand all assaults : and never engage in a

dispute with this enemy, or any lust or member of this body, without CHRIST the principal; that is, the soul should despair in itself, and "be strong in Him, and in the power of His might."

7. And, for this cause, the believer should eye the covenant, the basis of all our hope and consolation, wherein final and full victory is promised to CHRIST, as our Head, *viz.*, that he shall bruise the serpent's head; and so that, in him, all his followers, (persevering such,) shall lift up the head, and get full victory, at length, over both sin and death. "Now, it is GOD that giveth us the victory, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST. (1 Cor. xv. 57.) "And the GOD of peace shall bruise SATAN under your feet shortly: sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The believer, I say, should look out by faith unto, and lay hold on, these and the like promises; and thereby get strength, whereby he may strive lawfully, and fight valiantly, and oppose with courage and resolution.

8. Further, the believer should eye CHRIST as a fountain, a full and complete magazine, standing open, and ready for every one of his soldiers to run to, for new supply of what they want: so that, whatever they find wanting in their Christian armour, they must run away to the open magazine, that standeth ready for them, and by faith take and put on what they stand in need of. If their girdle of truth be slacked, loosed, or weakened, and SATAN object to them their double-dealing, to discourage them; they must away to him who is the Truth, that he may bind on that girdle better, and make their hearts more upright before GOD in all they do. And if their breast-plate of righteousness be weakened, and SATAN there seem to get advantage, by casting up to them their unrighteous dealings towards GOD or men; they must flee to Him who only can help here, and beg pardon through his blood for their failings, and set afresh to the battle. If their resolution grow weak, it must be renewed in CHRIST's armory, and the feet anew be shod

therewith. If their shield of faith begin to fail them; away must they get to Him, who is "the author and finisher of faith." (*Heb. xii. 2.*) And, if their helmet of hope begin to fail; in this armory alone can that be supplied. And if their sword be blunted in their hand, or they unable to wield it aright; the SPIRIT of JESUS can only teach their hands to fight, and instruct them to manage that useful weapon with advantage. "He is their GOD that girdeth them with strength, and maketh their way perfect. He maketh their feet like hinds' feet, and setteth them upon their high places. He teacheth their hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by their arms. He giveth them the shield of salvation. His right hand upholdeth them. He girdeth them with strength unto the battle."

9. For the further strengthening of their hope, faith, and confidence, believers should eye CHRIST as hanging on the cross, and overcoming by death, death and him that had the power of death, the Devil; and so as meritoriously purchasing this redemption from the slavery of sin and SATAN, and particularly from the slavery of that body of death, and of the law of sin and death: so that the believer may now look upon that enemy, how fearful soever it appear, as condemned and killed in the death of CHRIST. He, having laid down the price of redemption, hath bought this freedom from the chains with which he was held in captivity. Faith then, on the death of JESUS, satisfying justice for the poor captive, may, and should, support and strengthen the hope and confidence of the believer, that he shall obtain victory.

It will not be amiss, for further explaining the matter, to remove a scruple or two. Some may say, that they cannot perceive that all their pains in this matter come to any good issue; for they never found corruption stir more, than since they began to fight against it in earnest: So that this would seem not to be the right way.

I answer, 1. May not much of this flow from thy not

laying the whole work so wholly off thyself, and upon **CHRIST**, as thou oughtest to do? Try and see.

2. May not the Devil rage most, when he thinks ere long to be ejected? May not he labour to create most trouble to the soul, when he seeth that he is like to be put from his strength?

3. May not the Devil be doing this of purpose to drive thee to despair of ever getting corruption mortified; or, to a fainting in the pursuit, that so, instead of fighting or standing, thou mayest turn the back? And should we comply with him in his designs?

4. May not the **LORD** give way to this for a time, to try thy seriousness, patience, submission, and faith, and to sharpen thy diligence, and kindle thy zeal? And should we not submit to his wise dispensations?

5. How canst thou say that thou gainest no advantage, as long as thou are helped to stand, and to resist sin, to cry out against it, and fight as thou canst, and at least not to yield?

6. What if **GOD** see it for thy advantage, that thou be kept in exercise for a time, to the end thou mayest be kept humble, watchful, and diligent? He may see more of thee than thou canst see of thyself, and so may know what is best for thee: and, shouldest thou not condescend to be disposed of by him, and to let him make of thee and to do with thee what he will?

7. What if **GOD** be about to chasten thee thus, for thy former negligence, security, and unwatchfulness, and giving too much advantage to those lusts which now thou wouldest be delivered from? Shouldest not thou bear the indignation of the **LORD**, because thou hast sinned against him?

8. Is it not thy duty, the more that corruption stirs, to run with it the oftener to **CHRIST**, that he may subdue it, and put it to silence?

Let this satisfy us, that he is the **LORD**, who doeth what he will in heaven and in earth, and may dispose

of us as he will, and make us of what he will, for his own glory: we are to mind our duty, and be faithful at our post, resolving never to comply with the enemy; and to rejoice in this, that the enemy is already conquered by the Captain, and that we share in his victory; and that “the very **GOD** of peace shall quickly bruise **SATAN** under our feet.”



CHAPTER VII.

How CHRIST is to be made use of in reference to Growing in Grace.

I COME now to speak a little to the other part of sanctification, which concerneth the change of our nature, and is called Vivification, or quickening of the new man: called the new man, as having all its several members and parts, as well as the old man; new, because posterior to the other. This duty of growing in grace, is variously expressed in Scripture: it is called an “abiding and bringing forth fruit in **CHRIST** ;” (*John xv. 5*;) “adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,” &c.; (*2 Pet. i. 5—7*;) “a going on to perfection ;” (*Heb. vi. 1*;) “a growing up in **CHRIST** in all things ;” (*Eph. iv. 15*;) “a working out our salvation ;” (*Phil. ii. 12*;) “a perfecting holiness ;” (*2 Cor. vii. 1*;) “a being renewed in the Spirit of our minds, and a putting on the new man, which after **GOD** is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (*Eph. iv. 23, 24*; *Col. iii. 10*.) Some whereof do more immediately express the nature of this change as to the root, and some as to the fruits and effects thereof, and some the progress and advancement that is made or to be made therein; and all of them point out a special work, which lieth on all that would see the face of **GOD**.

This then being a special part of the daily work of a Christian; and it being certain, that without **CHRIST** we cannot get this work either begun or carried on, the

question is, How we are to make use of CHRIST for this end ?

Though by what we have said, it may be easy to gather what is to be said here ; yet I shall briefly put the reader in mind of these things :—

1. The believer should consider what an ornament this is to the soul, to have on this new man, which is created after the image of GOD ; what an excellency lieth here, to recover that lost glory ; and what advantage the soul reapeth hereby, when it is “ made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, walking worthy of the LORD unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of GOD :” what glory and peace is here, to be found obedient unto the many commands given to be holy ; what hazard is in the want of holiness ; how unanswerable it is unto our profession, who are members of such a holy Head ; what joy and satisfaction there is in being temples of the HOLY GHOST, in walking after the SPIRIT, in bringing forth fruit unto the glory of the FATHER. The consideration of these, and other motives unto this, should arm the soul with resolution, and harden it against opposition.

2. It should be remembered, that this work, though it be our duty, yet it is beyond our power. It is true, at conversion, the seed of grace is cast into the soul, new habits are infused, a new principle of life is given, the stony heart is changed into a heart of flesh ; yet these principles cannot act in themselves, or be brought into act by any thing that a believer, considered in himself, can do : but this growth in grace must be carried on by divine help, by the SPIRIT of JESUS dwelling and working within. Albeit no believer will question this, yet it may be, it shall be found after trial, that one main cause of their not growing in grace, and making progress in this work, is their not acting as believing this, but setting about the work as if it were a work which they themselves could do without special help : therefore the believer should abide, live, and act, in the faith of this truth.

3. Therefore, believers should not, in going about this work, either trust to their own strength, to the habits of grace, to their former experiences, to their knowledge, or the like; nor yet should they trust to any external means, because the wisdom, strength, and help, which their case calleth for, is not to be found in them. Yet they should not think of laying these means aside, for then would they sin against GOD; they would rob themselves of the help, strength, and supply, which GOD useth to convey to the soul in and by the means: and withal, they should not tempt the LORD, by prescribing another way to him than he hath thought good to take.

4. Albeit it be true, that the power and grace of GOD alone, doth begin and carry on this work of sanctification; yet though he might carry on and finish this work without the intervention of second causes or means, he hath notwithstanding thought fit, for his own glory, to work this work by means, and particularly by believers setting about the work: he worketh not in man as if he were a block or a stone, but useth him as a rational creature, having useful and necessary faculties, and having a body fitted to be subservient to the soul in its actions. Therefore the believer must not think to lie by, and do nothing; for he is commanded to work out his own salvation; and that because it is GOD that worketh in him both to will and do: because GOD worketh all, therefore he should work; so reasoneth the Apostle: so that GOD's working is an argument and motive to the man to work, and not an argument to him to lie idle, and do nothing. And here is the divine skill requisite in this business, for the believer to be as diligent and active as if he could bring forth fruit by his own working; and yet to be as abstracted from himself, his own grace, ability, knowledge, and experience, in his working, as if he were lying by like a mere block.

5. The soul that would grow in grace, should remember, that CHRIST is proposed to us as a copy which we are to imitate; and that therefore we should set CHRIST con-

tinually before us as our pattern, that we may follow his steps. But withal it should be remembered, that he is not like other copies, that can help the man that imitateth them no other way than by their prospect; for looking by faith on this copy, will bring virtue to the man that studieth to imitate, whereby he shall be enabled to follow his copy the better. O if we knew in experience what this were, to take a look of CHRIST'S love, patience, long-suffering, meekness, hatred of sin, zeal,—and by faith to pore in,—until, by virtue proceeding from that copy, we found our hearts cast into the same mould!

6. Believers should lie open to the influences of CHRIST, and guard against the putting obstructions in the way, through grieving of the SPIRIT, by which he conveyeth those influences to the soul, and through questioning and misbelieving CHRIST'S faithfulness; which, as a violent humour, stoppeth the passage. So then believers should look and wait, drawing, seeking from him what they need, and guarding against every thing that may provoke the LORD to anger, whether in omission or commission. Here is requisite a holy, humble, sober, and watchful walk; an earnest, serious, and hungry looking out to him, and patient waiting for supply from him. This is to open the mouth wide, that he may fill it; to lie before the Sun of Righteousness, that the beams thereof may beat upon them, and warm and revive them; and to wait as a beggar at this King's gate, until he give the alms.

7. For the strengthening of their hope and faith in this, they should lay hold on CHRIST dying, and by his death purchasing all those influences of life and strength which are requisite for carrying on the work of grace and sanctification; he should look on these influences as purchased at a dear rate, by the blood of JESUS CHRIST; so that the "divine power giveth unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 *Pet.* i. 3.) And this will encourage the soul to wait on, and expect the flowing down of influences, and spiritual blessings, and

showers of grace, to cause the soul to flourish and become fruitful, and to urge and press more earnestly, by faith, the bestowing of the purchased benefits.

8. The believers likewise should exert their faith upon the promises of grace, strength, and life, whereby they shall walk in his ways, have GOD'S laws put into their minds, and writ in their hearts, and of "the new heart, and new spirit, and the heart of flesh, and the SPIRIT within them, to cause them to walk in his ways or statutes, and keep his judgments and do them;" because these are all given over to the believer by way of legacy; "CHRIST becoming the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (*Heb. ix. 15.*) Now CHRIST by his death hath confirmed this testament: for "where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead." (*Verses 16, 17.*) CHRIST, then, dying to make the testament of force, hath made the legacy of the promises sure to the believer: "He was made a minister of circumcision, to confirm the promises made to the Fathers." That the eyeing of these promises by faith is a noble means to sanctification, is clear by what the Apostle saith: "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD." (*2 Cor. vii. 1.*) So that the believer that would grow in grace, should eye CHRIST the fundamental promise, the Testator establishing the testament, and the Executor of the Covenant, and expect the good things through him and from him, through the conduit and channel of the promises.

9. Faith should also look to CHRIST, as an Intercessor with the FATHER, for this particular: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (*John xvii. 17.*) And this will add to their confidence, that the work shall go on; for CHRIST was always heard of the FATHER,

and so will be in this prayer, which was put up for all believers.

The believer then should eye CHRIST as dying to purchase the good things promised, and to confirm the same; as quickened, as rising as Head and public Person, to insure this work, and to bestow the graces requisite, and as praying also for the FATHER'S concurrence; and cast the burden of the work on him by faith, knowing that he standeth obliged, by his place and relation to his people, to bear all their burdens, to work all their works in them, to perfect his own work that he hath begun in them, to present them to himself at last a holy bride, to give them the SPIRIT "to dwell in them, to quicken their mortal bodies, and to lead them," (*Rom. xi. 14.*) until at length they be crowned, and brought to glory. This is to live by faith; when CHRIST liveth, acteth, and worketh in us by his SPIRIT. Thus CHRIST "dwelleth in the heart by faith," and by this his people become rooted and grounded in love; and "knowing the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge," they become "filled with all the fullness of GOD."

10. But mean time remember, we should not think that there is no growth in grace because it cometh not our way, or by the instruments and means that we most expect it by. Possibly we are too fond of some instruments and means, that we prefer to others, and we think, if ever we get good it must be that way; and by that means, be it private or public; and GOD may check us for our folly, by taking another way.

11. Nor should we think that there is no growth in the work of grace, because it cometh not at such and such a set time; nor should we think the matter desperate, because of our looking long, and waiting, and asking, and labouring, and yet seeing no sensible advantage. Such and such a believer (saith the soul) made great progress in a short time; but I come no speed, for as long as I have been at this school. O, we should beware of limiting the

Holy One of Israel ! Let us be at duty, and commit the event to him.

12. It is not a fit time to take to measure off our graces, when Devils are broken loose upon us, temptations are multiplied, corruptions make a great noise, and we meet with a horrible tempest shaking us on all hands ; for it will be strong grace that will much appear then ; it will be a strong faith that will say, " Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." At such a time it will be much if the man keep the ground he hath gained. The trees, which in a cold winter-day bear neither leaves nor fruit, must not be said to go back, or not to grow ; when the spring cometh again they may revive and be as fruitful as ever.

13. Whatever measure of holiness the believer attain, he should take special heed that he place no part of his confidence of being justified in it ; as if that could come in as any part of the price to satisfy justice : but when he hath done all, let him account himself an unprofitable servant. Though believers will not be so gross as to speak thus, yet sure their holding back from God, because they find not such a measure of holiness as they would, looketh too much this way, and saith, that they lean too much hereunto in the matter of acceptance before God. Now, this should be specially guarded against, lest their labour be in vain.



CHAPTER VIII.

How to make use of CHRIST for taking away the guilt of sins that come after justification.

THE next part of our sanctification is in reference to our failings through violence of temptations, or through daily infirmities. The question is, How CHRIST is to be made use of for taking of these away ?

In these there are two things to be noticed : *First*, The guilt, whereby the transgressor is liable to the sentence of the Law, or to the penalty annexed to the breach thereof, which is no less than GOD'S curse. Next, The stain or blot, whereby the soul is defiled, and made so far incapable of glory, (for nothing entereth in there which defileth,) and of communion and fellowship with GOD, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; so that it is manifest both these must be taken away, that they may not stand in our way to the FATHER. And as to both, we must make use of CHRIST, who is the only way to the FATHER.

We shall first speak of the taking away the guilt that is contracted by every sin. And for this cause, we shall, 1. Show what CHRIST hath done as Mediator, that the guilt contracted by our daily failings might be taken away : 2. What the believer should do for his getting of guilt taken away in CHRIST ; or how he should make use of CHRIST for reconciliation with GOD after transgressions, for the taking away of the guilt that he lieth under because of his violation of the law.

As to the first, CHRIST, for taking away of guilt contracted daily, hath done these things :—

1. CHRIST laid down his life a ransom for all our sins, both such as were past before we believed, and such as were committed after. His blood was shed for the remission of sins indefinitely, and without distinction.

2. Having satisfied justice, and being risen from the dead as a conqueror, he is now “exalted to be a Prince to give repentance and remission of sins.” (*Acts* v. 31.) Now, repentance and remission of sins his people have need of after conversion, as well as before.

3. There are promises of pardon and remission of sins in the new covenant of grace, all which are sealed and confirmed in the blood of JESUS : “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (*Jer.* xxxi. 34.) “And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me ; and I will

pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, and whereby they have transgressed against me." (*Chap. xxxiii. 8.*)

4. Though there be no actual pardon of sins until they be committed and repented of, according to the tenor of the Gospel, (*Matt. iii. 2; Luke xiii. 3; Acts ii. 38, and viii. 22.*) yet while CHRIST "bare all the sins of his people upon the cross," they were all then meritoriously taken away.

5. So that, by virtue of CHRIST's death, there is a way laid down, in the covenant of grace, how our sins shall be actually pardoned, *viz.*, That at our first laying hold on CHRIST by faith, all the sins whereof we then stand guilty shall be actually pardoned and forgiven, and all our after-sins shall also be actually pardoned, upon our laying hold on CHRIST anew by faith, and turning to GOD by repentance. And this way is revealed in the Gospel, for the instruction and encouragement of believers; and all to the glory of his free grace.

6. Beside CHRIST's death and resurrection, which give hope of pardon, there is likewise his intercession useful for this end; for, saith the Apostle, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (*1 John ii. 1, 2.*) This intercession of his is a special part of his priesthood, who was the great High Priest, and a completing part; and upon this account it is, that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to GOD through him, because he liveth for ever to make intercession for them:" (*Heb. vii. 25:*) for by his intercession is the work of redemption carried on, the purchased benefits applied, and particularly new grants of remission are through his intercession issued forth; he pleading, in a way suitable to his glorified condition, his death and propitiation made upon the cross, accepted of the FATHER, and declared to be accepted by his resurrection, ascension, and sitting at his FATHER's right hand. And thus, as believers are reconciled to GOD by CHRIST's death, they are saved by his life.

7. And as for the conditions requisite to renewed pardon, *viz.*, repentance and faith, CHRIST is the worker of both; for he is "a Prince exalted to give repentance," (*Acts* iv. 31,) first and last; and as he is the author of faith, so he is the finisher of it. (*Heb.* xii. 2.)

As to the second particular, namely, What believers should do for getting the guilt of their after-failings taken away by CHRIST? Or, how they should make use of CHRIST for this end? I shall propose these things to consideration:—

1. We should beware to think, that all our after actual transgressions are actually pardoned, either when CHRIST died, or when we first believed in CHRIST, as some suppose; for sin cannot properly be said to be pardoned before it be committed. DAVID was put to sue for pardon after his actual transgression was committed, and not for the mere sense and feeling of the pardon, when he cried out, "Blot out my transgressions; hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities;" (*Psa.* li;) and, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness." (*Ver.* 14.) Sure, when he spoke thus, he sought some other thing than intimation of pardon to his conscience; for that he desired also, but in far more clear expressions: "Make me to hear joy and gladness;" (*ver.* 8;) and, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." (*ver.* 12.) Scripture phrases to express remission import this, *viz.*, Covering of sin, pardoning of debts, blotting out of sins, hiding of God's face from sins, not remembering of them, casting of them behind his back, casting of them into the sea, removing of sins. These and the like phrases, though many of them be metaphorical, yet all clearly evince that sin must first have a being before it can be pardoned. The same is clearly imported by the Gospel-conditions requisite before pardon, such as, acknowledgment of sin; (*1 John* i. 9;) confessing and forsaking it; (*Prov.* xxviii. 13;) sorrowing for it, and repenting of it, and laying hold on CHRIST by faith.

The reason why I propose this, is not only to guard the soul against this Antinomian error, but also to guard the

soul from security, to which this doctrine hath a natural tendency: for if a person once think that all his sins were pardoned upon his first believing, so that many of them were pardoned before they were committed, he shall never be affected for his after-transgressions, nor shall he act faith upon the promises of pardon made in the covenant of grace for after-transgressions, or for transgressions actually committed; (*Jer.* xxxi. 34, and xxxiii. 8; *Heb.* viii. 12;) and so there shall be no use made of CHRIST for new pardons, or remission of new sins.

2. The believer should remember, that among other things antecedently requisite to remission of posterior actual transgressions, Gospel-repentance is especially required: (*Luke* xiii. 3; *Matt.* iii. 2; *Ezek.* xviii. 28, 30, 32; *Luke* xv. 17, 18; *Hos.* ii. 6, 7; *Ezek.* xiv. 6:) Whereby a sinner, through the help of the SPIRIT, being convinced not only of his hazard by reason of sin, but also of the filthiness and hatefulness of sin; and having a sight of the mercy of GOD in CHRIST JESUS to sinners, turning from their sin; doth turn from those sins unto GOD, with a full purpose of heart in his strength, to follow him and obey his laws. And hereby the soul is brought to loathe itself and sin, and is made willing to desire, seek for, accept of, and prize remission of sins. This makes them more wary in time coming: "For behold," says the Apostle, "this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge." (*2 Cor.* vii. 11.) Thus is GOD glorified in his justice; and his mercy is acknowledged, in not entering with us into judgment, nor casting us into hell, as he might have done in justice.

3. Yet it should be remembered, that though it hath seemed good in the LORD'S eyes to appoint this way of obtaining pardon of sins daily committed, we must not ascribe too much unto repentance in the matter of pardon; we must not make it a cause of our remission, either

efficient or meritorious ; we must not think that it hath any hand in appeasing the wrath of **GOD**, or in satisfying of justice. Pardon must always be an act of **GOD**'s free grace, unmerited at our hands, and procured alone through the merits of **CHRIST**. We must not put repentance in **CHRIST**'s room, nor ascribe any imperfection unto his merits, as if they needed any supply from any act of ours ; we must beware of leaning to our repentance, even so far as to think to commend ourselves to **GOD** thereby, that we may obtain pardon.

4. The believer should not only consider the sin itself, but also all its aggravations. There are peculiar aggravations of some sins, taken from the time, manner, and other circumstances, which, rightly considered, will help forward the work of humiliation : and the sins of believers have this aggravation above the sins of others, that they are committed against more love, and against more opposition and contradiction of the grace of **GOD** ; against more light and conviction, and therefore their humiliation ought to be singular and serious. This considering of sin, with its due aggravations, would help us to prize mercy at a high rate, and cause the soul more willingly to wait for and more seriously seek after remission ; knowing that **GOD** is more angry for great sins than for sins of infirmity, and may therefore pursue the same with sorer judgments.

5. Faith should eye **CHRIST** as hanging upon the cross, and offering up himself, through the eternal **SPIRIT**, a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for all our sins. We cannot think that **CHRIST** bare but some of our sins, or only sins committed before conversion ; and if he bare all, as the **FATHER** laid all upon him, the believer is to lay hold on him by faith, as hanging on the cross, as well for taking away the guilt of sins committed after conversion as before. His sacrifice was a sacrifice for all, and "he bare our sins," without distinction or exception, "in his own body on the tree." (1 *Pet.* ii. 24.) **DAVID** had his eye on this, when he cried out, "Purge me with hyssop : " (*Psa.* li. 7 :) hyssop being sometimes used in the legal purifications,

which typified that purification which CHRIST really wrought when he gave himself a sacrifice for sin." (*Lev.* xiv. 6; *Num.* xix. 18.)

6. The believer looking on CHRIST dying as a Mediator, to pacify the wrath of GOD, and to make satisfaction to the justice of GOD for the sins of his people, should renew his consent unto that gracious and wise contrivance of heaven, of pardoning sins through a crucified Mediator, that mercy and justice might kiss each other, and be glorified together; and declare again his full satisfaction with CHRIST'S satisfying of justice for him, and taking away the guilt of his sins by that blood that was shed upon the cross, by taking those sins whereof now he standeth guilty, and for which he is desirous of pardon, and by faith nailing them to the cross of CHRIST, and rolling them on his shoulders; that the guilt of them, as well as of the rest, might be taken away, through the merits of his death and satisfaction.

Thus should a believer make use of CHRIST for the taking away the guilt of his daily transgressions; and, for further clearing of it, I shall add a few cautions.

1. The course before-mentioned is to be taken with all sins, though, 1. They be never so heinous and gross: 2. Though they be accompanied with never such crying aggravations: 3. Though they be sins frequently fallen into: And, 4. Though they be sins many and heaped together. DAVID'S transgression was a heinous sin, and had heinous aggravations, yea, there was a complication of sins together in that one; yet he followed this course. We find none of those kinds of sins excepted in the covenant; and where the law doth not distinguish, we ought not to distinguish; where GOD'S law doth not expressly exclude us, we should not exclude ourselves. CHRIST'S death is able enough to take away all sin. If through it a believer be justified from all his transgressions committed before conversion, why may not also a believer be, through virtue of it, justified from his multiplied sins committed

after conversion? "The blood of CHRIST cleanseth from all sin." CHRIST hath taught his followers to pray, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that sin against us;" and he hath told us also, that we must forgive our brother "seventy times seven." (*Matt. xviii. 22.*) We should not be discouraged then from taking this course, because our sins are such and such; nay rather, we should look on this as an argument to press us more unto this way, because, the greater our sins be, the greater need have we of pardon.

2. Believers should not abuse this great condescendency of free grace, and take the greater liberty to sin, because there is such a way of getting those sins blotted out and forgiven. "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? That be far from us," saith the Apostle. (*Rom. vi. 15.*) This were indeed to turn the grace of GOD into lasciviousness.

3. The believer must not think it strange, if he find more trouble after great sins, and a greater difficulty to lay hold on CHRIST for pardon of those, than for pardon of others. For as GOD hath been more dishonoured by these, so is his anger more kindled upon that account; and it is suitable for the glory of GOD's justice, that our sorrow for such sins be proportionably greater; and this will likewise increase the difficulty: and ordinarily the effect of GOD's fatherly displeasure makes deeper wounds in the soul after such sins, and these are not so easily healed. All which call for proportionably greater sorrow and repentance, and acts of faith; because faith will meet with more opposition and discouragement there, and therefore must be the more strong to go through these impediments, and to lay hold on his cross. Yet, though this should make all watchful, and to guard against gross sins, it should not drive any to despair, nor to say, with that despairing wretch, their sin is greater than that it can be forgiven. The ocean of mercy can drown and swallow up greater as well as lesser sins; CHRIST is an all-sufficient Mediator, for the greatest sins, as well as for the least. "O for thy name's

sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great," will come in season to a soul ready to sink with the weight of this millstone tied about its neck.

4. As the greater sins should not make us despair of taking this course for remission, so neither should the smallness of sin make us neglect this way; for the least sin cannot be pardoned but through **JESUS CHRIST**. For the Law of **GOD** is violated thereby, justice provoked, and therefore sin cannot be now pardoned, by reason of the threatenings annexed to the transgression of the Law, without a ransom. Death is the wages of all sins, less and greater; and the curse is due to all sinners, greater and smaller: therefore the believer should not suffer one sin, seen and discovered, to lie unpardoned: but, on the first discovery thereof, take it away to **CHRIST**, and nail it to his cross.

5. The believer should not conclude that his sins are not pardoned, because possibly temporal strokes, inflicted because of them, are not removed: for though **DAVID**'s sin was pardoned, yet, because of that sin, a temporal stroke attended him and his family to his dying day: for not only **GOD** cut off the child, (2 *Sam.* xii. 14,) but told him, that the "sword should never depart from his house;" and that "he would raise up evil against him out of his own house, and give his wives to one that should lie with them in the sight of the sun." (*Ver.* 10, 11.) So we read, that the **LORD** took vengeance on their inventions, whose sin he had pardoned. (*Psa.* xcix. 8.) **GOD** may use this expedient for his own glory, and for humbling them, and causing them to fear to sin against him.

1. But what course shall we take with secret sins? I answer, This same course must be followed with them: There is an implicit repentance of sins that have not been distinctly seen and observed; as who can see and observe all their failings? And so there may be an implicit faith; that is, the believer being persuaded that he is guilty of more sins than he hath yet a clear sight of, as he should

bewail his condition before **GOD** because of these, and sorrow for them after a godly manner; so he should take them together in a heap, or as a closed bag full, and by faith nail them to the cross of **CHRIST**, as if they were all distinctly seen and known: yet says he moreover, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." (*Psa.* xix. 12.)

2. But, what shall I do with the guilt of my weak repentance, and weak faith? *Ans.* When with a weak and defective repentance and faith, thou art carrying thy sins away to **CHRIST**, and nailing them to his cross, let the imperfections of thy faith and repentance go with the rest, and leave all there.

3. What shall I do with my conscience, that still accuseth me of guilt, notwithstanding my taking and following this course? *Ans.* Despise not the accusations of conscience; but let these humble thee the more: Yet know, that conscience is but an under servant and **GOD'S** deputy, and must accuse according to law, its mouth must be stopped by law; and so the soul should stay and answer the accusations of conscience with this, that he hath fled to **CHRIST** the only Mediator, and cast his burden on him, and leaneth on his merits alone, and liath put those sins in his hand as his Advocate and Intercessor with the **FATHER**; and that the Gospel requireth no more of him.

And if conscience should say, that both faith and repentance are imperfect and defective; and that guilt is thereby rather increased than taken away: He must answer again, True; but I have done with the guilt of my faith and repentance, as with the rest, taken all to **CHRIST**, and left all on him; and herein only do I acquiesce. I look not for pardon for my imperfect faith and repentance, yea, nor would I look for pardon of my sins for my faith and repentance, were they never so perfect, but only in and through **JESUS CHRIST**, the only Redeemer and Advocate. But further, this deputy should be brought to his Master, who can only command him to silence: That is to say, the believer should go to **CHRIST** with the accusing con-

science, and desire him to command it silence, that he may have peace of conscience, and freedom from those accusations.



CHAPTER IX.

How to make use of CHRIST for cleansing of us from our daily spots.

HAVING spoken of the way of making use of CHRIST for removing the guilt of our after-transgressions, we come to speak of the way of making use of CHRIST for taking away the filth that cleaveth to the soul through them: for every "sin defileth the man." (*Matt. xv. 20.*) Hence we are so oft called to this duty of washing and making us clean. (*Isai. i. 16; Jer. iv. 14; Acts xxii. 16.*) Now, in speaking to this, we shall observe the same method; and first show, what CHRIST hath done to take away this filth; and next what way we are to make use of him for this end, to get our filthiness taken away, that we may be holy.

As to the first, For the purging away the filth of our after-transgressions, CHRIST hath done these things:—

1. He hath died, that he might procure this advantage to us; and thus he hath washed us in his blood, which he shed upon the cross. Thus he "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (*Rev. i. 5.*) And this is from all sins, as well such as are committed after, as such as are committed before conversion. Thus "he by himself purged our sins," (*Heb. i. 3.*) viz., by offering up of himself as an expiatory sacrifice. "CHRIST gave himself for his Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. He gave himself for us, that

he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Here then is the foundation of all our cleansing and purification; CHRIST'S death procuring it.

2. As he hath procured, so he sendeth the SPIRIT to effect this, and to work this washing and sanctification in us. Hence it is said, that "we are sanctified and washed in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) We are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he shed upon us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour." (*Titus* iii. 5, 6.) The sending then, or shedding of the HOLY SPIRIT upon us, whereby we are sanctified, purified, and purged from our filth, is a fruit of CHRIST'S death and mediation, being purchased thereby; and of his resurrection and glorification, and intercession in glory.

3. He hath purchased and provided the external means, whereby this cleansing and sanctification is brought about, viz., the preaching of the Gospel. "Now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken unto you." (*John* xv. 3.) The Church is "sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water, by the word." (*Eph.* v. 26.)

4. He hath confirmed and ratified all the promises of the covenant, which are ample and large, touching this cleansing and washing, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me." (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 25.) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness." And all the other promises of the covenant, apprehended by faith, have no small influence on our cleansing: "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves." (*2 Cor.* vii. 1.)

Secondly, As to the way of our using CHRIST for the purging away of our filth and pollution, believers should take this course:—

1. They should live in the conviction of the exceeding abominableness and filthiness of sin, which is compared to the vomit of a dog, and to the mire wherein the sow walloweth; (*2 Pet.* ii. 22,) that this may move them to

seek with greater care and diligence to have that filth washed away.

2. They should remember also, how abominable sin maketh them in the eye of a holy God, and how that no unclean thing can enter into the New Jerusalem: and that will make them so much the more to abhor it, and to seek to be washed from it.

3. They should look by faith upon the blood of CHRIST, that is shed for this end, to wash filthy souls in; and run to it as a fountain opened for this end, that they might come to it, and wash and be clean.

4. They should grasp by faith the promises of the new covenant.

5. And remember the end of CHRIST'S death, *viz.*, to purchase to himself a holy people, zealous of good works; "to present them to himself holy, and without spot and wrinkle, or any such thing."

6. They should put the work by faith in His hand, who hath best skill to wash a foul soul, and to purge away all their spots; and by faith pray for and expect the SPIRIT to sanctify and cleanse them from all their filthiness: that is, they should spread forth their abominations before the LORD, and eyeing CHRIST as the only great High Priest, whose blood is a fountain to wash in, should lay the work on him, and by faith put him to wash away that filth, and to purify their souls by his SPIRIT, pardoning their past iniquities, and renewing them in the spirit of their minds by grace, that they may walk before him in fear. Thus they should roll the work on him, and leave it there.

1. The believer should in all this work be kept in the exercise of these graces following: (1.) Of humility; seeing what a vile filthy wretch he is that stands in need of washing and purging daily. (2.) Of love; considering with what a loving God he hath to do, that hath provided so liberally all things for him, and particularly hath provided a fountain, and such a fountain, whereto he not only may but is commanded to resort daily. (3.) Of thankfulness; remembering how great this mercy is, how unworthy he is

on whom it is bestowed, and who He is that doth grant it. (4.) Of fear; lest GOD'S goodness be abused, and he provoked, who is so gracious to us. (5.) Of sincerity and godly ingenuity; avoiding all hypocrisy and formality; knowing that we have to do with Him who will not be mocked. (6.) Of holy hatred, loathing, and abhorrence of sin, which maketh us so filthy and odious in the eyes of the LORD.

2. This course should be followed for the purging away the least sins: for, until they be purged away, we remain in our filth, and cannot expect GOD'S favourable countenance, nor the intimations of his love and kindness. And a small spot may grow greater, and provoke GOD to let the accuser of the brethren, SATAN, loose upon us.

3. This course should be followed with every sin quickly, without delay: for the longer those spots continue, it will be the more difficult to get them taken away; the soul will after some time become the less troubled about them, and possibly forget them, and so they will remain; and this may occasion at least a sad distance, and provoke GOD to hide his face. It were good, then, to keep up a spirit of tenderness and fear.

4. Let this be our daily work. Yesterday's cleansing will not save us from new filth to-day; nor will our running to the fountain to-day, serve to take away new spots to-morrow: new spots call for new washing; so that this must be our very life and exercise, to be continually running to the fountain with our souls, and giving CHRIST, the great purger, much to do.

5. Let the believer's recourse in this matter be wholly to JESUS CHRIST, and his blood; lay no weight on their sorrow, repentance, or tears, or any outward means which they are commanded to use: yet should they not lay aside these means, but go through them to the fountain, to JESUS, there and there only to be cleansed.

6. When all this is done, we must think of having on another righteousness, as our clothing and covering in the day of our appearance before our Judge, even the right-

eousness of **JESUS CHRIST**, which only is able to save us from the wrath of **GOD**. Let us be never so washed in sanctification, and cleansed from our spots, we cannot for all that be accounted righteous before **GOD**; nor will that satisfy justice, or take away the guilt so much as of one transgression.

7. At every time we run to the fountain with our new contracted filth, we should not forget to carry along with us the mother corruption, which is the sink of all filthiness; I mean, our natural rottenness and pollution, from whence flow all our other actual pollutions. We should do well to carry mother and daughter both together to the Fountain. **DAVID** prayeth to be purged as well from his original filthiness, wherein he was conceived and born, as from his blood-guiltiness. (*Psa. li. 5, 7.*)

8. Let not this occasion our carelessness in watching against sin, for that would be to turn his grace into wantonness; but rather let it sharpen our diligence in watching against all occasions of sin, lest we again defile our souls.

9. Not only must we have our bodies, our outward conversation washed, but our souls within; the frame of our heart, our understanding, will, affections, and consciences, sprinkled with that blood. "The blood of **CHRIST**, who through the eternal **SPIRIT** offered himself without spot to **GOD**," must "purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living **GOD**." (*Heb. ix. 14.*) And we must have our "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."

Finally, If the believer fear that he shall not be able to remember all these particular duties, let him remember this, to put a foul soul, defiled with original and actual pollutions, in **CHRIST**'s hand daily, and leave it with him to wash by his blood and **SPIRIT**; and yet remember to lay the weight of his acceptance before **GOD**, upon the atoning sacrifice of **JESUS CHRIST**, and not upon his own cleanness when thus sanctified.

Thus have we endeavoured to clear up **CHRIST**'s being the Way to the **FATHER**, first and last; and how all believers or unbelievers are to make use of him, as the way

to the FATHER, whatever their condition be. From all which we may see, 1. That those are in a wretched and forlorn condition, who are still strangers to CHRIST, and will not lay hold on him, nor come to him, and walk in him, and make use of him. They are unrighteous and unholy, and daily contracting more guilt and more filth; and they know no way either for justification or sanctification; but a way of self, which will prove like the brooks which run dry in summer, and disappoint the weary traveller when he hath most need. They are without CHRIST, and so without the way, the only way, the safe and sure way to the FATHER. And O if all that is here spoken could induce them to think once of the misery of their condition, and to seek out for relief, that they might not only be saved from their state of sin and misery, but brought into a state of salvation through JESUS CHRIST; so that they might be justified before GOD, from all that justice, the Devil, or conscience, could lay against them; and throughly sanctified, and so at length brought home to the FATHER, fair and spotless. 2. Upon the other hand, we see the advantage of believers, who through grace are entered into this way; for it is a way that shall carry them safe home: They shall find that "he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to GOD through him." And O, if they were sensible of this, how would it excite them to thankfulness! How would it encourage them to run through difficulties great and many! 3. We see what a special duty lieth upon believers to make special use of CHRIST in all things as the way to the FATHER, and so march to heaven in him as the only way; march in his hands, or rather be carried in his arms and bosom. This were to go from strength to strength, till at length they appeared in Sion, and landed where the weary are at rest, and yet rest not day nor night, but sing praises to "him that hath redeemed them by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and

ever." (*Rev.* v. 9, 13, 14.) Hence, we may see the cause of the leanness of believers, of their wanderings, of their many defilements; *viz.*, their not constantly making use of CHRIST as the way in all things, according to the tenor of the Gospel. O, if this were laid to heart and mourned for, and if grace were sought to help it!

This one point of truth, That "CHRIST is the way," well understood, and rightly put into practice, would do all our business both as to justification and sanctification: and were poor sinners once entered into this way, and had they grace to walk in it, it would prove their life and salvation; for it is the marrow and substance of the whole Gospel.



CHAPTER X.

Some generals, clearing how CHRIST is the Truth.

FOR clearing of this, we first take notice of some generals, then show particularly how CHRIST is called the Truth; and finally, speak to some cases wherein we are to make use of CHRIST as the Truth.

As to the first; there are four things here to be noticed.

First, What our case by nature is, and what we are all without CHRIST the Truth.

1. Without CHRIST we are in darkness, mistakes, errors: yea, we are said to be darkness itself. "Ye were sometime darkness;" (*Eph.* v. 8;) and "of darkness;" (*1 Thess.* v. 5;) yea, "under the power of darkness," (*Col.* i. 13,) "walking in darkness;" (*1 John* i. 6;) and abiding "in darkness;" (*1 Pet.* ii. 9;) yea, we are "all gone astray." (*Isai.* liii. 6.) So far are we from any knowledge of, or acquaintance with, truth, or the way of truth.

2. We cannot turn into the right way: A spirit of error

leadeth us continually wrong ; like sheep we wander still, and weary ourselves in our wandering, and so spend all our labour and pains in vain. Being under the power of untruth and error, we cannot walk one step right.

3. Though all other ways, besides Him “ who is the way and the truth,” be false ways and by-ways, leading us away from the true resting place, and from that way which is the truth, yet we are ready to cleave to those false ways, to catch at shadows, and to lean to them, as if they were the ways of truth : Such as, (1.) A good heart ; which many may imagine they have, when they have nothing less. (2.) Good intentions and purposes for the time to come ; which such, as were in error, should never deceive themselves with. (3.) A harmless life ; a foundation on which no wise man, led by truth, would build his hopes of eternal happiness. (4.) An outward, moral, civil carriage ; wherein a Heathen can outstrip many called Christians ; so that it must be a poor ground to found our hopes upon. (5.) Outward exercise of religious duties ; wherein a Pharisee may outstrip many : and yet, O how many build all their hopes of heaven upon this sandy foundation ! (6.) The commendation of Ministers and Christians is that which many rest upon : a sad proof of the blindness of their hearts. (7.) The way of good works and alms-deeds blindfolds many, and shows that they were never led by CHRIST the truth. (8.) Some sorrow for sin, is another way which people, strangers to the truth, deceive themselves with. (9.) A common sort of repentance, backed with some kind of amendment, is a way that many rest in, though it lead to destruction. (10.) Freedom from challenges of conscience deceiveth many.

Though these and such like ways be dangerous, yea, deadly ; yet, how many are there to be found among Christians, that have no better ground of their hope of salvation, and will cleave to them so, as no preaching will make them once question the matter.

Fourthly, There is an inclineableness in us by nature to wander out of the way ; for being nothing but a mass of

error, made up of darkness, ignorance, and mistakes, we have a strong bias to error, which agreeth best with our natural corrupted temper. Hence is it, that we have such a strong propension to error and mistakes, whether,—

1. Concerning **GOD**, and his way of dealing with his Church or with ourselves. O how ready are our hearts to hatch and foment wrong, unseemly, untrue, if not blasphemous conceptions of his nature, attributes, word, and works? And how ready are we to receive and entertain wrong apprehensions of all his ways and dealings with his church and people! And as for his works in and about ourselves, O what unsuitable, erroneous, absurd, and abominable opinions do we drink in and foster, yea, feed upon with delight! Who is able to recount all the errors and mistakes, which our hearts are ready to admit and foster? Are we not, by nature, ready to say that there is not a **GOD**, or that he is not such a **GOD** as his word and works declare him to be,—a holy, just, righteous, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, **GOD**; or that he hath forgotten to be gracious, and remembereth not his people in adversity, and so is not tender and merciful; that he hath forgotten his promises, and so is not faithful and true; that he approveth of sin, because he suffereth the way of the wicked to prosper, and so is not a holy **GOD**? All which showeth how prone we are to receive and entertain erroneous thoughts of **GOD**.

2. Concerning ourselves; supposing ourselves to be born again, and reconciled to **GOD**, when yet we are living in black nature: and who so bold and confident that they are right, as such as are farthest out of the way? Or supposing ourselves in a good condition, lively, active, diligent, watchful, when it is just otherwise with us; or, in questioned matters, making truth to be error, and error to be truth.

3. Concerning others. How ready are we to run either to the one extremity or the other, in judging their persons and actions?

Next, How miserable must their condition be, who are

yet strangers to CHRIST? For they are living in darkness, lying in darkness, walking in darkness, yea, very darkness itself, a mass of error, mistakes, ignorance, and misconceptions, of all things that are good, and still wandering out of the way.

Finally, Should not this convince us all of a necessity of having more acquaintance with truth, with JESUS CHRIST, who is the truth, that we may be delivered from this wretched condition? For truth only can set us free therefrom.

The second general thing to be noticed here is, that all other ways which we can take that we may obtain life, beside CHRIST, are but lies, false and deceitful ways; there is no truth in them: for he only is the truth; no other whatsoever can bear this epithet. For, 1. He only can satisfy the soul in all points: other ways, whatever we may dream, can yield no true satisfaction in this matter. 2. He only can secure the soul from destruction: all other ways will fail here; none of them can give the least security to the soul, that they shall not bring him to destruction and everlasting perdition. 3. He only can bring the soul safe through all opposition and difficulties in the way: no other way can do this, but will leave us in the mire ere we come to the end of our journey.

O what a warning should this be to us all, to take heed that we embrace not a lie instead of Him who is the Truth, and sit not down with a shadow instead of the substance! How ready are we to put other things in his place! But whatever gets his room in the soul will prove a lie. Even, 1. All our outward holiness and duties: yea, 2. All our experiences and great attainments: yea, 3. All our gifts and inducements: aye, 4. Our very graces: none of these are CHRIST; and if we place that confidence in them, which we should place on him, they will not prove the truth to us.

How sure then should we labour to be, that we do not die with a lie in our right hand? And how carefully should we guard against the trusting in, or leaning to, any

thing that is not CHRIST, and whole CHRIST, and only CHRIST, and CHRIST as offered in the Gospel? Seeing this way is only the truth, and no other way will be found so in the end.

The third general is this: CHRIST JESUS is not only the Truth in himself, but also in reference to us. As he is the way and the life for our use; so he is the truth: not only as GOD equal with the FATHER, but also as Mediator, and our IMMANUEL.

As GOD, he is, 1. Essential Truth, being GOD equal with the FATHER in power and glory. 2. In respect of veracity, "He is the GOD of Truth:" (*Deut.* xxxii. 4:) "Faithful in all his sayings:" (*Psa.* xxxi. 5:) "Keeping truth for ever." (*Psa.* cxlvi. 6.) 3. He is the fountain and spring head of all created truth; for he is the First Truth.

As Mediator, and in reference to us, "He is full of grace and truth." (*John* i. 14.) "He receiveth not the SPIRIT in measure." (*John* iii. 34.) And this SPIRIT is a Spirit of Truth. But of this more, when we come to show more particularly how he is called the Truth, as Mediator.

The fourth general, which is here observable, is, that he is not only called Truth, but "the Truth," as he is "the way, and the life;" and not only true, but truth in the abstract: which saith, 1. That he is every way truth, however we consider him, as GOD, or as Mediator. 2. That all truth is in him: all truth of salvation for us is to be found in him. 3. That all that is in him is truth; his natures, offices, performances, words, works; all are true. 4. That he is pure and unmixed truth: no lie in him, no error or mistake there. 5. That truth in him is in its perfection and excellency: in the truest of men it is very imperfect.

O what an excellent one must he be? How completely fitted for us? O if our souls could love him, and close with him, and rest upon him as all-sufficient!

CHAPTER XI.

More particularly, in what respects CHRIST is called the Truth.

BUT, for further explaining of this matter, we should see more particularly in what respects he is called the Truth.

First, He is the Truth, in opposition to the shadows and types of him under the Law: hence, as “the Law (the whole Levitical and typical dispensation) came by MOSES; so grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST.” (*John* i. 17.) They were all shadows of him, and he is the substance and body of them all; and this is true in these respects: 1. All these shadows and types pointed at him, and directed as with a finger the Israelites, who were under that dispensation, to look to CHRIST the promised Messiah, and to rest and to lay all their weight on him. 2. They all terminate in him; he putting an end, by his coming and performing his work, to all those types, which only related to him, and to what he was to do. The body being come, there is no more need of the shadow; and the thing typified existing, there is no more need or use of the type. 3. They are fulfilled in him, he answereth them all fully: so that whatever was shadowed forth by them, is completely to be found in him.

Secondly, He is the Truth, in reference to the prophecies of old; all which did principally point at him and his concernments, his person, nature, offices, work, kingdom; and whatever was foretold in these prophecies, is perfectly fulfilled in him, or done by him, or shall in due time be effected by him. “To him gave all the Prophets witness.” (*Acts* x. 43.) And whatever they prophesied or witnessed of him was, or is in due time to be, fulfilled in him. Hence we find the Evangelists and Apostles frequently applying the sayings and prophecies of the Old Testament unto him; and, (*Luke* iv. 18,) himself said that the prophecy of *Isai.* lxi. 1, &c., was fulfilled in him: and himself expounded to the two disciples going to Emmaus, in all

the Scriptures, beginning at MOSES and all the Prophets, all the things concerning himself. (*Luke xxiv. 27.*) Thus is he the Truth of all the Prophecies.

Thirdly, He is the Truth, in respect of his offices, which he took upon him for our good : for all the duties of these offices, which he was to do, and what remaineth to be done, he will perfect in due time. Did he take upon him the office of a Prophet? He did fully execute the same, in revealing mediately and immediately, the whole counsel of GOD. Did he take upon him the office of a Priest? So did he fulfil the same, offering up himself an expiatory sacrifice to GOD, becoming a Priest, living for ever to make intercession for us. Did he take on him the office of a King? So doth he execute the same, calling a people to himself out of the world, by his word and SPIRIT, erecting a visible Church to profess and declare his name, which, as his kingdom, he ruleth with his own officers, laws, and penalties, or censures; so that the government is on his shoulders, who is the Head of the body, the Church. And this his kingdom he ruleth in a visible manner, by his own officers, &c. And further, he executes this office, by effectually calling his people, giving them grace, rewarding the obedient, chastising the disobedient, bringing them home at length, through all their temptations, afflictions, and overcoming all their enemies; and at length he shall do the part of a King, when he shall judge quick and dead at the last day.

Fourthly, He is the Truth in this regard, that he fully answereth all the titles and names which he got. As he was called JESUS, so did he "save his people from their sins:" as he was called CHRIST, so was he "anointed with the SPIRIT without measure," and separated for his work, and endued with all power for that effect; and established to be a Prophet, a Priest, and a King. Was he called IMMANUEL? So was he indeed "GOD with us," being GOD and Man in one person for ever. Was he called "Wonderful?" So was he indeed in his two distinct natures in one person. Was he called "Counsellor?" So was he indeed, coming from

the FATHER'S bosom, with the whole counsel of GOD concerning our salvation. Was he called "the mighty GOD?" So was he indeed. "The everlasting Father?" So is he the Father of Eternity, being (as some interpret the word) the Author of eternal life, which he giveth "to all that believe in him." Was he called "the Prince of Peace?" So is he "the Prince of Peace," making peace betwixt GOD and us. Was he called "the LORD our righteousness?" So is he the same, being "made of GOD to us righteousness," and making us righteous.

Fifthly, He is the Truth, in reference to the Promises, which, 1. Centre all in him, and lead to him, as the great Promise. 2. Are founded all upon him, who is the only Mediator of the covenant of promises. 3. Are confirmed all by him, and made "Yea, and Amen," in him. He confirmed the promises made to the Fathers. 4. Are all dispensed and given out by him, who is the Executor of his own Testament, and the great Dispensator of all that we need; so that what we ask of the FATHER, he giveth himself.

Sixthly, He is the Truth, in that he fully answereth all the hopes and expectations of his people. He shall not be found a liar unto them, whatever SATAN may suggest unto them, or a misbelieving heart may prompt them to conceive, and whatever his dispensations may now seem to say. In the end they shall all find, that he is the Truth, fully satisfying all their desires, and granting all that ever they could hope for, or expect from him. They shall at length be satisfied with his likeness, yea, abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and with his goodness.

Seventhly, He is the truth, in opposition to all other ways of salvation: For, (1.) There is no salvation now by the law of works; that covenant being once broken, cannot any more save. (2.) There is no salvation now by the Law of MOSES, without CHRIST: Hence, Israel, which "followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."

(*Rom. ix. 31, 32.*) They “went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of GOD.” 3. There is no salvation by any thing mixed with CHRIST, as the Apostle fully cleareth in his Epistle to the Galatians. 4. There is no salvation by any other way which man can invent, whereof there are not a few: for, “there is not another name given under heaven, by which we can be saved, but the name of JESUS.” (*Acts iv. 12.*) So that He is the true salvation, and He only is the true salvation, and is the sure and safe salvation; such as make use of Him shall not be mistaken nor disappointed.

Eighthly, He is the Truth, in respect of his leading and guiding his people in the truth; and this upon several accounts:—1. Of his personal teaching. GOD spoke by him; (*Heb. i. 2;*) he revealed the FATHER’S mind. (*Matt. xi. 27.*) 2. Of his messengers sent by him; as Prophets of old, Apostles and Ministers of late, whom he sendeth forth to make disciples, (*Matt. xxviii. 19,*) “and to open the eyes of the blind.” (*Acts xxvi. 18.*) 3. Of his word, which he hath left as our rule. 4. Of his ordinances, which he hath established as means to guide us in the way of truth. 5. Of his SPIRIT, whereby he maketh the word clear. (*John xiv. 26.*) This SPIRIT is sent to teach all truth, and to lead and guide in all truth, and sent by him, and by the FATHER in his name. (*John xiv. 26, and xv. 26, and xvi. 14.*) 6. Of his dispensations of Providence, within us and without us, by which likewise he instructeth in the way of truth.

Ninthly, He is the Truth, in respect of his bearing witness to truth; and this he doeth,—1. By himself, who “was given for a witness;” (*Isai. lv. 4;*) and “came to bear witness to the truth;” (*John xviii. 37;*) and was “a faithful witness.” (*Rev. i. 5, and iii. 14.*) 2. By his Ministers, who witness the truth of the Gospel, publishing and proclaiming the same. 3. By his martyrs, who seal the truth with their blood, and so bear witness to it. 4. By his SPIRIT, sealing the truth of grace in a believer,

and his interest in GOD through CHRIST, and his right to all the benefits of the New Covenant.

Tenthly, He is the Truth, in respect that he carrieth towards poor sinners, in all things, according to the tenor of the Gospel, and the offers thereof. He offers himself to all freely, and promiseth to put none away that come to him; and this he doeth in truth: for no man can say that he had a sincere desire to come to JESUS CHRIST, and that he rejected him. He giveth encouragement to all sinners to come that will be content to quit their sins, and promiseth to upbraid none that cometh; and is there any, that in their own experience can witness the contrary? He offers all freely; and did he ever reject any upon the want of a price in their hand? Nay, hath not the cause of their getting no admittance been, that they thought to commend themselves to CHRIST by their worth, and would not take all freely, for the glory of his grace? Let believers and others speak their experience in uprightness, and it shall be found that he was and is the Truth.



CHAPTER XII.

How to make use of CHRIST, as the Truth, for growth in knowledge.

It is a commanded duty, that we “grow in the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST; and the knowledge of him being life eternal, and our measure of knowledge of him here being but imperfect, for “we know but in part,” it cannot but be a useful duty, and a desirable thing to be growing in this knowledge. This is to “walk worthy of the LORD unto all pleasing,” to be “increasing in the knowledge of GOD.” (*Col. i. 10.*) Knowledge must be added unto virtue; and it layeth a ground for other Christian virtues.

(2 *Pet.* i. 5, 6.) In this knowledge we must not be barren ; (2 *Pet.* i. 8 ;) and this being so necessary, so desirable, and so advantageous a grace, the believer cannot but desire to have more and more of it ; especially seeing it is a part of the image of **GOD.**" (*Col.* iii. 10.)

Now, it is the truth that must teach them here, first and last. The "light of the knowledge of the glory of **GOD**" must be had "in the face of **JESUS CHRIST.**" (2 *Cor.* iv. 6.) The question therefore is, How we should make use of **JESUS CHRIST** for this end, that we may attain more of this excellent knowledge ?

For clearing this, I shall propose these directions :—

First, It is good to live in the constant conviction of a necessity of his teaching us. And this taketh in these particulars : 1. We should be conscious of our ignorance, even when we know most, remembering that the best knoweth but its part. The more true knowledge we attain, the more shall we see and be convinced of our ignorance ; because the more we know, the more shall we discover of the vastness and incomprehensibility of that object which is proposed to our knowledge. 2. We should remember how deceitful our hearts are, and how ready they are to sit down upon a shadow of knowledge, even when we "know nothing as we ought to know ;" and this will keep us jealous and watchful. 3. And to help forward our jealousy of our own hearts, we should remember, that our hearts naturally are averse from any true and saving knowledge. Whatever desire there be naturally after knowledge of hidden things, out of curiosity, yet there is no inclination after spiritual and saving knowledge in us naturally, but an aversion of heart therefrom. 4. We should study and know the absolute necessity of this knowledge ; how necessary it is for our christian communion with **GOD**, and christian walk with others ; how necessary for our right improving of dispensations general and particular ; what a noble ornament of a Christian it is, and a necessary piece of the image of **GOD**, which we have lost.

Secondly, Upon these grounds we should also be convinced of this, That of ourselves, and by all our natural parts, endowments, and sagacity, we cannot attain this saving knowledge, which must be wrought in the soul by a divine hand. By our private study and reading we may attain to a literal and speculative knowledge, that will puff us up; but thereby shall we never attain to this knowledge, which is spiritual, practical, and saving. We must have the anointing here, which teacheth us all things.

Thirdly, There should be a constant, diligent, and serious using the means of knowledge, with a faithful dependance on CHRIST by faith; cleaving to him in his relations, offices, engagements, and promises, and waiting upon his breathings in hope and patience.

Fourthly, There should be a guarding against every thing that may obstruct this work, and grieve him in it; and therefore we should beware, 1. To undervalue knowledge; for this will grieve him, and, to speak so, put him from work. 2. To grow weary of the means and ordinances whereby he useth to convey knowledge to the soul. 3. To limit the Holy One of Israel to this or that means, to this or that time, or to this or that measure. 4. To despise the day of small things, because we get not more. 5. To be too curious in seeking after the knowledge of hidden mysteries, the knowledge whereof is not necessary. 6. To depend too much upon the ordinances or instruments, as if all or any thing could come from them.

Fifthly, There should be a right improving of any measure of knowledge we get, to his glory and to the edification of others, with humility and thankfulness; and so a putting of that talent in use, to gain more to his glory. Whatever measure of knowledge we get, we should in all haste set it to work; so shall it increase, and engage him to give more.

Sixthly, There should be a lying open to CHRIST'S instructions, and to the shinings of the SPIRIT of light and of truth, and a ready receiving of what measure he

is pleased to grant; which includeth these duties: 1. A serious and earnest hungering and thirsting after more spiritual knowledge. 2. A diligent use of every means for this end. 3. A going about the means with much self-denial, spirituality, singleness of heart, and sincerity; looking to and depending upon Him who must breathe upon the means, and make them useful. 4. A greedy receiving, drinking in, and treasuring up in the soul, what is gotten. 5. A guarding against selfish ends, with a single eyeing of his glory. 6. A guarding against pride in the heart, and a studying of humility and meekness; for "the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." 7. A putting the heart or understanding in His hand, together with the truth that is heard and received; that He may write the truth in the heart, and cause the heart to receive the impression of that truth.

Seventhly, There should be a rolling of the whole matter by faith on Him as the only Teacher; a putting of the ignorant, blockish, perverse heart into his hand, that he may frame it to his own mind; and leaving of it there, until He, by his SPIRIT, write in it what he thinketh meet, to his own glory, and our good.

And sure, were this way followed, growth in knowledge would not be so rare a thing as it is.

For further direction in this matter, the believer should take notice of these particulars:—

1. That he should not sit down upon any measure of knowledge he hath attained, or can attain to here, as if he had enough, and should labour for no more; but should still be seeking and pressing for more.

2. Whenever he is about any means of knowledge, such as preaching, reading, conference, his heart should be only upon CHRIST; he should be hanging on his lips for a word of instruction, and with greediness looking for a word from his mouth; he should be sending many posts to heaven, many ejaculatory desires for light and understanding; and that with singleness and sincerity, and not for base ends, or out of hypocrisy.

3. Let him not think that there is no growth in knowledge, because possibly he perceiveth it not, or is not satisfied as to the measure thereof, yea, though possibly he perceiveth more ignorance than ever he did before. If he grow in the knowledge of his own ignorance, it is a growth of knowledge not to be despised; and in a manner what can we else know of God, but that he far transcendeth all our knowledge.

4. Let him not think that there is no growth in knowledge, because he perceiveth not a growth in the knowledge of such or such a particular; for, if there be a growth in the knowledge of other particulars necessary to be known, there is no reason to complain. If one grow not, as he supposeth, in the knowledge of God, and of the mysteries of the Gospel; yet, if he grow in the discovery of the treachery of his own heart, he cannot say he groweth not in knowledge.

5. Let him not measure his growth in knowledge by his growth in the faculty of discoursing of such or such points of religion. Many measure their knowledge by their tongue, and think they know little because they can express little; and so they think they attain no increase in knowledge, because they perceive no increase in this faculty of discoursing. It is safer to measure their knowledge by the impression that the truth hath on their spirits, and the effects of it on all their carriage, than by their ability to talk and dispute of it.

6. Let them beware to imagine that they shall be able to search out the ALMIGHTY unto perfection. "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Or that they shall be able ever to go to the bottom of their own deceitful heart; neither let them think, so long as they are here, to come to an exact and perfect knowledge of the mysteries of God.

7. Let them not think that every one shall have the same measure of knowledge. Every one hath not the like

use, or the like capacity for it ; there is a measure proportioned to every one. They should not then complain, because they have not such a measure of knowledge as they perceive in some others ; it may be, the LORD hath some harder piece of service, which calleth for more knowledge to put others to. Let every one mind his duty faithfully and conscientiously, and not quarrel with GOD that he attaineth not such a measure of knowledge as he seeth others attain.

8. Let their desires run out after that knowledge, not which puffeth up, but which humbleth and driveth the soul further from itself, and nearer to CHRIST.

9. When they do not profit indeed, let them beware of quarrelling with CHRIST, or of blaming him in any manner of way ; but let them lay the blame on themselves, for not making more use of him by faith, and single dependance upon him. It is true, none will be so bold as in words to quarrel with or blame him ; yet the heart tacitly may raise and foment such thoughts of him and his dispensations, as can pass under no other notion than a quarrelling with him.

10. Whatever point of truth they learn, or whatever measure of knowledge they get, they would do well to give that back again to CHRIST, to keep for them against a time of need, and wait on him for grace to improve it for his glory.



CHAPTER XIII.

How to make use of CHRIST as Truth, when Truth is oppressed and borne down.

THERE is another difficulty wherein believing souls will stand in need of CHRIST, as “the Truth,” to help them ; and that is, when his work is overturned, his cause borne down, truth condemned, and enemies, in their opposition to his work, prospering in all their attempts. This is a

very trying dispensation, as we see it was to the holy Penman of Psalm lxxiii.; for it made him to stagger, so that "his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well nigh slipped;" yea, he was almost repenting of his being a godly person, saying, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." (*Ver.* 13.) And that which evinceth the danger of this dispensation, is the fainting and backsliding of many in such a time of trial.

Now, the believer's stay in this case must be the Rock of Ages, JESUS, the Truth. It is He alone who can keep us straight and honest in such a reeling time: so that a sight of CHRIST, as the Truth, in reference to the carrying on of truth in the earth, will be the only support of a soul shaken by such a trial.

But the question is, How should believers make use of CHRIST, to the end that they may be kept from fainting in such a storm? To which I answer, That the faith and consideration of these particulars will help to establishment:—

1. CHRIST, in all this great work of redemption, and in every piece of it, is the FATHER's servant. So is he frequently called; therefore this work is a work entrusted to him, and he standeth engaged as a servant to be faithful to his trust. Moreover, he hath a commission to perfect that work; and we need not doubt but He, who is "the Truth," will be true to his trust.

2. While he was upon the earth, he finished that work that was committed to him to finish here, having purchased all that was to be bought by his blood, paying all the price that Justice did ask, by which price "he hath purchased a people to himself:" so that his work, cause, and interest, is a purchased work, bought with his blood.

3. His resurrection and glorification are an undoubted proof of this, that Justice is satisfied, and that the price is fully paid; also his exaltation at the FATHER's right hand is a sure evidence and ground of hope, that he shall at last triumph over all his enemies, and that his work of

truth shall prosper. The FATHER said to him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool:" (*Psa. cx. 1*;) "Being highly exalted, he hath got a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of GOD the FATHER." (*Phil. ii. 9—11*.)

4. The FATHER standeth engaged to make good to him all that was promised, and to give him all that he purchased. (*Isai. liii. 10—12*.) CHRIST having now fulfilled his undertaking, by making his soul an offering for sin, and so satisfying justice, which is openly declared by his resurrection and admission to glory, is to expect the accomplishment of what was conditioned unto him. His work, therefore, on the earth must prosper; and the FATHER hath undertaken to see it prosper. Sure the faith of this should much support a poor soul, staggering at the thoughts of the prosperity of the wicked, and of their cause.

5. CHRIST himself is now thoroughly furnished and enabled for the carrying on of his work, over the belly of all adversaries; for "all power in heaven and earth is given to him;" (*Matt. xxviii. 18*;) and "every knee must bow to him;" (*Phil. ii. 10*;) "all judgment is committed unto him;" (*John v. 22, 27*;) "angels, powers, and authorities are made subject unto him;" (*1 Pet. iii. 22*;) yea, "all things are under him." (*Eph. i. 22*.) How then can this work miscarry? Or who can hinder, that truth should not flourish in the earth?

6. CHRIST is actually at work, employing this power for the carrying forward of his design, for the glory of the FATHER, and for his own glory, and for the good of his poor people. The FATHER worketh by him, and he by the SPIRIT, who is his great vicegerent, sent from the FATHER and from him; and his work is to glorify the SON, and shall receive of his, and show it unto us. (*John xvi. 14*.)

7. CHRIST, upon many accounts, standeth engaged to

perfect this work which he hath begun, and is about. His honour is engaged to go through, seeing now he is fully furnished for it, and hath all the creation at his command. He must then perfect his work as to the application, as well as he did perfect it as to the purchase; his love to his FATHER's and his own glory, and to his own people's good and salvation, may assure us, that he will not leave the work unperfected; and his power may give us full security, that no stop which his work meeteth with shall be able to hinder it.

8. Hence it is clear and manifest, that his wheel is in the midst of the wheels of men, and that therefore he is ordering all their motions and reelings to the best. His wheel keepeth an even pace, and moveth equally and equably, in the midst of men's contrary motions.

9. Therefore all the irregular motions of devils and wicked men, being in his hand, cannot hinder but further his end; so that even enemies, while opposing and seeking to destroy the cause of CHRIST, are promoting his work. His wheel is the great wheel that ordereth all the lesser and subordinate wheels, whatever contrary motions they may have the one to the other, and all or many of them may seem to have to this great wheel; so that, do they what they will, the work of our LORD goeth on; their opposition is setting his work forward, though they intend the contrary; however their faces look, they row to the port he would be at. This is an undoubted truth, and confirmed in all ages, and yet it is not firmly believed; and a truth it is, which, if believed, would do much to settle our staggering souls in a stormy day.

10. At last "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, when he shall be revealed from heaven with all his mighty angels." Then shall it be seen whose counsel shall stand, his or men's; and whose work shall prosper, his or SATAN's.

Yet let me add a few words for caution:—

1. The consideration of those things mentioned should not make us slacken our diligence in prayer and other

duties; and, when they are right considered, they will rather prove a spur to set us forward, than a bridle to hold us back.

2. We should not think that CHRIST'S work and interest is going backward, when it seemeth so to us. Even when he is casting down what he hath built up, and plucking up what he hath planted, his work is prospering; for all that is in order to the laying a better foundation, and to the carrying on of a more glorious work, when "he shall lay all the stones with fair colours, and the foundations with sapphires, and make the windows of crystal."

3. Though his work be always going on, and his truth prospering, yet we should not think that it will always prosper alike in our apprehensions. Many times we judge by rules of our own making, and not by the rule of truth; and hence it is that we mistake oftentimes. We walk little by faith, and too much by sense; and hence we judge too much by sense, and so pass a wrong judgment, to his dishonour, and the saddening of our own hearts.

4. Nor should we think that his truth and interest is ruined and gone, because it is sore oppressed in this or that particular place; as if his work were not of an universal extent, and in all the churches. If his truth prosper in some other place of the world, shall we not say that his kingdom is coming? Or, shall we limit all his work and interest to one small part of the world?

5. We should not think the worse of his work, because it is carried on with so many stops, and doth meet with so many impediments in its way. We are not acquainted with the depths of his infinite wisdom, and so we see not what noble ends he hath before him, in suffering those impediments to lie in the way of his chariot. We think he should ride so triumphantly all along, that none should once dare to cast the least block in his way; but we judge carnally, as unacquainted with the many glorious designs which he hath in ordering matters. As himself was for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, so will he have the way of carrying on his work prove, in his holy and

spotless justice, a stumbling stone to many, that shall stumble thereat, and fall, and never rise more.

6. We should beware to think that CHRIST hath forgotten his work, because he seemeth to take no notice of our prayers for his work. He may be doing that which we are desiring, in the general, and yet not let us know that he is answering our prayers; and that for wise and holy ends, to keep us humble and diligent. He may seem to disregard our suits, and yet be carrying on his work, and granting us our desires.

7. Hence we should beware of desponding, and growing heartless and faint, when we see few owning truth, or standing upon CHRIST's side; for he needeth not man's help to carry on his work, though he sometimes thinketh good to honour some to be instrumental in setting it forward, who yet have nothing but as he giveth. Let us not, then, think that his work cannot prosper, because great ones and mean ones oppose it; and such as would stand for it, and own it, are but few and fainting, without strength, courage, or zeal.

Nevertheless, when enemies are prevailing, and the truth evil spoken of, many faint, and many turn aside, and do not plead for truth, nor stand up for the interest of CHRIST, in the hour and power of darkness; many are overcome with base fear, and either side with the workers of iniquity, or are not valiant for the truth, but turn back. Now, the thoughts of this may put some who desire to stand fast, and to own him and his cause in a day of trial, to inquire farther how they shall make use of CHRIST, the Truth, so as to stand in the day of temptation, and to keep fast by truth, when it is loaded with reproaches, and buried under a heap of obloquy. For satisfaction to this question, I shall shortly point out those directions, which, if followed, may prove helpful to keep the soul from fainting, doubting, quarrelling at the LORD's dispensations, and from yielding to temptation in such a day.

1. The believer should live in the conviction of his hazard through the sleight of SATAN, the strength of the

temptation, the wickedness of the heart, the evil example of others, and the want of sanctified courage, zeal, and resolution ; and this will keep the soul humble, and far from boasting of its own strength.

2. They should live in the persuasion of this, that it is **CHRIST** alone who can help them to stand for truth in a day of temptation ; and that all their former purposes, vows, resolutions, and professions, will prove but weak cables to hold them fast in a storm ; that only the **Rock of Ages** must save them, and their partaking of his safe protection will do their business ; that all their stock of grace and knowledge will help but little in that day ; and that new influences of grace and truth from the **Fountain**, will only prove establishing to the soul.

3. Therefore they should eye **CHRIST** in his offices, particularly as the great **Prophet**, who can teach as never man taught ; so teach, as to make the soul receive the doctrine, and hold it fast ; receive it in love, and lay it up in the heart.

4. They should eye him in his relations unto his people, as their **Head, Husband, Brother, Leader, Commander, Captain** ; for those give ground of approaching him with confidence ; in the day of darkness, for light and direction ; and for strength and courage in the day of temptation.

5. They should eye the promises of assistance in the day of calamity ; such as those : “ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” (*Isai. xliii. 2.*) And particularly, they should eye the promises of light in the day of darkness. (See *Isai. lviii. 8, 10 ; and lx. 20 ; 2 Sam. xxii. 29.*)

6. They should look on **CHRIST** as an exalted **Conqueror**, now risen and glorified ; as a victorious **Captain**, that hath fought and overcome ; that they, as his followers, may be made partakers of his victory, and so reap the fruit of his resurrection and ascension, in their establishment in the truth, when it is borne down and questioned,

yea, and condemned by men. He abode steadfast and unmoveable in the midst of all the storms that blew in his face: And as he came to witness the truth, so did he faithfully and zealously avow it, even to the death; and in death got the victory of the arch liar and deceiver. Now, the believer should eye this, for the strengthening of his faith and hope of victory also through him; and therefore should wait patiently for his help, and not make haste; "for they who believe make not haste;" knowing that he is true and faithful, and will not disappoint his followers that trust in him.

7. They should study much the grand promise of his coming again, finally dispelling all clouds, and fully clearing up his glorious truths, that are now covered over with obloquy, and buried under reproaches: and this will encourage the soul to stand to truth in the midst of all opposition.

8. They should be single in their dependance on him for strength in that day of trial; not leaning to their own understanding, but "acknowledging him in all their ways." (*Prov.* iii. 6.) And when they see no hope, nor appearance of the clearing up of the day, they should comfort and encourage themselves in the LORD.

A few words of caution will be useful here also: as,—

1. The believer, though taking this course, should not think to be altogether free of fear of stepping aside less or more: GOD may think good to let much of this abide, to the end he may be kept watchful, tender, and diligent; for fear maketh the soul circumspect and watchful, and this is a good preservative from defection.

2. Nor should the believer think that hereby he shall be kept altogether free from fainting. The heart now and then, through fear and misbelief, may fall into a fit of fainting, and think all is gone; and yet he may carry poor souls through, and "make his strength perfect in their weakness;" that, when they are carried through the temptation, they may sing praise to him, and not ascribe any thing to themselves; remembering how often they

were fainting, and almost giving over the cause as desperate.

3. They should not think it strange, if, in the time of their wrestling with difficulties, the LORD give them not that joyful access unto him in prayer, that sometimes they have met with: For the LORD may see it fit, to put them to this point of trial among the rest, to see if the love of his glory and truth will keep them standing, when they want the encouragements that might be expected in that way; and if pure conscience to the command and authority of GOD will keep them from siding with an evil way.



CHAPTER XIV.

How to make use of CHRIST as the Truth, when the Spirit of Error carrieth many away.

THERE is a time when the Spirit of Error is going abroad, and many are led away with delusions: For SATAN can change himself into an angel of light, and make many fair pretensions to holiness, and under that pretext usher in untruths, and gain the consent of many unto them; so that, in such a time of temptation, many are stolen off their feet, and depart from the right ways of GOD. Now the question is, How a poor believer shall make use of CHRIST the truth, for keeping him steadfast in such a day of trial? For satisfaction to this, we shall propose these few things:—

1. In such a time, when a Spirit of Error is let loose, and carrieth several away, it were good for all, who would be kept straight and honest, to be walking in fear. It is not good to despise such a subtle enemy, especially in the hour and power of darkness. Then all are called to be on their guard, and to stand upon their watch-tower, and to be jealous of their corrupt hearts, that are ready of their own

accord to drink in error, and to receive the temptation at any time, and much more then.

2. They should not think that their knowledge and ability to dispute for truth will keep them steadfast ; for, if the temptation grow, they may come to reason and dispute themselves out of all their former knowledge. The Father of Lies is a cunning sophister, and knoweth how to shake their grounds, and cast all loose.

3. They should renew their covenant, and make sure that main business, their peace and union with **GOD** and **CHRIST**. They should labour to have the foundation sure, and to be united unto the chief Corner-stone ; that so, blow the storm as it will, they may ride safely ; and that hereby they may have access to **CHRIST** with boldness, and may with confidence seek light from Him in the hour of darkness.

4. They should eye the promises suiting that case ; *viz.*, the promises of **GOD**'s "guiding the blind by a way which they know not ; of making darkness light before them, and crooked things straight ; and of guiding continually.

5. Particularly, they should fix their eye upon that principal promise of the **SPIRIT**, to "guide into all truth."

6. With singleness of heart they should depend on **CHRIST**, and wait for light from him, and beware of prejudice at the truth : They should lie open to his instructions, and receive the beams of his divine light ; and thus go about duties, *viz.*, prayer, conference, preaching, reading, with an eye fixed on him, and with a soul open to him.

7. With singleness of heart they should give up their souls to **CHRIST** as the Truth, that he would write the truth in their souls, and frame their souls unto that truth which is most questioned ; and urge him by prayer and supplication, to do the duty of a head, a husband, guide, and commander unto them ; and that he would be a light unto them in that day of darkness, and not suffer them to dishonour him, or prove scandalous to others, by departing from the truth, and embracing error.

For further clearing this, we shall hint at some cautions ; such as,—

1. They should beware of thinking that **God** should come to them with light and instruction in an extraordinary manner, and reveal the truth of the question controverted immediately : For this were a manifest “tempting and limiting the Holy One of Israel.” We must be satisfied with the means of instruction which he hath provided, and run “to the law and to the testimony.” We have the Scriptures, which are able “to make the man of **God** perfect, and throughly furnished unto all good works.” There must we seek light, and wait for the breathing of his **Spirit** with life, and coming with light to clear up truth to us. We have the ministry, which **God** hath also appointed for this end : there must we wait for him and his light. Thus must we wait at the posts of wisdom’s doors, for the King of Light in his own way. And, if he think good to come another way more immediate, let him always be welcome ; but let us not limit him, nor prescribe ways to him, but follow his directions.

2. When any thing is borne in upon their spirit, as a truth to be received, or as an error to be rejected, more immediately, they should beware of admitting every such thing without trial and examination : For we are expressly forbidden “to believe every spirit,” and commanded to “try them whether they are of **God**.” (1 *John* iv. 1.) The **Lord** will not take it ill, that even his own immediate motions and revelations be tried and examined by the word ; because the word is given us for this end, to be our test and standard of truth. “The Bereans,” upon this account, “were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Even **Paul**’s words, though he was an authorized and infallible Apostle of **Christ**, are here put to the touchstone of the word. Many “false prophets may go out, and deceive many, and speak great swelling words of vanity ; but though an angel out of heaven should preach

any other thing than what is in the written word, we ought not to receive his doctrine." So that the written word must be much studied by us; and by it must we try all motions, all doctrines, all inspirations, all revelations, and all manifestations.

3. Much more should they beware of thinking that the dictates of their conscience oblige them, so that always they must of necessity follow the same. Conscience, being GOD's deputy in the soul, is to be followed no further than it speaketh for GOD, and according to truth. An erring conscience, though it bind so far, that he who doeth contrary to the dictates thereof sinneth against GOD; yet it doth not oblige us to believe and do what it asserteth to be truth and duty. It will not then be enough for them to say, My conscience speaketh so, and instructeth me so; for that light may be darkness, and error, and delusion, and so no rule for them to walk by. "To the law and to the testimony:" And if their conscience, or light within them, "speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (*Isai. viii. 20.*) I grant, as I said, they cannot without sin counteract the dictates even of an erring conscience; because they know not better, but that these dictates are according to truth: And thus an erring conscience is a very dangerous thing, and bringeth people under a very sad dilemma; that, whether they follow it or not, they sin. And there is no other remedy here, but to lay by the erring conscience, and get a conscience rightly informed by the word; putting it in CHRIST's hand to be better informed, that so it may do its office better. This, then, should be especially guarded against; for, if once they lay down this for a principle, that whatever their conscience, or inward light, dictates, must be followed, there is no delusion, how false, how abominable soever it be, but they may be drawn away with; and so the rule that they will walk by, be nothing, in effect, but the spirit of lies and delusion, and the motions and dictates of him who is the Father of Lies, that is, the Devil.

4. Such as pretend so much to walk by conscience, should take heed that they take not that for the dictate of conscience, which really is but their own humours, inclinations, pre-occupied minds, and biassed wills. When conscience speaketh, it groundeth on the authority of **GOD**, whether truly or falsely, and proposeth such a thing to be done, or to be refrained from, merely because **GOD** commandeth that, and forbiddeth this, though sometimes it mistaketh: but, though men's humours, inclinations, pre-occupied judgments and wills, may pretend **GOD**'s authority for what they say; yet really some selfish end lieth at the bottom, and is the chief spring of that motion. And also the dictates of humour and biassed wills are usually more violent than the dictates of conscience; for, wanting the authority of **GOD** to back their assertions, they make up that with an addition of a preternatural force. Hence such as are purely led by conscience, are pliable, humble, and ready to hear and receive information; whereas, others are headstrong, unwilling to receive instruction, or to hear any thing contrary to their minds, lest their conscience, receiving more light, speak with a higher voice against their inclinations and former ways.

5. They should labour for much self-denial and sincerity, and to be free from the snares of selfish ends, as a name, and applause; for that will be like "a gift, that blindeth the eyes of the wise." Love to carry on a party, or a design to be seen and accounted somebody, to maintain their credit and reputation, and the like, will prove very dangerous in this case: for these may carry the soul away to embrace one error after another, and one error to strengthen and confirm another, that it is hard to know where or when they shall stand; and these by-respects may so drive the soul forward, that he shall neither hear the voice of conscience within, nor any instruction from without.

6. They should study the word of truth, without prejudice, or any sinful pre-engagement, lest they be made thereby to withdraw and wrest the word "to their own

destruction." It is a dangerous thing to study the word with a prejudicate opinion, and to bow the word, and make it speak what we would have it speak, for the confirmation of our sentiments: for this is but to mock God and his, and to say, Let his law speak what it will, I will maintain this opinion; and so make the word speak as we would have it, or else lay it by. This is to walk by some other rule than the word, and make the word serve our lusts, and confirm our errors; than which a greater indignity cannot be done to the SPIRIT of Truth, speaking in the word.

7 In reading and studying the word, there should be much dependance on the SPIRIT for light; waiting for clearness from him whom CHRIST hath promised to lead us into all truth: an earnest wrestling with him for his assistance, enlightening the mind to understand the truth, and inclining the soul to a ready embracing it.

8. Though one place of Scripture be enough to confirm any truth, and ground sufficient for us to believe what is there said; yet in such a time of abounding errors, and when many are going abroad speaking perverse things, it were spiritual wisdom to be comparing Scripture with Scripture, and not to be lightly embracing whatever may seem probable, and fairly deducible from some one passage of Scripture: for this is certain, whatever contradicteth other clear and manifest testimonies of Scripture cannot be true, however a sophister may make it seem to flow out of such or such a passage of Scripture. The testimony of the SPIRIT is uniform, and free from contradictions: and therefore we must see if such an assertion, that some would draw from such a passage, agree with other plain passages; and, if not, be sure that is not the meaning of the place. Especially they should beware of expounding clear Scriptures by such as are more dark and mysterious: it is always safer to explain darker passages by such as are more clear.

9. Let them guard against nauseating old and solid truths, and seeking after something new, having itching

ears after new doctrines, yéa, or new modes and dresses of old truth: for this savoureth of a spirit of levity and inconstancy, which is dangerous.

10. Especially they should hold the ground-work fast,—faith in CHRIST. It were good, in such a time of erring from the way of Truth, to be grasping CHRIST faster, and cleaving to him by faith, and living by faith in him. This is to hold the foundation fast; and then let the tempest of error blow as it will, they will ride at a sure anchor, and be safe, because fixed upon the Rock of Ages. And further, living near CHRIST, in such a dangerous day, would be a noble preservative from the infections of error: the soul that is dwelling in CHRIST, cleaving to him daily by faith, and acting love on him, dwells in light, and will discover error sooner than another, because living under the rays of “the Sun of Righteousness.”

11. They should guard against pride and self-conceit, as thinking they are wise enough, and need not take a lesson of any. It were good for his people in such a day to be meek and humble, willing to learn of any person, how mean soever. The LORD may bless a word spoken by a private person, when he will not bless the word spoken by a Minister: for his blessings are free, and it is not good to despise any means. APOLLOS, though instructed in the way of the LORD, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, and teaching diligently the things of the LORD, yet was content to learn of AQUILA, and of his wife PRISCILLA, when they “expounded unto him the way of GOD more perfectly.”

12. In such a time, it is not unsafe to look to such as have been eminent in the ways of GOD; for it is probable they may know much of the mind of GOD in those questioned matters: though we should call no man Rabbi, as hanging our faith absolutely on him; yet, in such a time of prevailing error, some respect should be had to such as have found grace of the LORD, to be faithful in times of trial, and have maintained truth in times of

persecution, and with singleness of heart followed the LORD.

13. They should also at such a time be much in the sincere practice of uncontroverted duties, and in putting uncontroverted and unquestioned truths into practice; and this may prove a notable mean to keep them right: for then are they in GOD'S way; and so the Devil hath not that advantage of them, that he hath of others who are out of the way of duty.



CHAPTER XV

How Christ is the Life.

THIS, as the former, may be taken, as relating both to such as are yet in the state of nature, and to such as are in the state of grace; and so may be considered three ways:—1. That we stand in need of His help, as being “the Life.” 2. That no other way can get that supply of life, which we stand in need of; for He only is “the Life.” 3. That this help is to be had in him fully and completely.

The words in reference to such as are in nature, point out these three truths:—

First, That all of us by nature are dead, standing in need of quickening: this is pre-supposed, while he is said to be “the Life;” and that both legally and really. Legally; being under the sentence of death for ADAM'S transgression, (*Rom. v. 15*;) and for that original corruption of heart we have;—and really; the sentence of the law being in part executed, and that both as to the body, and as to the soul. As to the body, it is now subject to death, and all the forerunners thereof, such as weakness, pain, sickness, fears, torment, trouble, weariness, yea, and in hazard of the second death for ever. As to the soul, it

also is many ways dead, both first in a way that is purely penal, and next in a way that is also sinful; and both ways, as to what is present, and to what is future: for, as to that which is penal and present, it is, (1.) Separated from GOD and his favour: (2.) Is under his curse and wrath. Whence it cometh to pass, that “by nature we are children of wrath, servants of SATAN.” (2 *Tim.* ii. 26.) The consequence of which is sad and heavy; for hence it is that we cannot please GOD, do what we will: until we be brought out of that state, our ordinary and civil actions, even ploughing the ground, is sin. (*Prov.* xxi. 4.) Yea, our religious actions, whether natural or instituted, are abomination; even our sacrifices and prayers; yea, and all our thoughts and purposes, (*Prov.* xv. 26,) and likewise our ways. (*Prov.* xv. 9.) As to what is penal and future, it is obnoxious to that everlasting excommunication, “from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power, and to the torments of hell for ever.” As to what is not only penal, but also sinful, the soul here is under the stroke of darkness in the understanding, perverseness and rebelliousness in the will, irregularity and disorder in the affections; whereby the soul is unfit for any thing that is good, and prone to every thing that is evil. (*Rom.* iii. 10, 20; *Eph.* ii. 1—3; *Rom.* v. 6; and viii. 7, 8.) Whence proceed all our actual transgressions. And moreover, sometimes the soul “is given up to a reprobate mind, to strong delusion, to hardness of heart, horror of conscience, to vile affections,” and the like spiritual plagues; which, though the LORD inflict on some only, yet all are obnoxious to the same, and can expect no less, if the LORD should enter with them into judgment. And, finally, as to what is future of this kind, they are, being fuel for Tophet, obnoxious to that malignant, sinful, blasphemous, and desperate rebellion against GOD, in hell for evermore.

O how lamentable, upon this consideration, must the condition of such be as are yet in the state of nature! O it it were but seen and felt! But, alas! there is this addition to all, that people know not this; they consider it not, they

believe it not, they feel it not, they see it not : and hence it cometh to pass, that, 1. They cannot bewail and lament their condition, nor be humbled for it. 2. They cannot, will not, seek after a remedy : for the whole will not trouble themselves to seek after a physician. And sure, upon this account, their case calleth for compassion from all that know what a dreadful thing it is to be in such a condition, and should stir up all to pray for them, and to do all they can to help them out of that state of sin and misery.

Should not the thoughts and consideration of this put us all to try and search if “ we be translated from death to life,” and delivered out of that dreadful state, and “ made partakers of the first resurrection ? ” It not being my purpose to handle this point at large, I shall only desire every one to examine, 1. Whether or not the voice of **CHRIST**, which quickeneth the dead, hath been heard and welcomed in their soul ? 2. Whether or not there be a thorough change wrought in the soul ; a change in the whole man, so as all things are become new ? 3. Whether or not there be a principle of life within, and they be led by the **SPIRIT** ?

Secondly, We learn hence, that without **CHRIST** there is no imaginable way of delivery out of this natural state of death. “ No other name is given under heaven whereby we can be saved.” (*Acts* iv. 12.) And angels can make no help here, nor can any of us deliver another : nor is there any thing we can do for ourselves that will avail here ; all our prayers, tears, whippings, fastings, vows, alms-deeds, purposes, promises, resolutions, abstinence from some evils, outward amendments, good morality, outward religiousness, yea, and if it were possible, our keeping of the whole law, will not help us out of this pit. And we may weary ourselves in such exercises in vain ; for they will prove but “ bodily exercises that profit little.” And when in this way we have spent all our time, spirits, and labour, we shall at length see, and say, that “ that we have spent our money for that which is not bread.”

This should put all of us to try what it is which we lean to for life; and what it is, the consideration whereof giveth us peace, when the thoughts of death, judgment, hell, and the wrath of God, come upon us, and trouble us: for if it be any thing beside CHRIST that our soul leaneth to, and that we are comforted by, and found our hopes upon, we shall meet with a lamentable, for ever lamentable, disappointment. Be sure, then, that our hearts renounce all other ways out of this death, beside JESUS “the resurrection and the life;” else it will not be well with us.

Thirdly, We see here, that delivery out of this state of death is only had by CHRIST; for He alone is “the Life;” and the life that is in him is suitable and excellent. Hence he is called “the Bread of Life,” “the Resurrection and the Life,” “the Water of Life,” “the Tree of Life,” “the Prince of Life,” “our Life,” “the Word of Life,” and “Life” itself.

And as He is a suitable and excellent Life, so is he an all-sufficient and perfect life; able every way to help us, and to deliver us from all the parts of our death: for,

1. He delivereth from the sentence of the Law; undergoing the curse of the Law, and becoming a curse for us.
2. He taketh away the curse and sting of all temporal plagues, yea, and of death itself; causing “all to work together for good to such as love him.” He hath “destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil:” and through him the sting of death, which is sin, is taken away.
3. He reconcileth to God; taking away that distance and enmity, and so he is our peace and peace-maker, purchasing access for us to the FATHER.
4. He also delivereth from the power of sin and corruption.
5. And from all those spiritual strokes, such as blindness, hardness of heart; for he is our light, and hath procured a new heart for us, even a heart of flesh.
6. So delivereth he from hell-fire, having satisfied justice, and “brought life and immortality to light.” And he giveth life eternal.

O! it is sad that CHRIST is so little made use of, and

that so many “forsake the Fountain of living waters, and dig to themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

O! if the consideration of this could move such as never found any change in themselves, to run to and make use of JESUS CHRIST for life!



CHAPTER XVI.

Some General Uses.

BEFORE we come to speak of particular cases, wherein believers are to make use of CHRIST as the Life, we shall first propose some deductions from what hath been spoken. And,—

First, The faith of those things which have been mentioned, would be of great use and advantage to believers: and therefore they should study to have this truth fixed on their hearts, and a deep impression thereof on their spirits, to the end that, 1. Be their condition what it will, they might be kept from despair, from giving over their case as hopeless. The faith of CHRIST's being Life, and the Life, would keep the soul in hope, and cause it to say, How dead soever my case be, yet life can help me; and He who is “the Resurrection and the Life,” can recover me. 2. Yea, be their case what it will, they would have here some encouragement to go to him with their dead soul, and to look to him for help; seeing he is the Life, as Mediator, to the end he might enliven his dead, fainting members. 3. They might be freed from many scruples and objections. This one truth believed would clear the way so, that such things as would have been impediments and objections before, shall be rolled out of the way: such as are the objections taken from their own worthlessness, their long continuance in that dead condition, and the like. 4. They might hereby be freed from that dreadful plague and evil of jealousy, whereby the soul is oft kept back

from coming to CHRIST: for they fear he will not make them welcome; they doubt of his love and tenderness, and question his compassion; yea, their jealousy maketh them to doubt of his faithfulness. So that the faith of this truth would cure this jealousy, and deliver the soul therefrom, and open a way for the soul to come forward with boldness and confidence. 5. They might also be hereby helped to wait with patience, and to be still and quiet under the LORD's various dispensations; so as they would not fret nor repine against him, knowing that he would prove himself to be Life, even the Life, in his own good time; so that the soul would patiently wait at his door, until he were pleased to look out, and with his look convey life. 6. They might be preserved hereby from looking out to, or expecting any help from, any other: knowing that He alone is the Life; and so, that help can no where else be had. The faith of this truth would guard from many ways, which the soul in a time of strait is ready to run to for relief: for hereby would it see, that neither instruments, nor means, nor outward administrations, nor any thing of that kind, can quicken their dead soul; and that He, and He alone, must breathe life into them; as at first, so now again.

Secondly, May we not see and observe here great matter of admiration at the goodness and rich bounty of GOD towards his people, who hath found out such a sure, safe, and satisfying way, whereby he becometh all things to his people which they stand in need of; and that notwithstanding, 1. That we are most unworthy of any such grace at his hands. 2. That we too oft are desirous of other guests in our hearts beside him. O how much corruption, sin, and death, lodge we within our souls? And how more desirous are we oft-times of death than of life? 3. That we little improve the noble advantages for life, which we have granted unto us; yea, many a time we abuse them: and this he did foresee, and yet, notwithstanding, would condescend thus unto us.

But not for our sakes hath he done this, but for his own

name's sake: for noble and holy ends hath he resolved upon this course; as (1.) That he might be "all and in all," and they nothing. That he alone might "fill all in all," and they be empty and nothing without him. (2.) That he might wear the glory of all: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," and that no man might share therein. (3.) That man might be his everlasting debtor, and cast down, in testimony thereof, his crown at his feet, who sitteth on the throne, as those did; (*Rev. iv. 10*;) and might cry out with these same elders, "Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power; and with those, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (*Chap. v. 12*.) (4.) That man's mouth might be stopped for ever, and all boasting excluded: for man is a proud creature, and ready to boast of that which is nothing and vanity. Now, GOD hath chosen this way of the covenant of grace, that man might boast no more. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." (5.) That believers might have strong consolation, notwithstanding all the opposition of enemies without and within, when they see that now their "life is hid with CHRIST in GOD," (*Col. iii. 3*), and that their life is in their Head, they will not fear so much devils and men without, nor their own dead and corrupt hearts within.

Thirdly, How inexcusable must all such be, 1, Who will not lay hold on this life, on JESUS, who is "the Life," sure life, yea, everlasting life? 2. Who seek life any other way than by and through Him, who is "the Life?" 3. Who oppose this way of life, and not only reject the offers of it, but prove enemies to it, and to all that carry it, or preach it?

Fourthly, Here is strong encouragement to all that would be at heaven, to enter into this Gospel-way. Such need not fear that their salvation shall not be effected: let SATAN and all their adversaries do what they can, all

that persevere in this way shall live ; for the way itself is life, and nothing but life. So that here all objections are obviated ; life can answer all. If the believer fear that he shall never win through difficulties, he shall die by the way, or, by fainting, dishonour the profession, and at length fall off, or despair and give over all hope ; here is that which may answer and obviate all : Life can quicken : and who can perish in the way, which is the way of life ; yea, which is life itself ; yea, the Life, in a singular and eminent manner ?

Fifthly, Here is ground of reproof, even of believers ; who, though they have come to CHRIST, yet do not live in him as they ought, do not walk in him with that liveliness and activity which is called for ; but,—

1. Lean too much to their own understanding, gifts, or graces ; and think thereby to ride out storms, and to wade through difficulties : While, if he who is the Life do not breathe upon us, all that will fail us in the day of trial ; our understanding and gifts may dry up, and our graces may wither and decay, and go backward.

2. Rest too much on duties ; when they should in them go to Him who is the Life : for only in Him is life to be had ; and Him should they seek to in the ordinances, that they might have life from him in those outward duties. And this appeareth in their way of going about duties, without that dependance on him, and single eyeing of him, which is called for ; as also by their fretting and repining when duties do not their business, as if life lay all in duties ; and concluding all will be right, because they get duties somewhat tolerably performed ; and, on the contrary, desponding when duties fall heavy on them : All which clearly evinceth, that they lay too much weight on duties ; whereas it would be otherwise with them, if they were purely depending on CHRIST, and looking for all from Him.

Sixthly, This may point to believers several duties to which they are called : We shall name some few.

1. That they should rejoice and be comforted in the thoughts of this, that they have such a complete Mediator ;

one that is thoroughly furnished, and made all things for them ; not only the Way, and the Truth, but the Life also.

2. The thoughts of this should also stir up to wondering at the wisdom, graciousness, and goodness of God ; and to thankfulness for providing such an all-sufficient Way for them.

3. This should also encourage them under all temptations, faintings, and deadness that they fall into, that there is one who is the Life ; and that He, whom their soul hath chosen, is the Life, and so fully able to enliven them.

4. This should teach them humility, and not to be proud of any thing they have or do : for it is He, who is the Life, who keepeth them in life, and helpeth them to any duty ; yea, that worketh all in them.

5. And mainly, they should here read their obligation to improve this advantage, and to draw life out of this Fountain, and so live by this life, act and do all in and through this life, and so be quickened by this Life in all their deadness.



CHAPTER XVII.

How CHRIST is to be made use of for Life, in case of heartlessness and fainting through discouragements.

THERE is a distemper which believers are subject to, and that is fainting through manifold discouragements ; which makes them so heartless, that they can do nothing. The question is, How such a soul shall make use of CHRIST, to the end it may be freed from that fainting, and win over those discouragements ? For satisfaction to which, we shall,—

1. Name some of those discouragements which occasion it.
2. Show what CHRIST hath done to remove all those discouragements.

3. How the soul should make use of CHRIST for life in this case. And,—

4. Add a few words of caution.

As to the first, there are several things which may occasion this distemper : We shall name these few ;—

1. The sense of a continually stirring body of death ; and that notwithstanding means used to bear it down and kill it. This is very discouraging ; to be still fighting, and yet getting no ease ; to have to do with an enemy that abides always strong, fight and oppose as we will. And this many times affecteth the hearts of GOD'S children, and causeth them to faint.

2. It may be the case of some, that they are assaulted with strange temptations of SATAN ; buffetings that are not usual. This made PAUL cry out thrice ; (2 Cor. xii ;) and, if the LORD had not told him that his grace was sufficient for him, what would he have done ? Hence some cry out, Was there ever any so tempted, so assaulted with the Devil, as I am ? Sure this dispensation cannot but be much afflicting, saddening, and discouraging.

3. The sense of the real weakness of grace under lively means, notwithstanding their serious and earnest desires and endeavours after growth in grace, cannot but disquiet and discourage them : for they may readily conclude, that all their pains and labour shall be in vain.

4. The want of joy and comfort, is another fainting and discouraging dispensation ; as the feeling of these is a most encouraging thing, which made DAVID so earnestly cry for it. (*Psa.* li. 8. 12.)

5. The want of liberty in their addresses to GOD, is another thing which causeth sorrow and fainting. They go to pray ; but their tongue cleaveth to the roof of their mouth : they are straitened, and cannot get their hearts vented.

6. Outward persecution that attendeth the way of godliness, and afflictions that accompany such as live godly, are another discouraging thing, both to them who are

under afflictions, and to others who hear it and see it: Wherefore, the Apostle desireth earnestly, that the Ephesians should not faint at his tribulation. (*Chap. iii. 13.*)

As to the second thing, CHRIST is Life to the believer in this case, in having done that which in reason may support under all these discouragements, and having done so much for removing these, yea, and carrying them over them all.

1. As for the body of death; let it stir in the believer as far as it will or can, all that struggling is but like the struggling of a man in the pangs of death; for "our old man is crucified with CHRIST," (*Rom. vi. 6,*) and the believer is dead to sin. But of this I spoke above.

2. As to SATAN's troubling: Through CHRIST also he is a vanquished enemy. He hath "overcome him that had the power of death, even the Devil." (*Heb. ii. 14.*)

3. As for weakness of grace, that is no ground of discouragement, so long as He liveth, who can make the "lame to leap as a hart," and can make "waters break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." (*Isai. xxxv.*) So that such "as wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; and they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." So that they need not faint upon this account, nor be discouraged; for he will "quicken them in the way." (*Psa. cxix. 37.*)

4. As for the want of joy and comfort, He hath promised to send the Comforter in his own good time. (*John xiv. 26,* and *xv. 26.*) "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will he comfort his." (*Isai. lxvi. 13.*) Joy and gladness is promised in the covenant. (*Jer. xxxi. 13.*) But further, though he keep back those influences of joy and comfort, he supporteth another way. The hope of heaven may bear up the heart under all this want: for there shall the soul have "fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore."

5. As to the want of liberty in prayer, He helpeth that also: for "he maketh the dumb to sing," and maketh

“the tongue of the stammerers to be ready to speak elegantly.” He can enlarge the heart, and help the soul to pour out its requests before GOD.

6. As to outward persecution, he can easily take that discouragement away, by giving the hundred fold with it, by supporting under it, and bringing safe through. When his presence is with them through fire and water, what can trouble them? And, when he maketh their consolations abound, what can discourage them? Have not his people sung in the very fires, and rejoiced in all their afflictions? The “resting of the SPIRIT of GOD and of glory,” which PETER speaketh of, is comfortable enough.

He having taken the sting of all, even of death, away, by taking away sin, and purchased the blessing and love of the FATHER, having made reconciliation through his blood; all those dispensations flow from love, even such as seem sharpest; so that there is no cause here of fainting, or of being so discouraged, as to give over the matter. But, for help in this case, there should be a using of JESUS, as the Life: and that is,—

The third thing which we shall speak to, *viz.*, How the soul should make use of CHRIST, as the life, that it may be delivered from this fainting, occasioned through manifold discouragements.

1. They should mind the covenant of grace, wherein all things are contrived and laid down, so as that the believer may have abundant comfort in all cases; and wherein there is enough to take away all cause of fainting and discouragement.

2. They should remember how richly CHRIST is furnished with all qualifications, suiting even that case wherein they are like to be overwhelmed. And, could we but believe these three things, we might be kept up under all discouragements: (1.) That CHRIST is a compassionate, tender-hearted Mediator, having bowels more tender than the bowels of any mother; so that “he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” He had compassion on the very bodies of the multitude that followed

him, and would not let them go away fasting, lest they should faint in the way; and, will he not have compassion on the souls of his followers, when like to faint through spiritual discouragements? (2.) That he hath power and authority to command all things that can serve to carry on a poor believer; for "all power in heaven and earth is given to Him; all things are made subject to him." (3.) That he hath a great readiness and willingness, to help his followers in their necessities. Sure, were these three firmly believed, we could not faint; having CHRIST, who is tender and loving, and willing to help, and withal able to do what he will, to look to, and to run to, for supply.

3. We should take up CHRIST under all his heart-strengthening and soul-comforting relations; as a tender Brother, a careful Shepherd, a fellow-feeling High Priest, a loving Husband, a sympathizing Head, a life-communicating Root, an all-sufficient King; any one of which is enough to bear up the head, and comfort the heart, of a drooping, discouraged, and fainting soul; much more may all of them yield strong consolation, to support and revive a soul staggering and fainting through discouragement. O, if we would but rightly improve and dwell upon the thoughts of these comforting and heart-quickening relations, our hearts would not fail us so much as they do!

4. We should eye him as now in glory; who, as Head and Captain of our Salvation, hath wrestled through, and overcome all difficulties and discouragements that were in his way; and, in behalf of all believers, that are his followers, and members of his body, is now possessed of glory: and thence we should draw a heart-comforting, and soul-strengthening conclusion, thus: Is he entered into glory as Head? Then such a poor faint-hearted, heart-broken, discouraged worm, as I am, may at length come there; especially since he said, that seeing he liveth, we shall live also. (*John* xiv. 19.)

5. We should remember how CHRIST, who was always heard of his FATHER, did supplicate for this, as Mediator and intercessor for his people; saying, "FATHER, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where

I am." May not the poor faint-hearted believer, that is looking to **JESUS**, draw a heart-reviving conclusion out of this, and say, Though my prayers be shut out, and when I cry for relief under my discouragement, I get no hearing; but, on the contrary, my discouragements grow, and my heart fainteth the more; yet **CHRIST** always was heard, and the **FATHER** will not say him nay. Why then may I not lift up my head in hope, and sing in the hope of the glory of **GOD**, in the midst of all my discouragements?

6. By faith we should cast all our discouragements, entanglements, and difficulties, as burdens too heavy for us, on **CHRIST**, and leave them there with him, who only can remove them; and withal resolve never to give over, but go forward in his strength, and thus become daily stronger and stronger in resolutions, purposes, desires, and endeavours, when we can do no more.

7 We should look to **JESUS**, the Author and Finisher of faith, as a copy of courage; who, for "the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," and "endured contradiction of sinners against himself;" (*Heb. xii. 2, 3;*) and this may prove a means to keep us from wearying and fainting in our minds.

Now, for the last particular, the words of caution, take these:—

1. They should lay their resolution to meet with discouragements: for few or none ever went to heaven, but they had many a storm in their face; and they must not think to have a way paved for themselves alone.

2. They should not pore too much, or dwell too long, upon the thoughts of those discouragements: for that is **SATAN'S** advantage, and tendeth to weaken them. It were better to be looking beyond them, as **CHRIST** did. When he had the cross and the shame to wrestle with, he looked to the joy that was set before him; and that made him endure the cross, and despise the shame. And as **MOSES** did, when he had afflictions and the wrath of the King to wrestle against, "he had respect unto the

recompense of reward ; ” and so he “ endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

3. They should remember, that as **CHRIST** hath tender bowels, and is full of compassion, and is both ready and able to help them ; so is he wise, and knoweth how to let out his mercies best. He is not like a foolish affectionate mother, that would hazard the life of the child, before she put the child to any pain. He seeth what is best for his own glory, and for their good, here and hereafter ; and that he will do with much tenderness and readiness.

4. They should look upon it as no mean mercy, if, notwithstanding all the discouragements and storms that blow in their face, they are helped to keep their face up the hill, and are fixed in this resolution, never to turn their back upon the way of **GOD**, but to continue creeping forward as they may, whatever storms they meet with : Yea, upon this account, ought they heartily to bless his name, and to rejoice ; for “ their hearts shall live that seek him.”

5. They should remember, for their encouragement, that as many have been helped through all discouragements, and have been brought home at length ; so may they be brought through all those storms which now they wrestle with. It is the glory of the Mediator to bring his broken, torn, and sinking vessels safe to shore.

Now I come to a third case, and that is,—

CHAPTER XVIII.

*How shall one make use of **CHRIST**, as the **Life**, when wrestling with an angry **GOD** because of sin ?*

THAT we may give some satisfaction to this question, we shall,—

1. Show what are the ingredients in this case, or what use to concur in this distemper.

2. Show some reasons why the LORD is pleased to dispense thus with his people.

3. Show how CHRIST is Life to the soul in this case.

4. Show the believer's duty for a recovery : And,

5. Add a word or two of caution.

As to the *first*, there may be these parts of, or ingredients in, this distemper :—

1. GOD presenting their sins unto their view, so as they shall cry out, "Our sin is ever before us ;" and say, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance : " (*Psa. xc. 8 :*) And so cause them to see the LORD contending for sin, as the Church did : "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves : We look for judgment, but there is none ; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us. For our transgressions are with us ; and as for our iniquities, we know them." (*Isai. lix.*)

2. Yea, GOD may bring upon them the iniquities of their youth, and so suffer conscience to charge them with their old sins, formerly repented of and pardoned : And this is more terrible.

3. And, as Job speaketh, (*chap. xv. 17,*) GOD may seem to be sealing up all their sins in a bag, that none of them may be lost or fall by, without being taken notice of, as it were gathering them together in a heap.

4. He may pursue sore with signs of wrath and displeasure, because of those sins ; as we see in DAVID, and in several others of his people chastened of the LORD, because of their transgressions.

5. Further, the LORD may deprive them of all their former joy and comfort ; which made DAVID cry out, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

6. And, which is yet more terrible, write their sin upon their judgment ; as when he caused the sword and whoredom to follow DAVID's house.

And this the LORD thinketh good to do, (that we may

speaking a word to the *second* particular,) for these and the like reasons :—

1. To discover to them, and to all the world, how just, holy, and righteous a **GOD** he is, that cannot approve of or bear with sin, even in his own children. .

2. To make all fear and tremble before this great and holy **GOD**, who is terrible in his judgments, even when they come from a **FATHER**'s hand; that is not pursuing in pure anger, but chastening in love. Sure, all must think, that his dispensations with the wicked will be much more fearful.

3. To press believers more earnestly into **CHRIST**, that they may get a new extract of their pardon, and their souls washed in the blood of **JESUS**.

4. To teach them to walk more circumspectly afterward, and to guard more watchfully against **SATAN**'s temptations, and to employ **CHRIST** more as their strength, light, and guide.

5. To give a fresh proof of his wonderful mercy, grace, love, and compassion; upholding the soul in the mean time, and at length pardoning them, and speaking peace to their souls through the blood of **JESUS**.

But, as to the *third* particular, we may look on **CHRIST**, as the Life to the soul in this case, upon these accounts :—

1. He hath satisfied justice, and so hath borne the pure wrath of **GOD** due for our sins: He hath “trodden the wine-press alone.” (*Isai. lxiii. 3.*) “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our sins.” (*Isai. liii. 5, 10.*)

2. Yea, he hath procured that mercy and love shall accompany all those sharp dispensations, and that they shall flow from mercy.

3. And sometimes he is pleased to let them see this clear difference betwixt the strokes they lie under, and the judgments of pure wrath; and this supporteth the soul. For then he seeth, that those dispensations, how sharp soever they be, shall work together for good to him, and come from the hand of a gracious and loving Father.

4. He is "a Prince, exalted to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel." (*Acts* v. 31.) Yea, he hath procured such a clause in the covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure, that, upon their renewing of faith and repentance, their after-sins shall be pardoned.

5. He cleareth to them their interest in the covenant, and their right to the promises; and, through their closing with CHRIST by faith, he raiseth up their heart in hope, and causeth them to expect remission of their sins, and turning away of the displeasure in due time: and this is a great part of their life.

6. Being "the Author and Finisher of faith," and "a Prince to give repentance," he, by his SPIRIT, worketh up the soul to a renewing of its grasps of himself by faith, and to a running to the death and blood of CHRIST for pardon and washing; and worketh godly sorrow in the heart: Whereupon followeth pardon.

7. He helpeth also the soul to a justifying of GOD, and to a holy submissive frame of spirit, under that dispensation; so that they are willing to bear the indignation of the LORD, because they have sinned against him; to wait for an issue in GOD'S own time, and to kiss the rod, and accept of the punishment of their sin.

8. When he seeth it fit for his own glory and their advantage, He speaketh peace to the soul, and saith, "Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:" and then is the soul restored to life.

As to the *fourth* particular; the soul that is wrestling with an angry GOD for sin, and would make use of CHRIST as the life, should do these things:—

1. He should look to CHRIST as standing under GOD'S curse in our room, and as satisfying justice for all our sins.

2. He should eye the covenant, wherein new pardon is promised, upon the renewing of faith and repentance.

3. He should eye CHRIST as the great Lord Dispensator of both faith and repentance, and hang on him for both; and thus believe, that he may believe and repent;

or lay his soul open to him, that he may work in him both repentance and faith.

4. He should flee to “the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of ABEL.”

5. He should eye CHRIST as a Prince, to pardon and give remission of sins, and as exalted for this end; and fix his eye upon him, as now exalted in glory for this end.

As for the cautions which I promised to speak to, in the last place, take these few:—

1. Do not conclude there is no pardon, because there is no intimation thereof made to thy soul as yet.

2. Do not conclude there is no pardon, because the rod that was inflicted for sin is not yet taken off. GOD pardoned DAVID’s sin, and did intimate the same to him by NATHAN; and yet the sword did not depart from his house until he died: GOD can forgive, and yet take vengeance on their inventions.

3. Do not think, that because thou hast once received CHRIST, that therefore, without any new act of faith on him, or of repentance towards GOD, thou shouldest immediately be pardoned of thy sins as soon as they are committed; for the Gospel method must be followed, and it should satisfy us.



CHAPTER XIX.

No man cometh to the FATHER, but by me.

THIS, being added to the further confirmation of what was formerly said, will point out to us several necessary truths: As,—

First, That it is most necessary to be sound and clear in this fundamental point, of coming to GOD only in and through CHRIST: For, 1. It is the whole marrow of the

Gospel. 2. It is the hinge of all our salvation: **CHRIST** is the chief corner-stone. 3. The only ground of all true peace and comfort. 4. An error or a mistake here is most dangerous; hazarding, if not ruining all. 5. **SATAN** endeavours mainly against this; raiseth up heresies, errors, and false opinions, and prompteth some to vent perplexing doubts and objections. 6. Our corrupt hearts are most averse from it, and will close with any way, how troublesome, how expensive, and costly soever it may seem to be, rather than with this.

All which clear up this necessity, and should teach us to make sure that we are in it, and to hold it fast, and to keep it pure in our practice, without mixing any thing with it.

Secondly, That it is no small difficulty to get this truth believed and practised: that through **CHRIST** alone we come to the **FATHER**. For, 1. Nature will not teach this way; it is far above nature. 2. Yea, our natural inclination is much against it, opposing it, and fighting against it. 3. This way is altogether contrary to that high esteem which naturally all of us have of ourselves. 4. Yea, there is nothing in us by nature that will willingly comply with this way; but, on the contrary, all is opposite thereunto. 5. And therefore it is the Christian's first lesson to deny himself.

The consideration of which should humble us, and make us very jealous of our own hearts, and of all those courses which they are inclinable to and bent upon; and it should put us to try if ever we have overcome this difficulty, and have now all our hopes and comforts founded on Him, and on nothing else; and in all our approaches to **GOD**, upon whatsoever account, are leaning to him, and resting on him alone, expecting access, acceptance, and a hearing, only in him; and are quieted under all our fears and temptations with this,—That **CHRIST** is our Way to the **FATHER**.

Thirdly, That even believers have need to have this truth inculcated often: for, 1. **SATAN** is busy pulling

them off this ground, by all the wiles and temptations he can. 2. Their own corruption within, and the evil heart of unbelief, is always opposing this way, and drawing them off it. 3. Through the sleight of SATAN, and the power of corruption, they are oft-times declining from this pure Gospel-way. 4. The experience of believers can tell, that when they are at their best, it is a great work and exercise to them, to keep their heart right in this matter. 5. Is it not too often seen that they are under the spiritual plague of formality, which stealeth them off their feet here? How ought all to be convinced of this, and humbled under a sense of it! And see also how necessary it is to be oft preaching on this subject, and to be oft thinking upon and studying this fundamental truth.

Fourthly, It should be a strong motive and incitement to us to make use of CHRIST as the way to the FATHER, that no man cometh to the FATHER but by him; for this may be looked upon as an argument, enforcing their using him as the way.

Fifthly, That in and through CHRIST alone we must come, 1. To the knowledge of the FATHER: for no man knoweth the FATHER but the SON; and he alone, who came out of the bosom of the FATHER, revealeth him. 2. To the favour and friendship of the FATHER: for he alone is our peace, and in him alone is the FATHER well pleased. 3. To the kingdom of the FATHER here; for he only is the door, and by his SPIRIT are we effectually called. 4. To the kingdom of the FATHER above; for he alone hath opened that door, and is entered into the holiest of all, as our forerunner, and is gone to prepare a place for us. 5. Through him alone must we address ourselves to the FATHER; in our supplications, (*John* xvi. 23; *Rev.* viii. 3;) in our thanksgiving, (*Rom.* i. 8; *Col.* iii. 17,) and praise. (*Heb.* xiii. 15; *Eph.* iii. 21.) 6. Through him alone have we access, and an open door to the FATHER. (*Eph.* ii. 18, and iii. 21; *Heb.* iv. 6.)

I shall only speak to one case here, *viz.*, How should we make use of CHRIST, in going to the FATHER in prayer

and other acts of worship? For answering this question, I shall lay down these particulars:—

1. There should be a lively sense of the infinite distance that is betwixt the great GOD, and us finite creatures; and yet more betwixt the holy GOD and us sinful wretches.

2. There should be an eyeing of CHRIST as the great Peace-maker through his death and merits, having satisfied justice, and reconciled sinners to GOD; that so we may look on GOD now, no more as an enemy, but as reconciled in JESUS.

3. There should be, sometimes at least, a more formal and explicit actual closing with CHRIST as ours, when we are going about such duties; and always an implicit and virtual embracing of him as our Mediator, or an habitual hanging upon him, and leaning to him, as our Mediator and Peace-maker.

4. There should be an eyeing of him as our Great High Priest, now living for ever to make intercession for us, and to keep the door of heaven open to us; upon which account, the Apostle presseth the Hebrews to come boldly to the throne of grace.

5. There should be a cleaving to him even in reference to this particular act of worship, and a laying hold upon him, to speak so, as our Master-Usher, to bring us by the hand in to the FATHER, as conscious of our own unworthiness.

6. There should be a confidence leaning to him in our approaching; and so we should approach in him without fear or diffidence; and that notwithstanding we find not our souls in such a frame as we could wish.

Thus should we roll all the difficulties that come in our way; and all the discouragements which we meet with, on him, that he may take away the one and the other, and help us over the one and the other.

7. As we should take an answer to all objections from him alone, and put him to remove all scruples and difficulties, and strengthen ourselves against all impediments and discouragements, alone in and through him; so there

should be the bringing all our positive encouragements from him alone; and all our hopes of speeding with the **FATHER** should be grounded upon him.

8. We should expect all our welcome and acceptance with the **FATHER**, only in and through **CHRIST**, and expect nothing for any thing in ourselves; not for our graces, good frame, preparation, or any thing of that kind. We should not found our acceptance, or our peace and sanctification on ourselves, nor on any thing we have or do; nor should we conclude our exclusion or want of acceptance, because we do not apprehend our frame so good as it ought to be; we should not found our acceptance on the right performance of duties, for that is not **CHRIST**.

9. We should look to **Him** for the removal of all the discouragements that **SATAN** casts in our way, while we are about this or that act of worship, to put us back, or to cause us to advance slowly and faintingly; and, casting them all on him, go forward in our duty.

10. We should look for all our returns and answers only in and through him, and lay all the weight of our hopes and expectation of a good answer only on him.

For caution I would add a word or two:—

1. I do not think that the believer can explicitly and distinctly act all these things whenever he is going to **God**, or can distinctly perceive all these several acts; nor have I specified them for this end, but to show at some length how **CHRIST** is to be employed in those acts of worship which we are called to perform; and that because we oft-times think the simple naming of him, and asking of things for his sake, is sufficient, though our hearts lean more to some other thing than to him; and the conscientious Christian, will find his soul, when he is rightly going about the duties of worship, looking towards **CHRIST**, though sometimes more distinctly and explicitly as to one particular, and sometimes more as to another.

2. Though the believer cannot distinctly act faith on **CHRIST** all these ways, when he is going about commanded duties of worship; yet he should be sure to have

his heart going out after **CHRIST**, as the only ground of his approaching to, and acceptance with, the **FATHER**; and to have his heart in such an habitual frame of resting on **CHRIST**, that really there may be a relying upon him all these ways, though not distinctly discerned.

3. Sometimes the believer will be called to be more distinct and explicit in looking to and resting upon **CHRIST** as to one particular, and sometimes more as to another. When **SATAN** is dissuading him to go to **GOD**, because he is an infinite Holy One, and himself is a sinner; then he is called to act faith on **CHRIST** as the Mediator, making reconciliation betwixt **GOD** and sinners. And when **SATAN** casts up his unworthiness and former sins, to keep him back, or to discourage him; then he is called to lay hold on **CHRIST** as the great High Priest and Advocate; and, casting that discouragement on him, to go forward. So likewise, when **SATAN** is discouraging him in his duty, by bringing before him his sins, he should take this course. And when, because of his sinful way of worshipping **GOD**, and calling upon him, and other things, he is made to fear that all is in vain,—that neither **GOD** regardeth him nor his service, and that he shall not speed; then should he cast all the burden of his acceptance, and of obtaining what he asketh and desireth, on **CHRIST**, and quiet himself there; and so as to the rest. And hence appeareth the usefulness of our branching out of this matter.

4. In all this there must be an acting in the strength of **JESUS**; a looking to **CHRIST**, and resting upon **CHRIST**, according to the present case and necessity, in **CHRIST**; that is, by strength and grace communicated to us by his **SPIRIT**. Then do we worship **GOD** in the **SPIRIT**, and in the newness of the **SPIRIT**, when all is done in and through **JESUS**.

AN EXTRACT
FROM
A TREATISE
OF
SOLID VIRTUE.



WRITTEN IN FRENCH.

TO
THE ENGLISH READER.

THE first part of this Treatise was translated some years ago, by one now deceased; a very humble, pious, and virtuous person, and who being convinced of the solid foundations of virtue that he found in this Author, was thence excited to contribute all that was in his power, that they might be communicated to these kingdoms. It was published at Amsterdam, and now it has been thought fit to revise it, and to publish both parts together.

The first Ten Letters are adapted to the planting of virtue; and all the rest to root out what may hinder its increase. That precept of Him, who is the Master and example of virtue, is the introduction, showing what virtues we must in the first place embrace, and by what means we must tend to them; which is by obedience, and renouncing our own wills, to the meekness, gentleness, and humility, of JESUS CHRIST. The nature hereof is solidly explained; the motives, instruments, and impediments produced; and the great reasonableness of emptying ourselves demonstrated, in order to be possessed with the love of GOD. In which love consists the essence and perfection of all virtue, and all good: this alone is able to resist and overcome all the temptations of SATAN, how subtle soever, which are here treated of, as they respect either the imagination, or the intellect, or the will.

The second part contains the means which are essentially necessary for the mortifying corrupt nature, and arriving at life : and the example of CHRIST is here set before us in the whole process, which is symbolically presented by three bridges. 1. That of forsaking the world. 2. That of poverty of Spirit. And 3. That of renouncing our wills. Which last is most largely considered, and earnestly pressed, as well in small as in great things. And for the preventing of mistakes, the nature and degrees of virtue and vice are clearly stated.

Some will not look upon this book because it treats of virtue ; they say there is nothing there of JESUS CHRIST, and of faith in him. What GOD has joined, men ought not to put asunder, or to make a contrariety between them. True faith, and faith in JESUS CHRIST, is certainly the divine principle of solid virtue. We are bidden to add to our faith the other divine virtues ; and are told, that faith worketh by love, and that the end of the commandment is charity, and that is the essence of virtue. Sure they who shall read this treatise without an evil eye, will see that by it we are still directed to JESUS CHRIST ; that he only has merited our pardon and favour with GOD ; that it is by his grace alone we can do any thing that is pleasing to GOD ; that his life and doctrine is the only rule we must follow, if we would attain true virtue, and eternal life ; and it is his HOLY SPIRIT that sheds the divine virtues into our hearts.

Be pleased then, friendly reader, to peruse this book with a sincere resolution, by the divine grace, to put the directions of it in practice, so far as you find them conformable to the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. I can wish you no greater good, than that your heart and life be moulded into that divine frame. We are all travelling to eternity,

where we hope to enjoy GOD; we come into the world with perfect contrariety to his nature; the present time is allotted us to overcome that, and to return to the love of GOD, without which we can never enjoy him. Much of this time is spent already, and we know not how little remains of it.

Were our hearts taken off from things present and temporal; did we constantly deny ourselves, our own wills, senses, appetites, and passions; did we love the humility, the poverty, the contempt, the reproaches, and sufferings of JESUS CHRIST, we should neither disturb the world with new sects, of which there are too many already, nor persecute others who differ from us in their sentiments; but we should find so much work in the mortifying our own corrupt natures, such beams to pull out of our own eyes, so much need of pardon and mercy for our own sins, such variety of temptations to watch against on all sides, so much weakness and propensity to evil in ourselves, and such an aversion and backwardness to follow JESUS CHRIST in a way so contrary to the maxims and customs of the world and nature, as would require and take up all our care and vigilance, and make us treat others with the spirit of meekness.

P R E F A C E.

FRIENDLY READER,

I CANNOT but impart to you several Letters, which I wrote to some of my friends, wherein I make appear what is solid virtue ; because it is a matter so necessary in this present age, wherein we see false virtue bear sway, or that which seems only to be virtue in men's eyes ; and wherein so many deceive themselves, being persuaded that they have true virtue, when they have nothing but fine speculations about it. They think they have the love of GOD, when they desire to have it ; nevertheless, they have indeed nothing but self-love, and it is nothing but deceit and lies when they say, we have the love of GOD. They do not so much as know the corruption of their natures, since they think they may well enough follow this corruption without sinning, provided they do no evil reprobable before men, and that they have the will to do well and to love GOD. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient for salvation ; for good desires, without effect, are nothing before God.

This made me resolve to publish those twenty-five Letters, which treat of true virtue, that they who aspire to it may see the state in which they are ; as also, if they have acquired any degrees of it ; or if their virtues be only imaginary.

I do not offer this matter of true virtue to all in general, since many would find it hard to be observed ; but I speak to souls disengaged, that is, to believers, who have left the world to follow JESUS CHRIST ; and such will easily understand me ; for none are better disposed to understand me, than they who desire to practise true virtue. To others I say, as ST. JOHN to the soldiers, " Do violence to no man, defraud no man, and be content with your wages ; " and this he says to them, because

he did not find them disposed for farther perfection. But if the soldiers had aimed at this, no doubt **ST. JOHN** would have advised them to forsake all that they possessed, as **JESUS CHRIST** did to the young man in the Gospel, after he had said he had kept the commandments of God.

The same I say to those to whom I present these twenty-five Letters, (which are but the beginning of my designs,) to let them see wherein it consists.

To those, I mean, who will embrace and follow it, and not to others ; for this would be but to “ cast pearls before swine, or the children’s meat to the dogs.” These are yet earthly souls, and have their affections wedded to the wealth, honours, and pleasures of this life, and by consequence are not in a disposition to put true virtue in practice. It seems enough to them not to transgress grossly and outwardly the commandments of God ; for they know no other evils.

But souls who have abandoned the world to follow **JESUS CHRIST**, and to be renewed into his Spirit, ought to labour with all their strength to acquire this true virtue, by renouncing the corruption of their nature ; and they may be persuaded they shall never attain to a truly christian life, unless they overcome corrupt nature. We must labour diligently in the mortification of our senses, that we may get the victory over that corruption which sin has brought into human nature : without this, our virtue is false, or apparent only, and not at all that which is virtue before God.

For if you show me a person sober, chaste, and upright in his affairs, who imparts of his goods to the poor, who fasts at the appointed times, and does many other good works, and nevertheless follows the motions of corrupt nature ; I make no reckoning of all these virtues, if he have not joined to them the renunciation of his corrupt nature, and if he have not entirely renounced his own will. **ST. PAUL** names to us greater virtues than those, when he says, “ Though I have the gift of prophecy ; and faith that could remove mountains ; and though I should give all my goods to the poor ; if I have not charity, I am nothing.”

Now charity is no other thing but the love of God ; which cannot be obtained but by renouncing self-love, and hating the corruption of our nature ; for we can never do good, if we

depart not from evil ; and all sorts of evil are contained in our nature, since it is fallen into sin : so that we can never attain true virtue but by renouncing this corruption, no more than the charity, of which the Apostle speaks, without having overcome it. With him, therefore, I tell all those who would attain true virtue, that all other good actions will avail nothing until they have overcome the corruption that sin has brought into human nature ; since all sorts of evil flow from it, and no good can be found in it. Though the blindness of men makes them presume that they can do any good, yet nevertheless all they do is evil so long as they act according to the motions of corrupt nature : and it is only arrogance and presumption of spirit, that they think themselves wise and willing to do all good.

When man was first created by God in the state of innocence, he was full of all good, and all manner of good proceeded from him ; but since he fell into sin, he has been filled with all evil, and nothing can flow from him but all sorts of evil. This is a general rule, and by it ought every one to regulate his life, if he would be saved ; for there is no exception for any body, since all men in general were corrupted by ADAM'S sin, and by consequence are all full of evil, without excepting so much as one.

In respect of grace they are alike, and by sin are fallen into the same corruption, one as well as another ; and therefore all have equally need of opposing this common corruption, since they are all equally corrupted by sin ; they must overcome it if they would be saved, without fancying that one is better than another, because he has some better temperament in his nature. For this nature does nothing to grace, and sometimes he who has more of fire will be more virtuous than he who has more of water : for if he employ his choler in defending justice, he will do it much better than a phlegmatic person, who usually loves nothing but his ease.

This I regard also, in writing of solid virtue ; but I do not aim to make it weighty and difficult : I desire only to make it known to those who would practise it, and that because I love them. Thus I cannot leave them in ignorance, or permit that they perish amidst their good-will, for want of knowledge.'

This First Part discovers, among other things, how the Devil endeavours always to divert souls from true virtue, by many different wiles. In fine, this is a school, wherein we may learn “to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow CHRIST,” as he taught all those who would become his disciples, in the perfect sense and the true explication. Receive it then with as good a heart, as I present it to you with a Christian charity : and I remain,

Friendly Reader,

Your very affectionate, in JESUS CHRIST,

ANTHONETTE BOURIGNON

A TREATISE
OF
SOLID VIRTUE.

LETTER I.

*That all Christians ought to learn of JESUS CHRIST,
Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility.*

MY DEAR CHILD,

I PERCEIVE you have not as yet comprehended what JESUS CHRIST teaches, when he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble in heart." For when occasion offers you do not practise it aright, but you give reins to your nature: You speak roughly; and sometimes you use force to accomplish what you have resolved upon, and that as well in little things as in great. This does not speak humility of heart, since the humble yields willingly to another in things that are not evil, and does not think that another should follow his will; but he is ever well content to follow the will of another, in all that is not against God, nor against the perfection of his own soul.

I think you may have observed this in me; for ordinarily I inform myself what is the will of my brethren, that I may see what they love most in indifferent things; and I take more content to do any thing according to their desires than according to my own, for this gives me more inward peace and quiet, and I feel satisfaction to see them contented. My temper is inclined to this, by a habit I have got of breaking my own will in every thing; and being overcome, it rules over all things, and is not troubled at any thing that falls out contrary to it, when it is not against God's honour, nor the love of our neighbour. All the rest is indifferent to me: whether it rains, or is fair weather; whether I eat sharp or sweet meats, provided

they do not prejudice health ; whether I be alone or in company, provided the one be as safe as the other ; and in short, I am as well pleased to be in one country as in another, provided I find there the same occasions of living well : and thus I am comforted in all rencounters ; whether I be sick or in health, I have no choice, provided I honour **GOD** in the one as well as in the other ; all is indifferent to me, and I would never make choice of any thing. So that I take from **GOD**'s hand all that befalls me, and thus I am always content and joyful.

If you could learn this method, you would be always in quiet ; whereas, at present, by fretting and discontent you disquiet your spirit, and are uneasy to others, and so hinder mutual love ; for an angry word is not agreeable to any body, and a mild one softens the heart even of a furious man. I believe indeed you love your brethren ; but you speak to them sometimes as if you hated them, and as if you would not hear them speak. If they spoke as you do, you would hardly suffer them ; so you ought to consider that they have much to suffer when you speak so harshly. They do very well for themselves when they bear with you, but your soul has no profit by it ; for though all the world should bear with you, you would not for this be justified before **GOD**, nor would your natural temper change its evil inclinations, but be strengthened in them ; which you would bewail much before **GOD**, when it would be too late.

I counsel you, therefore, my child, to labour after meekness now, since it is taught by **CHRIST** himself. I know you will feel some repugnance to this, and that you must do violence to your nature ; but the kingdom of heaven must be taken by force, since it is written, "The violent take it by force." Eternal life does well deserve the violence we must do to ourselves, to overcome our evil habits. Resolve, then, to overcome this passion of anger : it is this that torments you most, and gives the Devil most advantage against your soul.

Watch therefore over yourself, that you may resist it

when occasions offer; for the first motions of anger are not in your power, but it is meet that you make use of continual prayer, whereby to oppose these continual motions. The sin does not consist in feeling them, but in consenting to them; and therefore, when you feel the motions of anger, do not give place to them, but retire into yourself, and beg of God the strength to resist them. While you are in this state utter no words; and when they reply to you what you do not willingly hear, retire rather than answer them; and thus you shall overcome by little and little that inclination, and become meek and gentle. As to humility, it teaches us to subject ourselves willingly to the will of another in all things that are good, or indifferent; and believe assuredly, that so long as you have a repugnance to yield to the will of another, you have not a humble heart. A humble heart is always distrustful of itself, and desires rather to obey than to command; it still submits its opinion to that of others, and will not contend to maintain its own, esteeming it the least of any.

If you had this humility which CHRIST requires, you would be happy and contented; for nothing would ever fall out against your will, which being subjected to God, would always take all things from his hand, even though they came from the wicked, or from the Devil himself, who could not hurt you, while you referred all to God. True humility consists not in actions outwardly humble, but in the inward motions of the heart, which ought not from the bottom to desire any longer to be honoured or esteemed, and far less to be followed and obeyed. But a humble heart does honour and esteem others, and willingly obeys them, since there is nothing that gives more repose to a man than obedience; for he who has no other business but to obey, needs not cast about his mind to know what he shall do, or what he shall say; he ought only to hear what shall be told him, and follow that, living thus as a child, without any care, except that only of pleasing God; which must needs give great quiet, both inwardly and outwardly.

I do not think that any body can desire to command, unless he has a proud and arrogant heart ; and we find by experience, that he who has done his own will, has often regret and displeasure for it afterwards. The reason is, our self-will is corrupted by sin, and so it breeds all sort of corruption to him that follows it. How many have undone themselves, or made themselves miserable for all their life, by following their own wills ! But he who can find a person disinterested, and will obey him according to God, is most happy and contented.

Not that I would counsel you to be obèdient in things of importance, to men who live according to their own will, as well as you, for this would be often evil ; the corrupt will of another being as bad as your own. Nevertheless, it will be profitable for your own perfection to obey them in things indifferent, or of small consequence, when they wrong nobody ; and thereby you shall overcome your own corruption, and accustom yourself to submit willingly to that which will be well-pleasing to God. For custom turns into nature, and he who accustoms himself to submit to men for his own perfection, it will be easy to him to submit also for the same to God ; and consequently your heart will still find repose.

This, nevertheless, we do not observe ; for as many persons as there are of us, we have as many wills ; which discovers in all a pride of heart, that is far from observing the counsel of CHRIST, “ To learn of him, who is meek and humble in heart.” We ought to retain this lesson, and to put it in practice on all occasions.

Indeed you should try whether what men propose or desire, be good ; and when you do not find it to be certainly so, then examine if it is evil, or if it may hurt or bring prejudice to any one ; and if you judge it to be so, you must excuse yourself from yielding, with all the mildness you can ; but if you resist them with rough and sharp words, you had better hold your peace than speak.

Likewise you should love the occasions of sufferings, that you may exercise yourself in Christian Perfection.

Therefore let not the present occasion escape, for the past is not in your power, and what is to come is uncertain. It is only the present moment that furnishes us with means of our perfection. In like manner, be not curious to spy the faults of others ; for every one must labour for his own perfection. Live so, as if you had nothing else to do but to perfect your own soul, and to fulfil the will of God ; for nothing concerns you but this. For if all the men of the world were holy, and you were not, their virtues would be of no advantage to you ; and if you were virtuous, and all others were vicious, this would take nothing from your virtue ; for God will not demand of us an account of others, but “ He will judge every one according to his works.”

Thus, when you shall have overcome yourself, you shall have overcome all the world, and nothing can be any longer a hinderance to you ; for the faults of others will even serve you as means to exercise your patience, and to become meek, mild, and lowly in heart ;” and the virtues of others will stir you up to greater virtue : so that you will prevail over every one ; for he who has overcome his passions is king over all the earth, and has subjected all things to himself, he not being moved with any thing that falls out.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
12th January, 1672, St. Vet.*

ANTHONETTE BOURIGNON.



LETTER II.

Showing wherein Meekness and Lowliness consist, which cannot be obtained unless we renounce our own will.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I PERCEIVE that you do not yet comprehend the words of JESUS CHRIST, where he says, that we must “ learn of

him, to be meek and humble in heart." Therefore you must know what this meekness is, otherwise you cannot love it; for we cannot love that which we do not know: and the reason why true virtue is so little loved, is because it is not well known. Men are persuaded that they are virtuous, because they have done some outward good works, while in the mean time there is nothing of the essence of virtue in them; for true virtue is a spiritual thing, which must possess the heart of man, and it cannot be seen nor felt, but by the operations which it produces, springing from the bottom of the heart; and if these good operations do not proceed from that fund, but are only studied things, or done to please men, or to satisfy ourselves, they add nothing to our souls, and cannot be rewarded with eternal life.

But they may indeed serve as means to attain true virtue, when our intention is to aspire after it. The mischief is, that many stop at these means and outward virtues, as if they were the end; and so they think they have virtue indeed, while they have it only in shadow.

Therefore I will teach you what true virtue is, and in particular what that meekness is. It is no other thing but a peace, a repose, and tranquillity of spirit, which resides in the bottom of our soul. We may learn to speak meekly, and yet not have the meekness which JESUS CHRIST says we must learn of him. We may learn meek words as a parrot learns them, and we may even pronounce them out of civility or hypocrisy; for I have known persons who have appeared very meek in their behaviour, and yet were inwardly arrogant. We must not, therefore, amuse ourselves with this outward meekness, which is oft-times deceitful or natural; for there are persons so faint-hearted, that they fear to speak a harsh word, lest this might breed them trouble, or cause them to meet with a rough answer; and this softness makes them mild, both as to good and evil. Yet they dare believe that they have the virtue of meekness, though they have nothing but the vice of sloth and injustice, which makes them yield to the evil of another,

instead of resisting it with care and vigour ; but they will not take so much trouble.

But behold what that meekness contains that **JESUS CHRIST** tells us we must learn of him.

If I have peace in my soul, quiet of conscience, and tranquillity in my spirit, be certainly persuaded, that you may have them also ; for **GOD** does not refuse his graces to those who ask and desire them. And he will be loath to refuse that of meekness, since **JESUS CHRIST** says, we must “learn it of him ;” for he will not command us to learn that which is impossible. **GOD** is just ; and therefore he has taught us nothing by **JESUS CHRIST**, but what he will readily give us.

All the evil lies in this, that we do not desire ; and this desire cannot be great in us, so long as we do not know him. Many say, that the **HOLY SPIRIT** does not operate in souls now, as he did in the time of **JESUS CHRIST** and his Apostles ; because they do not see him “in the form of a dove, or in tongues of fire :” which is a very weak argument ; for the **HOLY SPIRIT** is not limited to any time, since he is **GOD** eternal, who gives his gifts, and bears his fruits, in all seasons, and will do it to all eternity : since he can never be barren or idle, but operates continually in the souls which are disposed for it.

True believers have no need to see outward figures to convince them that the **HOLY SPIRIT** does yet dwell in the soul of him that is disposed for it. They may search themselves, if they know what the **HOLY SPIRIT** is, what are his gifts, what his graces, and what his fruits, of which one is the meekness that **JESUS CHRIST** says we must learn of him.

And **ST. PAUL** places amongst the fruits of the **HOLY SPIRIT**, goodness, gentleness ; which is the same thing, expressed in different words ; and in its essence it is peace, repose, and tranquillity, residing in the soul. These signs are sure evidences that the **HOLY SPIRIT** dwells there ; for the natural spirit cannot give either true peace, or true repose, or true tranquillity of mind.

If you do not feel in your soul true inward peace, quiet of conscience, and tranquillity of mind, you have not, as yet, learned of JESUS CHRIST, his meekness, and his lowliness; and, therefore, you must embrace the means to attain it.

The first is, absolutely to desire and will it; which I believe, by the grace of GOD, you do. Secondly, you must endeavour to remove all sorts of hinderances, which retard this peace and tranquillity. The hinderances are in our corrupt nature; for since sin, men are fallen into a continual trouble, war, and disquiet; and our passions being disordered, breed all these things; and they cannot be governed and kept in peace, unless we have resisted and overcome them, and have also renounced our natural inclinations.

This is the reason why JESUS CHRIST says, "That we must deny ourselves, if we would become his disciples." For it is only this denial of our passions, that is the true means to find this peace; for since sin came, our passions rob us of this. If we will let our passions rule, they will lead us to intemperance, vexation, and disquiet of spirit; so that it is impossible that one who lives according to his natural senses, can learn meekness and humility. And therefore he adds, "That a man must deny himself." For the one cannot be without the other. If we would be meek and lowly, as CHRIST teaches, we must deny ourselves; since our corrupt nature has nothing but bitterness and fretting, which breeds a man trouble in his mind, disquiet in his will, and contention with his neighbour. For he who has not meekness in himself, cannot have peace with his neighbour: and if he have, it is nothing but counterfeit, which gives no inward peace, nor tranquillity in his spirit, as I am persuaded you experience in yourself; for though you have a repose in having quitted the occasions of sin, yet you have not inward peace. But we see you act yet with disturbance, which proceeds from corrupt and disorderly passions. The meekness of our heart begets gentleness towards our neigh-

bour : for he who has tranquillity within himself, will not give his neighbour trouble, nor occasion of vexation in any thing ; since the meekness of the good quenches the anger of the wicked. And though one, who has learned the meekness of **JESUS CHRIST**, were in the midst of all sorts of troubles, yet he would preserve the tranquillity of his mind ; for he would not follow the motions of his corrupt nature, and by this means he preserves the repose in which he is, by meekness and gentleness.

If you would learn this lesson, endeavour to deny yourself, and not to follow your own will in any thing ; for it has been corrupted by sin, and therefore is inclined always to evil. Be jealous of all that proceeds from your own will, and do not follow it in any thing. It is it that robs you of meekness and gentleness ; and we have no greater enemy in the world than our self-will. If you could comprehend this truth well, you would not follow it in any thing ; and you would distrust even your good-will and intentions. But because you do not yet sufficiently know that your own will is evil, you do not distrust it : nevertheless it betrays you often, and, which is more, it leads you to do evil when you would do good. The inward intention of your heart is good, but your self-will opposes your good desires, and you do often the quite contrary to what you have well resolved. If I were in your place, I would never follow my own will in any thing, and I would look upon all my own will as evil ; since no good can ever proceed from a thing wholly corrupted. All that is good must come from **GOD** ; and all that is evil from the **Devil**, and from the corrupt will of man. That is as a fire that kindles in our nature, luxury, wrath, and all sorts of intemperance : it is insatiable, never satisfied, ever coveting what it has not ; restless in its desires, eager in its pursuits, always thirsty, never contented : in short, our self-will breeds us more mischief than the **Devil** himself does ; for he could not hurt man any way, if his self-will did not consent to it. When therefore we shall have overcome our self-will, we shall also have overcome the **Devil** ; for he can never make

us sin, but by moving our will to obey him. For this cause, all men in general ought to war against their own wills. Nevertheless, few look on it as their enemy, and very many make it their idol, and esteem themselves happy when they can follow it in all things, without considering that it brings death to the soul.

*From Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
5th February, 1672, St. Vct.*



LETTER III.

*Men could sufficiently know the will of God, if they
would perform it.*

MY DEAR CHILD,

I BELIEVE you have understood sufficiently by my former, what the meekness and gentleness is that JESUS CHRIST says we must learn of him ; how the will of man is corrupted by sin, and how we must now war against it and overcome it, if we would find peace in our souls, quiet of conscience, and tranquillity of spirit.

But you cannot comprehend how you may so know the will of GOD in all things, that you may follow it, and forsake your own will.

Believe me, this doubt proceeds from your corrupt nature, which would fain excuse itself from being obliged to renounce this self-will ; and would gladly follow it, if it could shun the obligation of resisting it ; and thus it persuades itself that it does not know the will of GOD in all things, that it might follow it. The heart of man is so deceitful, that he persuades his understanding he knows not the will of GOD ; and, consequently, cannot fulfil it in all things. But this is a deceit of SATAN, that he may amuse us by appearances of truth, which, indeed, are nothing but lies ; for all may know the will of GOD, if

they please : but they will needs be ignorant of it, (for the most part,) because they have no mind to obey it, even though they knew it ; and when they do know it, the love they have for themselves makes them say, that they do not know it : yet sometimes they have the confidence to say, that they would do it if they knew it.

Therefore we should earnestly desire to discover the truth in a thing of so great importance ; and never lull ourselves asleep upon a pillow of suppositions which are not true : for he who sins ignorantly, goes ignorantly to hell ; since all Christians are obliged to know the will of **GOD**, which is clearly manifested to them by his commandments. There are very few Christians who do not know that **GOD** has commanded, “ To love him with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves.” And yet there are fewer who observe these commands ; and in the mean time they say, ‘ If I knew the will of **GOD**, I would follow it.’ And thus they lie to **GOD** and to themselves, though they are persuaded they speak truth. So great is the darkness in which men live, as to their salvation.

It may be truly said, that at present they are given up “ to the spirit of error,” and that the Scripture had good reason to say, “ All men are liars ;” since they lie to themselves, to the prejudice of their eternal salvation, and that sometimes without knowing it. For in this, that they say they would follow the will of **GOD**, if they knew it, they lie ; since they do not follow it as to the first commandment, to wit, that of “ loving **GOD** with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves :” for to love **GOD** with all our heart, we ought not to love any thing but him alone, otherwise our heart is divided, instead of being entire in the love of **GOD**. So that if we love the riches, the pleasures, and the honours of this life, we do not love **GOD** with all our heart, though we know this is his will : and when we envy our neighbour, and do not help him in his need, we do not love him as ourselves ; and thus we do often to him, what we would not have done to ourselves. In which we do not follow the will of **GOD**, though we certainly know his

will, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. And thus we do not practise the will of **God** that we know; but we seek, besides that which is so clearly revealed, a more particular will in things of little moment, and neglect to fulfil his will in what concerns our eternal salvation.

It is therefore much to be feared, that we would not do the will of **God** in little things, though we knew it, since we will not do it in things so great, and so profitable for our eternal happiness. So that this would be to tempt **God**, to ask of him what his will is in all things, when we do not fulfil it in the chief things, as his express commandments.

I have heard men say, that it is a great happiness to be able to discover in all things the will of **God**. And yet, if this were given them, it is to be feared it would turn to their greater condemnation: "For he who knows his **LORD's** will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." And the reason why **God** does not communicate himself to all Christians, is, because they are not disposed to do his will, when it is contrary to their own. Therefore every one ought to endeavour to fulfil the will of **God**, which he knows by his commandments, rather than ask of **God** particular things, so long as he does not fulfil the principal commands of **God**, and of **JESUS CHRIST**. **JESUS CHRIST** deduces in particular all that we ought to do and avoid; to fulfil the command of "loving **God** with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves," saying, "Learn of me, who am meek." Meekness is one of the essential qualities of **God**, which seems to surpass his other qualities. It is like oil among other liquors, which always swims above: for we see in all the works of **God**, his goodness and meekness superabound more than his other qualities. Though his goodness is never separated from his righteousness and truth, yet it is exalted above his righteousness and his truth.

For in many things we see that **God** has stopped his wrath, to give place to his goodness; as he did to the people of Nineveh, who by their sins had justly merited

GOD's justice; yea, and the truth of GOD had foretold, that within forty days their city should be destroyed. But as soon as that people repent, the goodness of GOD gets uppermost, and swims above his justice and his truth, and he pardons them of his great meekness and goodness. And since JESUS CHRIST exhorts us to "be perfect, as our heavenly FATHER is perfect," we ought to labour particularly to acquire this virtue, this perfection of our heavenly FATHER. Righteousness and truth respect GOD, meekness and gentleness respect also our neighbour. And though one were just and true before GOD, yet he must be also meek and gentle, otherwise he loves not his neighbour as himself; seeing he gives him not that testimony of love to which that command obliges. And because GOD only knows the heart, it is not enough that one be good inwardly, it must also be testified outwardly by gentleness; otherwise our neighbour cannot be edified.

Exercise yourself therefore in this virtue, and beg of GOD meekness and gentleness. He will never be wanting on his part to give you his grace, provided you do not fail on your part. This is one of his commands, and he cannot command any thing but what he will give us grace to observe.

But our nature is like a horse, to which sometimes you must give the bridle, and sometimes the spur, to make it turn and go whither it is meet. And though it have a repugnance to act contrary to its own motions and inclinations, yet you must not give it loose reins, and let it go where it will. For our will is always evil, since it was corrupted by sin, and is no longer capable to make one good determination; but it must be kept in with a bridle as a horse is managed, otherwise it would precipitate our souls into hell.

Endeavour first of all to attain Meekness. After, if any other particular knowledge be needful, undoubtedly he will reveal it to you in due time; and he will never be wanting to show us what we have a desire to obey, no more than he will be wanting to give his grace necessary

for attaining Christian perfection. For he desires our perfection more than we do ourselves; he will not then refuse us his grace to attain it, if we ask it with humility of heart.

For without humility, no prayers are acceptable to GOD; and our meekness and gentleness cannot be good, if not accompanied with humility; for one may be meek and gentle by nature, or hypocrisy. This is often a sin before GOD, instead of a virtue; but that gentleness which is seeming only, shall have no praise but from men.

No virtues, which proceed not from the bottom of our heart, and are not generated there by divine faith, can have an eternal reward; they are recompensed only by the praise of men, who judge of things by appearance; but GOD searches the heart. Therefore, humility, meekness, and gentleness, are knit together, which cannot be separated, no more than righteousness, goodness, and truth, which correspond to the three persons of the Trinity in GOD, and are joined inseparably in all his works, of which, if one were wanting, his work could not be perfect. Even so meekness and gentleness would be imperfect, if they were separated from humility; which must infallibly beget true meekness and gentleness: for a humble heart is always meek and gentle.

*From Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
the 9th of February, 1672, St. Vet.*



LETTER IV.

Humility consists in the knowledge of one's self.

MY DEAR CHILD,

IN my last, I exhorted you to humility of heart: but I know not if you understand well what this humility is, wherein it consists, and by what means you may discover

if you have it or not. Therefore I have resolved to speak more particularly of it, that in all things you may discern true virtue from that which is so only in appearance; and may lay in your soul a good foundation of solid virtue without amusing yourself with seeming or imaginary virtues, which in God's sight are of no value.

Humility is the foundation of all virtues; it begets many others, and roots out many vices, which cannot abide in a humble heart; such as pride, presumption, avarice, pomp, vain-glory, and many other sins, which proceed from pride of heart: when it becomes humble, all these vices vanish away.

Humility is a perfect knowledge of one's self. For he that knows himself, can never have any esteem for himself. He will not glory in the praises of men. He will not desire riches, that he may be adorned or served; for a humble heart is persuaded that it deserves nothing; and the least things content and satisfy it.

A humble heart is not angry at being debased or despised, for it sees it deserves nothing but contempt; being, as to the spirit, frail, ignorant, and inconstant; and, as to the body, full of miseries, infirmities, diseases, and liable to death and corruption.

None of these things afford matter for a man to exalt himself, or to esteem himself in any wise; but rather ground to be abased and humbled before God and men, because of his infirmities and miseries. Yet we see men make themselves great, are proud, and value themselves much, and in short, judge themselves worthy of all sorts of honours, pleasure, and services, every one advancing himself with all his power. All proceeds from this, that men do not know themselves: for if they did, they would be ashamed to glory in their miseries, folly, and ignorance: for man has nothing else in himself, and all these defects are annexed to his corrupt nature. We need but open the eyes of our understanding, to see the miseries of our mind, and how it is tossed by different motions, and disorderly passions.

And we need but open the eyes of the body, to discern the bodily miseries, to which all the bodies of men are liable. He can neither endure too much heat, nor too much cold; a little too much exercise wearies him; he must rest and sleep, else he loses his strength and health: the body must be clothed and fed, cleansed and cherished, whereby the understanding is occupied, in care, labour, and disquiet, to relieve the infirmities of this body. And to how many sorts of diseases is the body of man liable? They are almost innumerable; and it is said, that the eye alone is liable to fifty sorts: to how many then must all the other members, since each has its particular diseases? Besides the disorderly motions of the passions, as of fear, terror, sadness, melancholy, anger, jealousy, and so many other sorts of evils, to which man is subject during this miserable life: where he has no subject of glorying, but great reason to abase himself in the view of so many miseries, to which his sin has reduced him; so that he has good cause to humble himself before God and men, being so miserable both in his body and in mind; for the spirit has its maladies as well as the body: for do but take notice of yourself, and you shall find that the mind is tossed with various superfluous desires and useless thoughts, which often carry it away against its intention. "It is not in the power of man to restrain his thoughts." Which every one may feel; for when we would fix our thoughts to prayer, or any other good thing, they waver here and there, and we cannot retain them.

What changes do we not feel in our spirit? We can scarce reckon the changes there are in one day, of joy and sadness, hope, displeasure, and desires. How many different thoughts? We love at one time what we hate at another: what we desire one day is displeasing to us another. So that oft-times we ourselves know not what we would be at; and we are often vexed for having obtained what we desired. And if a man should write all the thoughts and desires which pass in his spirit, he himself would be ashamed; and would be far from being

proud of the qualities of his mind, any more than those of his body.

Men indeed imagine, that they are wise, when they are very ignorant. For I do not believe that they have yet truly discovered one science, even in nature; and how can they then in spiritual things? Nevertheless, we will needs search curiously into profound mysteries; and yet we know not natural things, which we see and handle. One boasts of being a Doctor in Physic, another in Divinity, another in Astronomy, and so of all the other sciences; though they be all equally ignorant of what they think they know well. And this proceeds from that wind of pride which the Devil has blown into their spirits, persuading them that they are learned, and worthy of esteem and honour.

As this ignorance is great in regard of bodily physic, it is yet greater in regard of the spiritual, which is theology; for it kills many more souls, than physic does bodies. And so the one has no ground to glory in their learning, more than the other, since they are equally ignorant.

The true wisdom, in respect of which all the wisdom of men is but folly, is the knowledge of themselves; in which consists the true humility which JESUS CHRIST says we must learn of him.

*In Holstein, from Gottorp-Castle,
February 13, 1672, St. Vet.*



LETTER V.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

You have seen by my last what humility is, where I have shown you, that it consists in the knowledge of one's self; and that nobody can ever be proud, but for want of

knowing himself; for in knowing himself, he will find matter enough of being humbled, by seeing the miseries and infirmities both of his body and mind. For he who will seriously reflect upon himself, shall not only discover his own nothingness, but will judge himself much worse than nothing; and consequently, will be far from esteeming himself, unless he be altogether a fool, and void of all reason and understanding. For if he judge by an upright judgment, what he is, he shall see nothing but misery and infirmities in his nature, and ignorance and disorder in his spirit; for a beast knows more things than he, for the conduct of his life; and is more moderate in eating and drinking, and other natural things, than man, who we see frequently exceeds in these things, which the beasts do not. Hence is it that men are much more subject to diseases than the beasts, because they live in greater intemperance. And when man finds himself less wise in the conduct of his life than a beast, he ought to be greatly humbled before God and man.

Yet that evil spirit makes him believe, that he is worthy of honour, either for his learning, or wealth, or virtue, though he is contemptible even in all these very respects: for his wisdom is nothing but folly before God; and his riches are a heavy burden, and cause trouble and disquiet to preserve them; and his virtue must needs be feigned, when it is not founded on the knowledge of his own nothingness, or on the truth of his miseries.

Therefore, self-esteem can never be any other than mere folly, which SATAN foists into men's spirits and understandings; since really there is nothing in them estimable as to the corrupted nature; but abundance of miseries worthy of contempt and scorn.

So that we may truly call a proud man a very fool, for he glories in his miseries, and judges his ignorance to be wisdom, and his troubles riches; such is temporal wealth, which brings continual cares and disquiets, both in the acquiring and preserving it.

Some of the very Heathens were wiser. They despised

the honours and pleasures of this life ; nay, some seeing them so miserable, and of so short continuance, would not take the pains to build a house to lodge in : one was content with a tub, for a cover from the sun and rain ; another seeing his hand would serve to carry water to his mouth, would no longer make use of a cup to drink in. So firmly did they despise this present life, that they would not take any pleasure in it, nor make use of the creatures farther than for urgent necessity, taking the least they could, and rejecting the rest.

This they did, because they knew that all the honours and pleasures of this world are vain, false, and deceitful : and they despised them, that they might attain the true ones, which are eternal. They longed therefore to be delivered from this life, which they looked on as a prison, or a valley of tears.

But men now do not discover this. They count him happy that can take his pleasure in eating and drinking, and recreations, or in giving other carnal satisfactions to his body. Yet such are far more miserable than those that live soberly and chastely. He who is content with a little has no need of much ; and is more joyful in his recollection of spirit, than if he were in the most diverting company.

He also that lives soberly ; is better pleased with his coarse fare, than they are who seek to please their appetites and palates, which are insatiable. And he that lives chastely, preserves his liberty, and the quiet of his conscience.

He that will please the world, has lost his liberty, and can no longer serve himself. He is as a hired servant, subjected to all sorts of vanities ; subject to the great and wise ones of the world, whom he fears more than God himself. And in the mean time, men think themselves happy to be thus bound to the world, to which they willingly yield themselves slaves : otherwise they would disengage themselves, and not let their spirits be so far bewitched, as to think that slavery is freedom, and fetters

are chains of gold, which is mere falsehood and vanity : for to serve **God** only is to reign ; and to serve the world, is to be a slave.

Which those wise Heathens knew, and therefore they despised the world, and its honours and pleasures. Yea, some of them cared not to be visited by Kings or Emperors, entreating them to retire from them, because they kept them from seeing the sun ; adding, that they took from them what they could not give them ; to wit, the sunshine, which they valued more than all the kingdoms of the world.

In which they had great reason ; for the greatest offices afford also the greatest troubles ; and he that is over others is servant of all ; for he must take care of them, and rule and govern them, as he will answer to **God**.

Therefore, a superior is more miserable than any other, both in time, and for eternity. This may be seen even in the master of a family, who must take care and labour to sustain and provide for his wife, children, and servants, while they are often without care, knowing that their master must feed and clothe them, that they may want nothing ; in which they are much happier than he ; for they have only one service to perform, and the master is burthened with many.

*From Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
15th of February, 1672, St. Vet.*

LETTER VI.

*He that follows the desires of his senses, thereby
renounces the Love of **God**.*

MY DEAR CHILD,

I HAVE shown you the truth of many things, that you might attain humility of heart. It is much to understand

these things aright; but you must also set about the practice of them, and embrace in good earnest the mortification of your senses, in pursuance of the truths you have learned; otherwise it will be small matter to know the truth, if you put it not in practice. Knowledge is very good, for we cannot practise what we do not know; but if this knowledge be not fruitful, it can be of no use for our salvation. We must be resolute, and war against our corrupt nature; otherwise, we shall die the eternal death, after the temporal.

This may be easily conceived, since man's nature is corrupted by sin; and he has quitted his dependance on his GOD, to depend upon himself. Of necessity then this nature must remain in that corruption, until every man, for his own particular, has overcome it; otherwise he continues and dies in the state of death and damnation.

For though ADAM had not sinned, all men in general, and every one in particular, might have sinned and corrupted his way, leaving off to depend upon his GOD; and that because all men were created free, and may continue in a dependance upon GOD, and may withdraw from it: so he that is arrived to the use of reason, has the same liberty to sin, and to withdraw from a dependance upon GOD, that ADAM had; yet, with this difference, that ADAM at the beginning had not in his nature that inclination to evil, which men have who proceeded from him after his sin; for they have contracted this from their first Father, and also the infirmities of body which we see in all men, and feel in ourselves: for nobody is exempted from the evils which sin has caused in human nature; though it is free to all men to follow this inclination to evil, which they feel in themselves; as they may also, by the grace of GOD, overcome their infirmities, and the corruption of their senses; and not follow them, but fight against them.

And it is in this that JESUS CHRIST says, "We must take the kingdom of heaven by violence; and the violent take it by force:" Not that we should fight by force to

gain the kingdom ; for **GOD** created it for us, and he gives it us freely. But the meaning is, we must resist forcibly the corruption of our nature, that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven ; and so must not approve in us the sin which **ADAM** committed, nor by our self-will quit our dependance upon **GOD**. Therefore, “our life is a continual warfare ;” for we must continually resist the corruption of our senses : Without this we can never return to a dependance on **GOD**, from which **ADAM**’s sin hath withdrawn us ; since our souls being corrupted, beget all sorts of sin, and we need but follow their inclination, to turn us away from **GOD**, and to keep us in the way of damnation.

For we no sooner give reins to our sight, than it pleases itself to behold beautiful or curious things ; and no sooner have we considered them, but we covet. If we indulge the sense of hearing, the heart delights in it, and the affection is carried away by it. And if we please ourselves in taste, all our care is employed to seek means to satisfy it ; and that sense is more insatiable than any other, and precipitates into all sorts of sins. Moreover, it excites the sense of feeling ; for he who satisfies his taste, seeks also to satisfy his feeling. Even all the senses are excited only by the love we have for ourselves, and the desire we have of affording ourselves pleasure.

All these things certainly withdraw us from **GOD**, and from a dependance on him ; and he has commanded us “to love him with all our heart :” So that he will not have us set our hearts on things so vile and frail, as are the sight, hearing, taste, and feeling : For this is unworthy of a divine soul, which **GOD** has given us, capable of loving an eternal **GOD** ; who desires and commands that we “love Him with all our heart.”

And this is from the disorder which the **Devil** has caused in man’s nature, when he makes it turn that affection towards the creatures which is due to **GOD** alone. In which consisted the first sin that man committed, and thence all other sins draw their original. For nothing can

be evil, or sin, but what is committed against the will of **God**; and there is nothing but this, that can be evil, as nothing can be good but what is done according to his will.

So the Devil has earnestly laboured from the beginning of the world, to turn aside man from the will of **God**; who created him that he might take delight with him, and therefore willed that he should love him with all his heart. Now there cannot be delight but with that which is loved, and therefore **God** will be loved by man with all his heart, and will not have him place his affection on any other thing, but on Him alone. The Devil no sooner perceived this, but he enticed him by the senses, (which are as windows of our heart,) that he might withdraw our hearts from **God**, and place them on visible and sensible things.

The Devil therefore did first move **ADAM**'s heart to look on the beautiful creatures which **God** had created for him. He excited also his sense of hearing, to hearken to the false persuasions of the Serpent, who made him believe that he should know good and evil, if he ate of the fruit of the tree, of which **God** had forbidden him to eat. He moves his hand to make him touch that apple, his smell to smell it, and his taste to eat it. And thus the Devil led **ADAM**'s heart to the love of the creatures, and turned him away from the love he owed to **God**.

If the Devil could have drawn man's heart directly to love himself, he would have done it; but this he could not do. Therefore he makes use of visible and sensible creatures, that indirectly he might make man love him; and that by moving him to love himself, and to make use of all the other creatures to satisfy his self-love, and consequently to withdraw him from the love of **God**. This he hath done with too much success, since he made **ADAM**, and all men who were to proceed from him, disobey **God**; and thus he made him abandon this dependance, so that he would no longer depend but upon his own will, and love nothing but himself.

Behold the miserable fall into which the Devil caused

all men to fall in ADAM ; and all, in general, are born in this misery and disobedience since ADAM's fall ; and in like manner they come into the world, with this evil inclination of loving themselves, and following the corruption of their senses, which breeds all sorts of sins ; for they are now moved by an evil spirit, whence no good can come.

GOD never created any evil, but man produced it, when he deprived himself of GOD's friendship, in which alone consist all sorts of good. And this is what we call sin ; which signifies the turning away from GOD, who is all good, and in the privation of him is all evil. So that he who withdraws his affections from GOD, to place them on himself, or any creature, has abandoned all good, and embraced all sorts of evil.

But though all men should go to perdition, you must endeavour to save your own soul. The great number of the damned would never lessen your pains, if you should be damned with them ; but it would rather augment them by the augmentation of cries, blasphemies, and all the noisomeness of fire and brimstone, which shall augment in hell according as the number of the damned shall increase. Therefore I counsel you to leave that common blindness of men, who reckon nothing to be sin but material things. But GOD is a pure Spirit, whom not only these gross material things offend, as drunkenness, theft, whoredom, and other material sins ; but he is offended to see the heart of man cleave unto things so vile, since he created it to love GOD only. And yet man turns away from GOD, and delights in eating, drinking, clothing, and recreating himself with any other creature.

Which greatly displeases GOD, and man becomes his enemy by disobedience, while he acts against the designs that GOD had in creating him after his own image and likeness, that he might take his delight in him. Nevertheless, man, contrary to the will of GOD, takes delight in himself, and in the creatures which are less than himself. For whatsoever is created under heaven, is far below man, who is as the master-piece of the works of GOD, and is set

over all the other inferior creatures ; being made as a little god in his divine nature, which is shut up in his humanity.

But the proud Devil could not endure that man should have dominion over the other creatures, and he himself be rejected and banished from the friendship of GOD, deprived of all good, and replenished with all evil. He endeavours then, with rage and envy, to undo man with himself, and to make him the companion of his miseries ; and seeing man made up of a body and spirit, he insinuates himself into his spirit, endeavouring to unite himself with him, under a pretext of procuring his good. Thus he makes him imagine that he should know all things as GOD, if he would eat of the fruit which GOD had forbidden him ; and these thoughts being entered into ADAM'S spirit, they gain upon his affection, and make him forget the love and obedience which he owed unto GOD ; beginning to love himself, and to seek out ways to please himself.

Now, GOD had given unto man natural senses, by which he might taste all that GOD had created for him, provided he praised and thanked the Creator for so many good things. But he began to use his senses to please himself, and to ascribe to himself the graces that GOD had bestowed on him ; as if they had been his own, and he had been the sovereign of them, independently from his GOD.

GOD would oblige him to love him by an excess of benefits ; and therefore created so many good and beautiful creatures, only for pleasure to man ; having created all sorts of delicious fruits for his nourishment, and so many other creatures to please his sense of feeling, that he might lack nothing, either for sustenance or pleasure, but might use them at will, provided he blessed the LORD who had made them for him.

But man falls from this acknowledgment of his GOD, and takes all his gifts for his own satisfaction ; and thus he forsook the love of GOD, and turned to love himself : which has necessarily rendered him the enemy of GOD ; for such ingratitude is insupportable, though it were committed but by one man to another.

For what man would be satisfied, to have desired the friendship and fidelity of another, having on this consideration bestowed on him his goods in abundance, and procured him all sorts of pleasures, that he might faithfully keep friendship with him; if this wretch should quit his benefactor, to take his pleasure in the goods which he had so freely received? How much more then should God resent the ingratitude of man, while he places his affection on the things which God has so liberally bestowed on him, and that to oblige him to love him? Yet man has forsaken him, and pleases himself only in self-love.

This you ought to consider well, that you may not render yourself guilty before this great Majesty, and that you may discover if you are not obliged to embrace voluntarily ADAM'S penitence, since you have so often fallen into the same sin, in quitting the love of, and dependance upon your God, to love yourself, and to depend upon your own will.

*Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
18th of February, 1672.*



LETTER VII.

Of the Love of God.

MY CHILD,

I WILL not believe that you are one of those inconsiderate persons, who say, That there is no great evil in following the motions of nature. God, say they, created nature, and he cannot be offended when we follow it.

Several persons of my acquaintance have been of this mind: they were given to lasciviousness, and they would say to me, God would not punish them for this, seeing he himself had given them such a nature. Thus they flattered themselves in their sins, to satisfy their senses. Moreover,

they would say, **GOD** has given all these to man, and we cannot be without seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. All this is true ; but they have not light enough to discern the miserable estate, into which man is fallen by sin, from that happy one wherein **GOD** created him.

Man might enjoy the pleasures of his senses, provided he loved and blessed **GOD**. But since he fell into sin, he can no longer enjoy them, without offending **GOD**, if the pleasure he now takes in them is only to satisfy himself, for his own glory, and his own advantage. Before sin, the satisfaction of his senses served only to make him praise, and bless, and glorify the **LORD**, for the benefits and mercies which he had received from him. He no sooner saw beautiful things, but his heart was lifted up to praise **GOD**, who had given him those beauties, those melodies, those fragrant odours, delicious tastes, and soft touches. So that all the good and pleasant things that he saw or felt, gave him occasion to bless **GOD**, and magnify him for his benefits.

But since man fell into sin, these very things are to him matter of offending **GOD** ; for if he see any beautiful thing, his heart covets it to please himself, and this self-love withdraws him from the love of **GOD**. This is it which makes sin, seeing he has commanded us to love him with all our heart. So that we cannot love beautiful things, without breaking this command ; seeing all our heart cannot be in the love of **GOD**, when a part of it is set upon beautiful things, fine smells, melodies, the delights of taste and feeling. For then it is a heart divided into as many parts as it loves different things ; and consequently it is very far from being entire in the love of **GOD**, as he has commanded us.

But men are so blind, and do so blind one another, that every one persuades himself he loves **GOD**, when he loves only himself. This is as if they thought they pleased **GOD** with words, in saying with the mouth that they love him ; but they deceive themselves ; for as long as they will satisfy their senses, they will not love **GOD** : For these, being corrupted, will engender all sort of sins, and conse-

quently the death of the soul. Nevertheless, men make no reckoning of all these evils, and they think it is lawful to satisfy their senses. Thus they follow them, (often as much as they can,) without believing that they do evil, and without considering that there is nothing more deceitful than the heart of man, which often flatters itself to its own ruin. But you, my child, be more wise, and learn the truth of things, without suffering yourself to be deceived by false appearances.

Never believe that it is lawful to take any pleasure out of GOD ; and far less that there is no evil in following your senses : For though we give our affections but for an hour to any thing that is not GOD, we are for that hour turned aside from GOD, and turned toward the creature, which is sin, since we do in this what GOD has forbidden ; to wit, we cease to love him with all our heart : for we ought to love him always, and at all times, without interruption. We ought therefore to bridle our senses, and give them laws, that they may take no other liberty but to follow the will of GOD. We may indeed use these senses, and employ them to the glory of GOD who gave them ; for we cannot be without seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling ; but we must not take pleasure in these things for our own satisfaction : we ought to employ them only in things necessary, and such as may serve for the glory of GOD, and the good of our neighbour.

For example ; man is made up of a soul and a body, and he has need to employ all his senses for the preservation of both. He must see and look upon all things that may serve for the perfection of his soul ; and hear and taste, smell and feel them ; loving them as the means of his salvation : He must also look upon all things that he needs for the maintenance of his body ; to which his senses may be very helpful : for he must see the things that are necessary for him ; as a house to dwell in, clothes to cover him, food to nourish him ; all these things must be looked to.

He must hear what the means are to obtain them ; he

must smell them, that he may take nothing for his nourishment that is hurtful ; and taste and touch them for the same reason ; for all things necessary are good ; and it can never be sin to use them for necessity : but it is always evil to make use of them for satisfying our sensual pleasure, because our love ought to be to **GOD** alone, not to things so base and vile ; which we may well use, but not love them, seeing **GOD** will have our whole heart.

This was figured by the earthly paradise, where **GOD** placed man at the beginning of the world. He gave him full liberty to eat of all sorts of delicious fruit, but he reserved that of one only tree, of which he forbade man to eat. And this, to make us understand that **GOD** permits us indeed to use all the creatures which he has created for us, provided we keep our affection for Him only. Thus he forbids us to place it on any other thing ; as the first commandment shows, of loving **GOD** with all our heart ; that is, that our heart ought not to be divided, but ought to be wholly for him. But men do not pierce into this as they ought ; they persuade themselves that it is lawful to love several other things with **GOD** ; in which they greatly deceive themselves, since **GOD**'s command does clearly express it, “ Thou shalt love the **LORD** thy **GOD** with all thy heart.” If it had been lawful to love any other things with **GOD**, he would not have added, “ with all thine heart.”

We start questions and disputes upon so many mysteries of our faith, and so many degrees of virtue, and we neglect the chief part, and that in which all faith and all virtue consist. For what will it profit a man to have pierced into all the secrets of nature, and even into all the doctrines of the most mysterious theology, if with all this he fulfil not the command of loving **GOD** with all his heart ; but have his heart divided into divers affections ? All his knowledge will profit him nothing. We must therefore fulfil this first commandment, of loving **GOD** with all our heart.

I know well there are several glosses to explain how we ought to love GOD with all our heart. Some say, We must love him above other things, and that if we have one ounce of love to our money, our honour, our pleasures, our parents, or even ourselves, we must have a pound for GOD ; and that so we fulfil this first command, and love GOD with all our heart. Others say, We ought so to love him, that if the case were that we must lose GOD, or our wealth, parents, or any other thing, we should choose rather to lose all than GOD. Others say, It is impossible to fulfil this command. And thus every one endeavours to extinguish in the spirit of man, this necessity of loving GOD with all our heart : which is very lamentable, and it grieves me when I see so many prefer these glosses to the express commands of GOD. He added in vain these words, “ With all thy heart,” if we might place one part of our affections on any creature. Yet GOD never did any thing in vain. If he had not intended to show, that men ought to love him with all their affections indivisibly, he would not have added, “ With all thy heart.”

Pray consider, if GOD does not well deserve that we love him with all our heart. Our being, and all that we have, comes from him ; and even he gave us that whole heart with which he desires to be loved. Would it not be a great ingratitude to refuse him the heart which he himself gave us, and that of purpose that we might have it for him alone ? He lets us enjoy so many creatures, provided we keep our heart for him, which is the only forbidden fruit.

Is not this the least that GOD could demand of man, for so many benefits that he had bestowed on him ? And ought not man of himself to offer unto GOD his heart, with all other things, though this had not been commanded him ? All that we have, or can have, comes immediately from GOD ; and consequently all ought to be offered unto Him voluntarily, and without constraint. Moreover, on whom can we better bestow our heart than on GOD ? And who can

render it more happy than he? If we bestow it on our parents, or friends, they cannot make it happy, even in this world. If we set it on riches, honours, and pleasures, all these things cannot satisfy it, since they are like salt water; the more our heart drinks of them, the more it thirsts.

Man, therefore, is very ill advised, if he place his affections on any other thing than GOD. None but He can satisfy, and make us happy and content: seeing in GOD alone is all sorts of good, and out of Him all sorts of evil.

Never rely then upon the discourses of men, for they are liars and deceivers, and their glosses are invented only to flatter their own looseness, and that of others who have no inward light.

There is no happiness for the man that loves the creature; since they cannot make us happy in this world, and far less in eternity. There is nothing but the love of GOD that is lovely and profitable for man. From hence, therefore, we must conclude, that it is very possible to love him; and besides, that it is profitable and necessary, both for our temporal and eternal happiness.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
April 20th, 1672.*



LETTER VIII.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

NEVER suffer yourself to be persuaded, that it is impossible to love GOD with all our heart, as some ignorant persons falsely say; for there is nothing more sweet, more pleasant, more honourable, and more profitable, than to love GOD with all our heart.

I have experienced, that all love to the creatures is bitter, and that the love of GOD only is sweet and pleasant:

For when I loved riches, they gave me abundance of trouble to keep them. When I loved honours, I found therein many piercing displeasures, when I was not honoured as much as I desired. So that one neglect gave me more trouble, than a hundred honours gave me content. When I loved the delights of this life, I found therein great bitterness ; for there is none of these pleasures that brings not its displeasure along with it. The pleasures of taste breed poverty and diseases, and they are insatiable ; they never satisfy, no more than those of the flesh, which resemble salt water, the more one drinks, the more he is thirsty. I have observed this in many persons, who (after having ruined their body, and their health, in giving satisfaction to their concupiscence) used all sorts of means to cure their infirmities ; and this, to the end, they might wallow the more in their filthy pleasures. And when I loved any human creature, it was always painful for me to please them ; and the fear of offending or losing them was to me a continual anxiety. So that there is nothing but **GOD** alone, whom it is sweet to love.

All other loves have grief mingled with their greatest pleasures. We see young people marry with joy : there is nothing but mirth and dances : but the wedding is scarce over, when we see them sad and afflicted, pensive and melancholy : Diseases attack, the care of their affairs disquiets them ; fortune is against them ; their pleasures are many ways turned into sorrows ; the pleasures of flesh into pains, those of the palate into diseases ; honour into contempt ; even as **HAMAN**'s pleasure, invited to the **Queen's** banquet, when he saw that **MORDECAI** would not give him the honour he desired. Thus all earthly pleasures end in sadness.

So that we cannot find any other true pleasure in this world, but that only of loving **GOD** ; which is very pleasant, and also honourable. For what honour is man capable of that comes near that of loving so mighty a **GOD**, who created heaven and earth, and all other things, and upholds them by his Almighty power.

If we count it an honour, that we may love a King, a Prince, or any person in authority ; how much more should we think ourselves to be honoured, that we may love GOD ? And what honour is it for a silly worm of the earth, such as man is, that he may love GOD, who desires to be loved by him ; and even expressly commands him to love him with all his heart ? As if GOD delighted in the honour he does to man, in desiring to be loved by him. And the honour of loving GOD with all our heart, surpasses all the honours that man is capable of in heaven and earth.

It is also profitable for him, seeing this love can make him happy in this world, and to all eternity. Whereas all the creatures together, cannot procure us either the one or the other. For what profit can we draw from the creatures, who cannot give us a day, yea, an hour, or a moment of life ? What could they do then to give us eternal life ?

Nothing but GOD alone can make man happy in this life, and in the life to come ; since all the advantages that men can receive from one another, serve but for their damnation. Their pleasures withdraw the soul from GOD ; their honours cause them to fall into pride, and their riches into avarice, which leads them in the broad way of damnation.

But so great is their blindness, that they cannot see those mischiefs, how evident soever they be. They persuade themselves that their disquiets are peace, and their displeasures contentments. For how many are there in the world, who study all their life to perfect themselves in some science, that they may be esteemed of men ! How many that toil, and travel, and expose themselves to many dangers, that they may gain a little money ! And how many who expose their wealth, and even their lives, to preserve their honour ! Though all these are vain ; yet they love and esteem them more than GOD. For we see them not do that for him, which they do for the creatures : they render them troublesome and hard services, and they imagine to themselves, that there is more difficulty to love GOD, than to love the world. Nevertheless, the love of

GOD is sweet, pleasant, honourable, and profitable. But the love of the world is disquieting, sad, without peace, honour, or profit, both for time, and for eternity.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
April 25th, 1672.*



LETTER IX.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

BELIEVE firmly that the words of **JESUS CHRIST** are true; to wit, That his “yoke is easy, and that his burden is light.” And believe his counsel, in taking his yoke, and you shall feel it to be such, if you will take it on you. I experience it daily more and more, and you will experience it too, as I do, if you continue in the resolution to follow **JESUS CHRIST**, and to become his true disciple. I will not promise that you shall have in his service sensual pleasures, or worldly riches: but I promise you assuredly peace of conscience, tranquillity of mind, inward peace in your soul; which are all far more valuable than the vain pleasures, the impure satisfactions, and the riches of this world, which can never satisfy our souls, seeing they are spiritual, and consequently cannot be satisfied with material things.

This is the reason why there was never any man perfectly content in this world, unless he loved **GOD** with all his heart. None but such can be entirely content: for only the love of **GOD** is capable to satisfy our souls; for they are little divinities, which cannot meet with full content out of **GOD**, from whom they proceeded.

You must labour then to attain this love: for when you have truly found it, you shall have all things, and shall reign over the whole world, having in contempt all that is

not **GOD**. And there is no need that you use violence with **GOD** to obtain his love, for he gives it freely to all that desire and ask it; and he even compels men by an express command. But you must do violence to yourself, to obtain this love; because your affections are carried to other things; so you must reclaim them, and constrain them to return to their **GOD**. And in this you shall have as many combats, as you have habits of loving other things. If then you be strongly wedded to self-love, or the love of other creatures, your combats will be so much the greater.

But the affair deserves well that we suffer it, seeing afterward we shall enjoy so great a happiness, both temporal and eternal. We should spare nothing to gain such a treasure; the trouble will soon be over, and the joy shall last for ever. You ought therefore to suffer willingly, that you may withdraw your affections from earthly things, and place them upon **GOD** alone.

I have shown you, in my last, that this is pleasant, honourable, and profitable. It remains now, that you put it in practice. Examine what it is that you love besides **GOD**, and detest that love, and withdraw your heart from it. And if you love objects that are without you, flee from them, as the enemies of your good; loose your heart from them, and desire no more to see them. And if your affections be wedded to self-love, break them off from an object so little lovely, that you may place them upon **GOD**, who merits your affections, and none but he.

Protest then against this self-love, and yield not any longer to nature, but the things that are purely necessary; for it is your greatest enemy, which you must not furnish with arms to fight against yourself. You know corrupt nature wars against the love of **GOD**, as far as you give way to it: give it then as little satisfaction as you can, until you have overcome it; withdraw then your affections from it. You must restrain it, as a horse with a bridle, that it kick not, and that it think of nothing, but to serve the Master whom you love.

This is the way to make you free, that you may love

God with all your heart : for as soon as your affections shall be withdrawn from all the creatures, they will be assuredly carried to love God their Creator ; for the love of God is the element of our soul, in which alone it can live, and repose itself. This love of God is the true centre of our souls, into which they fall of themselves, so soon as they are disengaged from other affections. It is as with a stone thrown up into the air, which will not rest until it fall on the earth, which is its centre, unless it be kept up by some other things.

You must labour in this, that you may break all the bonds of earthly affections ; and so soon as you feel an affection for any thing that is not God, break it off quickly, for it is a chain that keeps you out of your element ; and though it should be grievous to you to loose your heart from any thing to which it inclines, yet this trouble will quickly change into consolations ; for you shall no sooner return to the love of God, but you shall bathe in ease and pleasure, as a fish newly returned to the water. I know, indeed, it seems grievous to us, that we may not in any thing follow our natural inclinations ; but if we take on this yoke for the love of God, it will become light and easy to us.

There is nobody that can excuse himself from bearing it, since our father ADAM laid it on the shoulders of all his posterity. All men in general, and every one in particular, are charged with the miseries that sin has brought upon human nature. They are all subject to heat, cold, intemperance of the air, hunger, thirst, infirmities, and diseases of the body, to ignorance and inconstancy of spirit, and the disorderly motions of their passions ; for sin has brought all these things upon human nature, which God created altogether perfect ; but since all men have partaken of ADAM's sin, they are all by consequence subject to his penitence.

But the miseries of this life are light and easy when we receive them from God's hand, as marks of his justice ; but the same miseries, or the same yoke, are very heavy and

grievous, when we bear them grudgingly, or seek to be discharged of them ; which cannot be in this valley of tears, where we must stay until the time of our penitence be over. Some have a longer time assigned them than others, according to the appointment of the great Judge ; but if we will take this life of penitence for a time of delights and pleasures, we must do an eternal penance, which shall never end, and which shall begin even in this life. For though we should employ all the industry of our mind, and all the strength of our body, to avoid sufferings, yet for all this they would not leave us ; and do or say what we will, we must feel heat, cold, sickness of body, and troubles of mind, changes of seasons, revolutions of times, and many other accidents, which befall man during the course of his life. All this must be grievous and painful to him, if he do not take it as **God's** yoke ; but if he embrace it affectionately, as **JESUS CHRIST** did, all will be light and easy to him ; as miseries, persecutions, torments, and even death itself, were unto our **SAVIOUR**. Not that his nature was insensible of the pains and torments which they caused him, but he suffered all for the love of **God**, which made the most heavy burdens easy.

If you, my child, would be His disciple, and become a true Christian, embrace, as he did, all the miseries of this present life ; bear patiently all that befalls you, contrary to your own will ; and above all, deny yourself, as **JESUS CHRIST**, your Captain, taught and practised. Because the inclinations of corrupt nature tend always to greatness, and to receive honour, He chose meanness and contempt ; and because they are bent always to covet riches, He would be poor ; and because they seek always their ease and pleasure, He chose uneasiness and sufferings.

Behold your Captain who marches before you, and who calls you to follow him, saying, "He that will come after me, let him take up his cross, and deny himself, and follow me." You must not seek any other Master, nor hearken to any other doctrine ; for men deceive, and are deceived, being desirous to take another way than **JESUS CHRIST**

took, or desiring to enter into eternal life, by means quite contrary to those which he used ; for if there had been another way of salvation, **JESUS CHRIST** would have taught us it, and would have followed it himself, since all that he did on earth was to give us an example that we might imitate him. If, then, there were any better thing than to renounce our corrupt nature, doubtless He had taught us it. Never imagine, then, that men are too frail to observe the laws of **GOD** ; since they were given us only because of our frailty ; for if we had been perfect, we should have had no need of laws. It is sin which has brought these laws upon man.

Yet you must not think that the laws are evil ; for they are very good, and are the true means of our salvation. For without them man had never known his sins, and had insensibly abandoned **GOD**, living without restraint, worse than a beast, not feeling nor knowing his own misery. **ADAM** was not ashamed to see himself naked before **GOD** called him, asking him, “**ADAM**, where art thou ?” Yet he had sinned, and his wife also, in the absence of **GOD**, and lived still freely after their sin, as they had done before ; but so soon as **GOD** called them, they began to fear, and tremble, and to be ashamed, which made them flee and hide themselves, not daring any longer to appear before Him. The same effect had the law of **GOD** on men’s minds in **MOSES**’ days ; for then also they had quite forsaken their **GOD**, and lived in a neglect of their duties, giving up themselves to all sorts of sins, without knowing them. Therefore **GOD** would give them a law, that by it they might know their sins, and so abstain from them ; this law was made up of ten commandments, or ten things which they were to observe. It is not a burden that **GOD** laid upon men’s shoulders, as some ignorant people say, blaspheming **GOD** ; he gave them no commands which are impossible to be observed ; for these things ought to be observed in all times, though they had not been distinctly commanded or forbidden.

The reason why **GOD** declares the things in the form of

commands, is man's infirmity, who had so forgotten his duty, that he committed evil without knowing it; and he would yet have become worse, if the law of GOD had not been given him as a voice to reclaim him, and to ask him, as He did ADAM, "Where art thou?" For without this law he had not known his sin.

It is given him as a light in the midnight of his darkness, and as a medicine for his evils. But men call those mercies heavy burdens, yea, insupportable to their frailty; which is a great ingratitude, and deserves to be punished, and that GOD should withdraw his mercies from those stupid persons, since they turn the benefit of GOD's Law, and the light and easy yoke of the Gospel, into insupportable burdens, saying that it is impossible to observe them; and thus they belie the word of JESUS CHRIST, "That his yoke is easy, and his burden light."

Believe your SAVIOUR, and do not hearken to these liars. Resign yourself to GOD; embrace the law of the Gospel, and you shall know by experience that his "yoke is easy, and that his burden is light."

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
April 26th, 1672.*



LETTER X.

That we must always advance in Virtue, and never stop.

MY DEAR CHILD,

NEVER weary in the service of GOD: the beginning of it is the most difficult. You know that rose-bushes bear thorns before they bear roses. It is the same as to true virtue: it begins with thorns, but beautiful roses will come in their season. True virtue has nothing pricking in it, no more than the rose, for it is altogether sweet, and beautiful, and fragrant. It gives peace and pleasure to

the soul ; for peace and joy are fruits of the **HOLY SPIRIT**.

O what peace and content has a virtuous soul ! It seeks nothing, fears nothing, and hopes for nothing, but in the promises of **God** ; it rests upon his providence ; it yields itself to be guided sweetly at the will and pleasure of the **Lord** ; it is not disquieted nor vexed about any thing, but waits in peace how **God** will dispose ; it affects nothing, and precipitates nothing, knowing that patience and long-suffering are the fruits of the **Spirit**. It is meek in itself and toward its neighbour ; for goodness, meekness, and gentleness, are fruits of the **HOLY SPIRIT**. A virtuous soul is always modest and moderate in all its actions, chaste, content, and full of charity ; because the **HOLY SPIRIT** produces there all his fruits, which are sweet and agreeable to **God** and men : so that true virtue is desirable for the sweetness it has in itself. It is desirable for its beauty, and all good men honour and esteem it above all created things. It can well abide a narrow search ; for the nearer we approach it, the more we discover its beauty. It is also fragrant as the rose ; for true virtue has a sweet savour in the nostrils of every one, even of the wicked, who are often obliged to esteem it, though they will not follow it. And if we hear sometimes well-inclined persons despise true virtue, it is because they know it not, and they have been deceived with apparent virtues.

Therefore, my child, you must endeavour to acquire this beautiful rose of true virtue, even though you should feel the pricking of thorns in gathering it. These pains will quickly be gone, and the beautiful rose of true virtue will never fade ; it shall be eternally beautiful, and of a good savour before **God** ; so you must spare nothing to acquire true virtue. If you feel trouble in this, it will turn into quiet ; if you feel grief, it will change into joy ; if you find repugnance, it shall be changed into content ; for the beginning only is difficult.

The reason is, because the Devil then uses all means to divert us from it. He leaves them in quietness who have

only apparent virtues, or those who have only good desires; because he can ensnare them at his pleasure. The first, by a presumption of their salvation, because of their seeming virtues; and the other, by precipitating them into death before they have brought their good desires to effect; for he knows well that all hell is paved with good intentions; therefore he leaves all such persons in quiet, as well as the worldlings, knowing well that he shall not miss them at one time or other, and thus he leads them softly to hell with a silken rope, without vexing or tempting them much.

But such as have truly resolved to follow **JESUS CHRIST**, he labours night and day to tempt them, and that by all means; as well knowing that he needs no longer pretend to it, when they have attained. They shall then laugh at him and his assaults; and therefore he endeavours to shake them at the beginning, and to make them lose their heart, considering the difficulty in acquiring it.

For he shows them the pains they shall meet with in the mortification of their senses; then the impossibility of attaining such perfection. He represents to them also the example of others, whom they esteem good men; for it is enough to them to make a good outside, without being at the trouble to mortify their senses, or to deny themselves; and the Devil persuades them that this is not necessary for their salvation.

Beware, my son, of his deceits, and give no ear to his suggestions, nor to the infirmities of your own nature; for neither of these can hinder you from attaining perfection, provided you have a firm resolution: **GOD** will assist you, and will give you all that you need, if you continue faithful to him.

This is it which **JESUS CHRIST** intended by the comparison, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you should remove mountains." To remove mountains of stone and sand would be no great marvel, since this would add nothing to our souls; but he speaks of mountains of difficulties, which we find in the acquisition of true virtue.

But if a soul persevere faithfully in its good resolution, it will revive by faith in the promises of **God**, and will remove all these mountains of imaginary difficulties. We no sooner abandon earthly affections, but we ascend with ease to true perfection; for all the difficulties which we apprehend, are nothing but false faces, which the Devil has placed as vizards to frighten those who begin. But we need not fear; for the mask being taken off, we find it pleasant and agreeable; and he who has once known it, finds in it afterwards much peace and consolation, though the Devil will never cease to tempt and pursue us. He tempted **JESUS CHRIST**, and pursued him even to the desert, whither he had gone by the conduct of **God's SPIRIT**.

It is nothing to feel temptations, though they should continue all the days of our life, provided we do not consent to them; they signify no more than smoke that vanishes in the air. It is the Devil's work to tempt, but man's to resist it: therefore **St. Peter** says, "My brethren, watch and be sober; for your adversary, the Devil, goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; resist him, therefore, steadfast in the faith." This he says to teach us, that we must not sleep in the service of **God**, nor follow our appetites, but be sober, and watch with perseverance; for we have an enemy who never sleeps. We must overcome him by the strength of faith, which is able to remove the greatest mountains.

I am apt to believe that you are burdened with temptations from the Devil, for he sees that you seek after true virtue; and so he will not fail to attack you, and so much the more, that you have given him advantage over your soul by your past sins. He will not part with his fortress but by force, seeing he has so long been governor there. You must, then, drive him out of it by force: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Indeed we are the children of **God**, and consequently the heirs of his kingdom; so we have no need to take that kingdom by force; it is given us freely of **God**.

But we must use great force to resist the Devil, and our corrupt nature, who would rob us of this kingdom, though it belongs to us, as the inheritance of our heavenly FATHER ; and this is the reason why he says, “ that the violent ravish it, and that it must be taken by force.”

Not that we must fight with weapons of iron to gain this kingdom ; for all the force of nature together could not carry it ; but we must fight our enemies with spiritual weapons, of which the chief is faith ; seeing it begets hope and love, which are the two bucklers to defend us against all sorts of enemies.

For he who loves GOD is afraid of nothing ; seeing “ love is strong as death, and he that putteth his trust in GOD shall never be confounded :” so that the Devil shall never have power over him that resists him by the strength of faith. Fear nothing then, my son ; persevere in the good resolution of attaining true virtue ; set all your affections to love GOD, and you shall be strong as death. Place your hope in GOD alone, and you shall never be confounded ; for having these weapons, you need not fear the assaults of your enemy, the Devil. He is as a chained dog, and can go no further than the chain of man’s consent goes. If he come to vex you in the night, during sleep, this cannot hurt you, seeing man does not use his free-will while he sleeps, which he knows full well ; but he comes to vex man in sleep, that he, may get him to consent, when awakened, to evil suggestions, which he excited in his spirit while asleep.

Be ready to lift up your spirit to GOD as soon as you awake, and then the temptation shall vanish as smoke. But if you amuse yourself with revolving in your spirit the thing that you dreamed, and take pleasure in it, then shall you fall into sin, and consent to the Devil. I advise you, therefore, never to regard dreams or evil thoughts which he represents to you while asleep, nor even those which he offers you when you awake ; for you cannot sin, so long as you take no pleasure in them, nor consent unto them.

And though you should be tormented all the days of

your life with evil thoughts, this will not make you lose the grace of **God**, so long as they are displeasing to you. Yet you have cause to be humbled before **God** for your former sins; for if you had never given a willing entry to evil thoughts, the Devil would never have had such power now. But what is past is no longer in your power. It remains only, that you strive for the time to come. Continue therefore faithful to **God**, and persevere in the good resolution you have taken. Never weary in this search; it well deserves that you endure some trouble; for even worldlings endure more in the service of the world. What disquiets, cares, and what travels, does not a merchant endure to gain a little money! What pains must not a gentleman take to preserve his honour! What toil has the tradesman to gain food! which you have in the service of **God** without trouble. Will you not then suffer a little temptation that you may attain true virtue? which is to buy it at a very easy rate.

For all the Devil can do to you is inconsiderable, in respect of the joy that attends you in heaven. He may disturb you; but he can never make you fall into sin, unless your own will consent to it.

But you have not yet sufficiently discovered the wiles of the old serpent; nor have you overcome yourself, nor human respects, which are the chains that hinder your flight to **God**. But do not lose courage: if I have overcome the world, you may overcome it also, and shall become master of the Devil, and of yourself. **God** is neither partial, nor a respecter of persons. He bestows his grace on all that seek and desire it in truth.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
the 27th of April, 1672.*

LETTER XI.

The Devil, the enemy of true virtue, opposes it with all manner of devices.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I SPOKE much to you in my last of the temptations of the Devil; because it is as necessary for you to know this in order to your salvation, as it is to know true virtue. For if you know only good, you will easily fall into evil, without perceiving it; and so, through ignorance, you may follow evil, thinking that you do well. But since I have undertaken to teach you all things necessary to salvation, I must also speak to you of the malice of the Devil, and how he tempts men to lead them to perdition; as he has already led many, who let themselves be seduced by him insensibly; though otherwise they were of good inclinations, yet they were lost by ignorance.

I entreat you therefore to consider, that all sorts of evil come from the Devil, as all sorts of good come from GOD. All that is good, in heaven, in earth, in all the creatures, in all places, comes immediately from GOD; and all that is evil in all these things, comes from the Devil. For he being by his sin separated from GOD, is fallen into all evil. There is no good but in GOD alone; and in the privation of good consists all evil.

Consider also, there can be no evil in GOD, and there can be no good in the Devil.

But we find this mixture in the other creatures, who partake of good from GOD, and evil from the Devil; and so they may have a mixture of these; and are good or evil, as they partake of the one or the other. GOD gave unto man all manner of good in abundance. And the Devil has given nothing to man, but so much evil as he has obtained consent from the free-will of man, and no more; and he has several sorts of snares, fit for every one's condition. He spies out the inclinations of every man, that he may attack him where he is weakest.

When he sees one inclined to covet riches, he will give him prosperity, that his heart may be wedded to them. If this succeed, he has gained that man; seeing his affections cannot be towards GOD, so long as they are in his money. Not that the Devil can give men riches, for he is but a poor wretch who has nothing but miseries: but he has power over the minds of many men, whom he moves to labour, or to give profit to such as he hopes to gain by the bait of riches; so that he affords occasions to make them prosper by his adherents. Now they, who know not the wiles of the Devil, think it is the blessing of GOD when they so prosper. The Devil so blinds their understanding, that they discover not that even these prosperities make them fall into many sins.

For he that is rich, becomes ordinarily proud. He exceeds in pomp, in vanity, in delicious fare, in sloth, in luxury, and divers other excesses, which he could not commit before he was rich.

But the Devil is very subtle, and will beware of tempting any by things contrary to their inclination. If he see one liberal, and that he does not covet riches, he will make him exceed in his liberality, by giving, wasting, and neglecting that which he has need of himself. If he see another addicted to luxury, blasphemies, and drunkenness, he is often content with some of these sins, and lets him do well in other things.

For it is enough to the Devil if he hold us bound by one only sin, wherein we have placed our affection. This is enough to shut us out of GOD's favour, seeing it is not lawful to withdraw our heart to place it in any other thing but in GOD alone. Yet the Devil always incites men to do all the evil they can. But there are many who would not give up themselves to many vices, though they be addicted to one. Such persons are not much molested by the Devil's temptations; but he lets them rest quietly in the sin to which he sees them most addicted, without tempting them by other things. When the Devil then has no hope to carry men to greater evils, he contents himself to

keep their souls bound by one chain until death, that he may after drag them with him to hell. The misery is, that men are not aware of this; for they that are not addicted to many vices, still hope for salvation.

One will say, It is true, I am inclined to luxury; but I bestow much on the poor, and will wrong no man. Another will say, It is true, I am given to drinking; but I am kind to my neighbour. A third will say, It is true, I love riches and honours; but I also attend the service of God, I go oft to Church. A fourth will say, It is true, I am given to delicacy; but I hate nobody. And thus they think to obtain salvation, while they are not addicted to many vices.

But the Devil laughs at all these excuses. He will have all sorts of persons in hell; such as have committed many kinds of sins, and those that are addicted but to one or two; for in hell there are all sorts of states and degrees, even as there is in the world; where one is of a higher quality than another. They who have committed more sins here, shall be more profoundly damned in hell than others. I pray God preserve you from this misery.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
the 29th of April, 1672.*



LETTER XII.

Other devices of SATAN.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I HAVE not yet sufficiently discovered to you the crafts of SATAN, how he tempts spiritual persons, and those that seek true virtue. He strives more to gain these, than he does those of the world; for he leaves such to do as they list, knowing well, that to damn themselves they

need but follow corrupt nature. For the corruption of nature comes from the Devil, and we need but follow it to become complete devils; as, if we follow the light of God, we shall be little gods. For both the good and the evil Spirit beget their like, when united to the soul of man.

They produce always fruits of their own nature. When man's will then joins with the corruption of his nature, it has within itself that devil of corruption, which SATAN hath engendered there. And when it obeys this corruption, it obeys the Devil himself; for the corruption of nature, and the wickedness of the Devil, are the same thing, even as a man's child is another man. Men are grossly ignorant in this. They think they are not tempted of the Devil when they do not feel in themselves preternatural evils; and they call the wickedness of their nature a frailty, without having ever considered from whence this wickedness proceeds.

God never created evil, but he made man altogether perfect, and with an inclination to good, without knowing any thing of evil. Therefore, of necessity, the wickedness and inclination to evil, which man feels in his nature, must come from the Devil: so that they who follow the inclinations of their corrupt nature, walk peaceably to eternal damnation. And the Devil does not drive such with the strokes of temptations, but he observes them at a distance only to see them go on, knowing well, that they will still become worse, if they follow simply the inclinations of their nature.

This few are aware of, but they will find themselves deceived at death; for during their life, they think they do no evil in following their natural inclinations: yea, some say, 'God created nature, and he cannot be offended that we follow it.' This is one of the greatest temptations, and opens a door to all sorts of evils.

Therefore, my son, you must first die to yourself, if you would attain true virtue; seeing so long as corrupt

nature is not entirely mortified in you, you cannot live in the spirit of **JESUS CHRIST**. Because, for this you must become a new creature, and detest that old corruption which the Devil has thrust into the works of **GOD** : for it is this that is our enemy, and causes all sorts of evil.

Yet the ignorant think themselves happy when they can follow their natural inclinations, though, indeed, it is the source of all evil. For though **GOD** created nature, and ordained that it should be sustained by aliments, and also reproduce itself by generation ; yet he would always have the heart of man entirely to himself, without any partner.

GOD willingly permits that man eat, drink, generate, and use his natural senses, for his necessity : but it is his will also that we do not set our heart or affections on them, which he requires to be reserved indivisibly for himself alone. We may, therefore, use all these things, but we ought not to fix our hearts upon them.

From all this we see, that what served man for a blessing, when he was in grace, serves him now for a means of sinning, and losing the grace of **GOD**. Yet we find men so blinded with self-love, that they persuade themselves they may see, hear, smell, taste, and feel, all that is good and pleasant, and in the mean while praise **GOD** ; which is a falsehood. For since man's nature was corrupted, it no longer refers any thing to **GOD** ; but in all these things pleases itself, and uses them as if it were worthy of them, as it was before sin. But this is a gross error : for corrupt nature cannot seek the glory of **GOD** ; it seeks only its own glory, and has no intention to bless and praise **GOD** for what it possesseth. This desire of satisfying the natural senses, is common to all those who live according to corrupt nature, none excepted.

Therefore, they who say, that they can use all that is good and pleasant, and praise **GOD** in them, do but flatter themselves. For to do this, one must have overcome corrupt nature ; which they have not yet done, since we see them search after pleasant things for their own satisfaction. But if they had overcome corrupt nature, they would no

longer satisfy it in any thing ; for this corruption is not so mortified but it will revive, if we grant to nature its ease and pleasures. But the soul that is regenerated in **JESUS CHRIST** knows well, that it must keep its nature under restraint during this short life, which is a state of penitence, where we must suffer, if we would enjoy afterwards ; which shows, that they who say, ‘ they can enjoy all good and beautiful things here, praising **God**,’ are very ignorant, and deceived by the **Devil**. For they think they are regenerated in the spirit of **JESUS CHRIST** ; which is false ; since his **SPiRiT** does not teach that we should use all that is pleasant : but he teaches to deny ourselves, to quit all that we possess, and to be sober and watch. All this is not to enjoy whatever is pleasant. For **JESUS CHRIST** teaches to take the least, and to choose the lowest place. If then these persons had contracted ever so little of the spirit of **CHRIST**, they would be far from saying, that they have overcome the corruption of their nature, and are regenerated in the spirit of **CHRIST** ; while they do things quite contrary to what he did and taught.

For if it were permitted to the regenerate to take their pleasure, and to enjoy whatever is pleasant in nature ; doubtless **JESUS CHRIST** would have done so ; since there was never any person regenerated, and who had overcome the corruption of nature, so as to be as perfect as he : and yet he speaks of nothing, but of suffering, becoming poor, bearing the cross, and denying himself. These inconsiderate persons must imagine they are more perfect than he ; since they say, that it is lawful for them to taste all that is pleasant in nature, provided they thank **God**.

Nevertheless, our **LORD** deprived himself of all these things, to give us an example. Do you not see that this is a cunning device of **SATAN**, that he may deceive those who aspire unto virtue ? For he fills their spirit with presumption as soon as he has got them to digest some fine speculations of the spiritual life. They imagine that they are already regenerate by the Spirit of **CHRIST**, though yet

they live altogether according to nature; such persons are very far from true virtue, and it is to be feared they will never attain it, since they think they have reached it already: but they are far from it; and better they had never begun to be virtuous, than to take up with false virtues. These sinners are worse than others, because of their hypocrisy. They think themselves virtuous, and they are yet full of vices. I despair more of these seeming devout persons, than of the men of the world, who have any fear of God; for so they have the beginning of virtue, which the others have not; for they cannot fear God, when they believe they are regenerate in the spirit of JESUS CHRIST; they imagine they have assurance and are secure, and they are in the midst of perils and hazards, by presumption, and the delusion of the Devil.

If the new beginner rests in the first consolations, he is lost. The reason is, that he will not mind to resist the corruption of his nature; but will think he has already overcome it, since he feels a delight in spiritual things, whereas he felt none but in natural things.

This makes him believe that he is already at the height of perfection, though he has not yet gone up the first step; which are the tears of penitence and sorrow for having offended God, and the desire to walk henceforth in his fear, which is the beginning of all virtue.

God bestows sweetness and consolations on those who begin, to take them off the more easily from earthly affections, and to draw them to his love: but we must not rest on them, or on any thing that is not God. But our whole heart ought to be taken up in the love of God only.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
May 1, 1672.*

LETTER XIII.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I HAVE NOT as yet discovered to you all the devices of the Devil; nay, it is impossible for me to discover them all: but I shall tell you more of them, which I have experienced myself, and such as I have seen in others.

You must know then, after what manner he deals with spiritual persons, otherwise he might seduce you, without your knowing it; for he transforms himself into an angel of light, and does in us almost the same things which the SPIRIT OF GOD does: he gives light to our understanding, and makes it conceive mystical things; for he was an angel of GOD, and so knew his will, but did not practise it: he attempts to cause men to do the very same: he does not hinder them to read mystical things, and to take pleasure in them: he even makes them curious to understand them, that they may learn to talk finely of them; but he hinders them with all his might from putting them in practice; for he well knows it is written, "He who knows the will of his FATHER and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

I knew one man, who spoke as divinely as an angel from heaven could do; and when I heard him at first, I thought I had found another self, and I remained several years in this opinion; for I had never heard any speak so profoundly of the inward and mystical life as he; but at length he discovered to me that all was but hypocrisy, which I could hardly believe, because of the good opinion I had of him: so I asked him where he had learned those profound secrets, seeing he had not studied nor understood Latin? He answered, That he was ambitious to be esteemed of men; and he observed, that virtue was esteemed amongst good men, and so he conceived that by learning it, he should be in esteem with such persons. He was modest, walked among men without regarding

them ; he was always the first at church ; he gave liberally to the poor, and would sometimes strip himself to clothe some wretched body that he saw naked ; he ate and drank soberly ; he was sincere and true in his words ; he professed to be in continual communion with God ; and with all these fine seeming virtues, he was by compact bound to the Devil, as he himself acknowledged several times at the end of his life, and died enraged, renouncing God, and calling on the Devil.

Behold how men deceive themselves, in believing themselves to be virtuous who can talk well of virtue. The Devil himself teaches his adherents to talk well of it : for a man told me that the Devil incited him to buy many good books, as THAULERUS, JOHANNES DE CRUCE, and other good mystic authors, that by reading them he might speak like them, and by such discourses procure the esteem of being enlightened by God. Nevertheless this light came from the Devil ; which befalls also many others, who are but beginners, even without their perceiving it ; and the design is to make them stop at these fine speculations of divine things.

Therefore, my child, never be curious to know much more nor yet to be able to talk well of virtue ; but be desirous to practise well what you know : for God will call you to an account of it, seeing “ to whom much is given, of much shall be required.” Be faithful to the first light that God gives you, and he will give you more.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
May 8th, 1672.*

LETTER XIV.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR SON,

IN my former, I have represented to you how the Devil tempts men many ways ; but I am afraid lest he catch you yet by another sort of temptation, which you could not discover, if you were not forewarned. It consists in this : That when you have well considered the power and wiles of the Devil, you will lay the blame upon the Devil instead of yourself ; for the heart of man is so proud that he will not confess his fault, and therefore seeks for the cause of his sins without himself. This you will do the rather, because I have shown that all evils come from the Devil, and all good from God. But though this be most true, we must not therefore imagine that the Devil himself can force us to do evil ; for he has no power over our souls, hearts, and wills, but so much as we give him. The Devil may represent evil to our spirit, and incite our wills to follow it, but he can never force us, so long as our will remains firmly resolved not to consent to evil.

God knew that JOB's heart was resigned to his holy will, and that he offered himself up continually to him, to be proved in what manner it pleased him ; and God permitted the Devil to tempt him. If the Devil had had power over man, he had not needed to ask God's permission to tempt JOB ; for he would have done it of himself, without any permission.

But he has no power over man, but what man himself gives him. Besides, God can never do any evil to man, nor permit any to befall him, without the consent of his own will. So if we commit sin, or are damned, it is of our own will ; for God can never damn any, without doing the greatest evil that ever was ; which cannot proceed from God, for He can do no evil. But it is our sins that damn us, and not God ; for if there were no sin, there would be no damnation ; and sin depending on man's

will, we must not attribute our damnation either to **God**; or to the **Devil**, seeing **God** gives us always grace to save us, and the **Devil** has no power to damn us.

So that man alone is truly blameable for the sins that he commits; and we ought never to lay the blame on the **Devil**, for he cannot hurt us without our own consent. He may bark, as chained dogs do, but he cannot bite, unless we come near him. He may indeed afflict our body, or our spirit, when we desire to have our souls purged by sufferings.

Then **God** permits him to tempt us by things that will be most for our salvation. As he permits the **Devil** to bring poverty on a good man, when he sees that this world's goods would make him forget himself; **God**, loving his soul, takes his riches from him, as the occasions of his damnation. Sometimes also he deprives him of honour, or health, lest these things should hinder the perfection of his soul. It is not always the express will of man that these things should be taken from him; but when **God** takes them, it is always with man's will indirectly.

For example: A person desires not to be poor, or afflicted, or sick, but he desires that **God** may send him every thing that is necessary for his salvation; and **God** regarding this, removes from him whatever may hinder him in the advancement of salvation. And this is a fatherly love which **God** bears to man, and not a punishment, as the natural sense takes it, and complains of it; but it is truly what the person desired in the bottom of his soul; to wit, things that were for his salvation.

Because he created man altogether free, he cannot be compelled either to good or evil; neither by **God**, nor by the **Devil**, who can never cause man to sin, unless it be his will either expressly or indirectly. But men do not always know the indirect will they have to do evil, and therefore they imagine it is the **Devil** that makes them sin against their own will; but this is only an excuse for their sins.

It is true, the **Devil** can tempt man against his will, but he cannot make him sin against his will. He may dis-

order his spirit, and make him remember what he ought to forget, and forget what he ought to remember ; but if the person be upon his guard, and will not do evil, he will easily discover that this comes from the Devil, being against his own will, and will have recourse to GOD by continual prayer, which CHRIST has so recommended to us as necessary for our salvation. Since we have continually an enemy to fight against, we have need of arms continually to defend ourselves ; and this will be necessary all the days of our life.

Thus the Apostle advises us “to pray without ceasing ;” because we have always need of GOD’S help against the continual assaults which the Devil gives us.

All human wisdom is not able to discover all the subtleties of the Devil, who, being a most subtle spirit, surpasses the capacity of man’s spirit.

He must therefore of absolute necessity use continual prayer, that he may discover the temptations of the Devil, which he cannot know without a divine light ; and far less is he able to withstand them without GOD’S assistance, whom he ought continually to invoke and call upon for help without intermission ; seeing the Devil never sleeps, and watches for us when we sleep. But the strength of faith can make us overcome the Devil, though he should tempt a man with all his might during his whole life.

These temptations serve only for greater virtues to man, because he passes the time of his trial in testifying his faithfulness to GOD, while he does not consent to the temptation which the Devil sets before him.

*Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
May 13th, 1672.*

LETTER XV.

On the same subject.

MY SON,

I SEE yet one difficulty which occurs to your spirit ; to wit, How you shall discover when the Devil insinuates himself into your good actions.

It is easy to discern this, provided you have an absolute will to resist the Devil. It is then most easy to discern if it be the good or evil Spirit that moves us in all our actions and words, to do or say any thing, small or great ; because these two spirits have quite contrary dispositions. So that you may, as it were, feel with your finger if it be a good or evil Spirit that moves you to do or say any thing, by the dispositions which you shall feel in your soul.

For the good Spirit produces in our souls, charity, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, benignity, meekness, chastity, faith, continence, and modesty. And on the contrary, the evil Spirit produces there self-love, impatience, rashness, wickedness, fretting, pride, despair, intemperance, inconstancy, and impurity ; and as the tree is known by its fruit, so we may discover the evil Spirit by the fruit which he produces. Therefore we must always examine if our enterprises, or the resolutions we have to do or leave undone any thing, produce in our souls, charity, joy, peace, &c., and then we may be assured that our undertakings and resolutions are of GOD, seeing they bring us the fruits of his SPIRIT.

The Devil gives only seeming and outward joys, which afflict the heart as soon as they are over. This is the reason why we see worldly persons still seek for new diversions, yet without finding true contentment in any ; which we cannot have but by the joy of the HOLY SPIRIT. So that it is very easy to discover if it be the good or evil Spirit which dwells in our souls, by the dispositions and operations which we feel in them.

When, therefore, we desire to do or say any thing, that

we may know if it comes from **GOD**, see what disposition that desire brings in the soul : If it be in peace, and if it wait for the effect with patience and long-suffering ; for this is a sign that the **SPIRIT** of **GOD** has given us that desire, and that it is his will that we bring it to effect. But if this desire mars our peace, and disturbs our spirit with impatience, and strives to precipitate us before the time ; it is a sign that this comes from an evil Spirit : or, if the thing or the desire be good in itself, it is a sign that the **Devil** insinuates himself into this good work. However, we must not cease to do or say what is good in itself, but we must be on our guard, that we suffer not the **Devil** to insinuate himself into it ; we must then use continual prayer for **GOD**'s help, and strength to overcome the temptation that the **Devil** gives us, while we are doing good.

We must, then, never cease from doing good works, because of the temptations of the **Devil** ; for he would be well pleased still to hinder them, if he could. But we must examine well the inward disposition of our souls, to discover if the **Devil** does not insinuate himself therein, that we may always purify our intentions, and hinder the **Devil** from getting any advantage by them.

And therefore we must alway be upon our guard, and watch against so powerful an enemy, who attempts to surprise us in all our actions, both good and indifferent, that he may render them all evil. Therefore we must study well to discern the good Spirit from the evil ; which we may do, seeing there are sure marks whereby to know them. Never say, then, that you know not if it is **GOD** or the **Devil** who moves you to do or omit any thing ; but rather acknowledge, with humility of heart, that you are not vigilant and diligent enough to discover that evil Spirit, who binds your understanding, that you may not know him.

For you never speak a word, nor do an action, wherein you may not discern whether it comes from **GOD**, or from the **Devil**, provided you reflect seriously upon yourself. But

the misery is, that we are distracted and strayed from ourselves; and the Devil makes us forget what we ought to remember, and puts in our mind that which we ought to forget, that he may bring confusion in all our behaviour.

Mark this, and you will find by experience that it is but too well grounded; for since the Devil can no longer make you fall into manifest sins, he endeavours to make you contradict the SPIRIT of GOD, which you do not yet well know. You have indeed resolved in the general to follow him, as you have done in abandoning the world, in loosing your affections from earthly goods, and desiring to follow JESUS CHRIST in his humility. All this proceeds from the SPIRIT of GOD, who has governed you in the most important things, and the Devil could not hinder it.

But now he attacks you in small things, and things of little importance, that he may hinder your doing the will of GOD in every thing; and often he gains your will, to make it contrary to the will of GOD in common things.

The Devil makes you forget this, and raises in you a spirit of contradiction, to which your nature is also inclined. This is the reason that you do not sufficiently discover that it is the Devil; you impute it to your natural inclinations, which yet is not so, though it mingle itself with the inclination of the Devil. It is his custom to follow one's natural inclination, to cover himself the better.

And by this device, he remains unknown; every one attributing his fault to his nature. One excuses his anger, another his moroseness, and another his lust, saying, I cannot help these things, for it is my nature.

This is a language that the Devil hears gladly, because thereby he lurks unknown. But they who esteemed the wickedness of the Devil to be but natural infirmities, shall perceive clearly at death, that it was the wickedness of the Devil which mingled itself with every one's inclinations. Now the Devil labours always to discover these inclinations, that he may play his game the better, and may remain unknown under this cover of natural infirmities.

And thus he amuses many. They never think it is the

Devil, because he is so straitly united to their natural inclinations; and this is his subtlety. He knows well that he would not be so much obeyed, if he gave temptations contrary to natural inclination; and therefore he follows every one's temper, and increases the inclinations that he finds in their nature. If he meet with a choleric person, he stirs him up the more to anger; if with a lustful, or melancholy, he increases their luxury or sadness: that he may gain them all by their weak side. He acts as an enemy that would attack a city: he will not assault it where it is fortified, but where it is weakest. If he find some corner of the wall broken, he endeavours to break it more, that by it he may enter the town.

The Devil cannot surprise us in things wherein we are upon our guard, and therefore he attacks us where we do not expect him; and by this means he easily gains our will, and makes it obey him in what we have an inclination for.

You may also remark the qualities of the things which the Devil makes us do; for if you will examine yourself narrowly, you will always find in your words something untrue or dissembled, or spoken to please men; which makes that there is not always justice in your words. For he that speaks by the good SPIRIT, is true at the bottom, and never speaks any thing to please or flatter men; but declares the truth of things, as well what is contrary to himself, as for his advantage; seeing he seeks to please GOD alone.

To know if our actions be excited by the Devil or not, mark if they be done for GOD's glory, or for your own; for the Devil will always stir us up to seek ourselves in all that we do. He knows well that self-love hinders the love of GOD, and so he excites us to consider, if what we do or say will be for our advantage, if it shall give us pleasure, honour, or profit; and when we observe none of these, he slackens our courage, that we may not accomplish our undertaking.

The good SPIRIT, on the contrary, incites always to

labour for the glory of GOD, and the assistance of our neighbour ; and so he that is guided thereby does nothing for his own interest, but endeavours to his power to assist his neighbour ; because charity, which that good Spirit brings, watches more for the common than for its own particular good.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
the 15th of May, 1672.*



LETTER XVI.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR SON,

I SEE you are grieved, because the Devil has power to tempt men so many ways ; but you ought to rejoice while you learn the truth of every thing ; for if you knew it not, the Devil would seduce you by ignorance, as he has done so many thousands, who have obeyed him because they did not know it. They thought to do the will of GOD, and they did that of the Devil, and so perished insensibly.

For before GOD, Ignorance does not excuse sin ; every one is obliged to know what he ought to do and avoid, that he may attain to salvation.

What should we say, if we saw a man oppressed with his enemies, who yet would not be at the pains to seek deliverance, and would sleep at his ease, though he knew himself to be surrounded by his enemies ? We should certainly say, this man is the cause of his own misery, and of all the evils that befall him.

And why do we not likewise conclude, that he who neglects to search for the means of his salvation, and to discover the wiles of the Devil, his enemy, is the cause of his own damnation ? It can only be imputed to ourselves, seeing we have abundant means to find, if we had a real

desire to search. What cause of ignorance can a Christian pretend, who reads and hears the instructions of JESUS CHRIST, and his Apostles? They teach, that there is a "Devil who is our enemy, and who seeks to devour us; that our life is a continual warfare; that we must fast and watch, that we enter not into temptation." Nevertheless, men will neither do the one nor the other; but live in ease, secure amidst their enemies.

And, which is strange, when any would awaken them out of this lethargic sleep, they are grieved and dissatisfied. Nevertheless, this sleep will assuredly procure them eternal death, if they do not awake to fight their enemies.

And therefore, you ought to rejoice, rather than be sorrowful, that GOD permits me to discover to you the wiles of the Devil. For you cannot make him not to be wicked, no more than you can hinder him from tempting men, since our first parents gave him that power; and though they had not done it, we give him daily the same power over us, which he got over them, by our consent to his temptations.

This being so, we must fight, or render ourselves to him, which were lamentable; for we were created true children of God, after his image and likeness; and we should become by our sloth the children of the Devil. This you must never suffer; but endeavour to discover the evil, and resist it to your power; and bless GOD also, that he sends you his light, that you may know it, and beware of it.

Temptations purify the soul, and render it agreeable to GOD. He takes pleasure to see us fight his and our enemies; and he gives us strength and aid, if we persevere constantly. Moreover, he prepares us triumphant laurels, and eternal rewards for the victory.

The grief which you conceive, because the Devil has power to tempt you and others, comes from him. He makes us always desire things impossible, that he may afflict and discourage us. For he knows well, that a grieved and discouraged person is not fit to resist his temptations; and that he can easily lead one in this state from

one evil to another : and therefore he often causes vain griefs, such as those which you now feel ; and also the disturbing grief for our past sins, which are no longer in our power.

These are the extremities into which the Devil attempts to make us fall. It is true, we ought to regret that we have voluntarily given the Devil so much power to tempt us ; and we ought yet more to lament our past sins : but we must not therefore rest in these griefs, seeing they would hinder the graces of GOD in us. It is better to go to GOD by love and amendment of life, than by melancholies, which proceed from the Devil ; since before him, there was nothing but joy in the world, and in the heart of man.

So that sadness is truly a quality of the Devil ; and therefore man ought to despise it, if he seek after true virtue.

He ought, indeed, to have a sincere regret in his heart, for having offended GOD, and beg pardon of him as often as he remembers his sins ; but he ought never to suffer himself to be overcome of grief, since what is past is not in his power ; and though he should destroy himself, he can never make that what is past should not be.

He ought then, for penitence for his past sins, to endeavour a true conversion to GOD, departing from evil to do good, detesting sin to embrace true virtue : which is a contrition much more solid than tears and immoderate grief.

This you must beware of, my child, for GOD would be served with a joyful heart ; and he deals with the converted sinner, as if he had never offended him. You should rejoice then, for the grace GOD has given you to forsake the world, and to turn from vanity to the truth.

Our nature is so feeble and corrupt, that it could not remain faithful to GOD, without tribulations ; for usually it forgets itself in prosperity. We see daily among men, that he who prospers becomes great and proud, and settles himself in the world as in an abiding place ; and that on the contrary, he who is in adversity becomes humble, and has recourse to GOD. I speak of such as are well-meaning,

for to the wicked all turns to evil: If they prosper, they offend GOD the more; and if they are in adversity, they blaspheme and despair.

Perhaps, when you were in the world, you loved your mistresses' favours or colours; show now that you have chosen JESUS CHRIST for your lover; love and carry willingly his colours; esteem as favours all the temptations which come; for JESUS CHRIST was clothed all the days of his life with temptations and sufferings, both from devils and men. You must then wear his livery, if you will be his servant.

It is a good sign, that you perceive and feel the temptation; for many do not feel it, and so follow it in every thing.

Would you willingly be seized with that lethargy? And would you wish that the Devil should tempt you no more? That would be an evident sign that he held you as his own; for he tempts but little the persons who calmly do his will: He leaves such in quiet, and they are well pleased that they are not vexed with temptations. They imagine themselves to be in a good state, though in effect they be in the greatest of all temptations.

*Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle,
May 29, 1672.*



LETTER XVII,

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I PERCEIVE it appears somewhat difficult to you, to watch so narrowly over all your words and actions. But believe me, if you do it not, the Devil will certainly surprise you, and you will obey him without knowing it; for he is a most subtle spirit, who still watches, and never

rests. It is necessary therefore, to resolve absolutely for the combat, if you would obtain salvation ; for without fighting, there is no victory ; and unless you apply your spirit to watch diligently over all your words and actions, you shall fall into all sorts of evil.

For this reason, negligence is a capital sin. But we must not think those commit the sin of negligence, who do not labour bodily ; but all those who neglect to watch over their souls ; seeing such neglect their eternal happiness, and consent tacitly to the Devil's temptations. This is the reason why this sloth is a capital sin, and ought to be called mortal, since it causes death to the soul.

For he who, through negligence, does not resist the Devil, leaves his soul to him for a prey : and he who searches not diligently for all means to find virtue, will never obtain it, and never come to eternal happiness.

For we are not come into this world to rest ; but to care, to watch, and to labour for our salvation. We must not therefore change the order of God. He hath sent us into this world, as into a place of banishment, or penitence ; and we forsooth would live here in ease, without care and diligence, and without watching against our enemies. And yet worldly persons watch day and night to gain a little money, or to acquire honour, or infamous pleasure.

Believe me, Son, these worldlings shall rise up against us in the day of judgment, and upbraid us, that they watched, and cared, and laboured in the service of the world, more than we have done in the service of God.

Is it just then, that you should complain of a little difficulty you have to watch over your words and actions, that you may discover the wiles of the Devil, and find the means to attain true virtue ? This is the least thing a Christian ought to do to attain eternal happiness. For man is created for no other end but for this eternity. If then he is capable (as it appears he is) to watch and labour for things temporal, how much more ought he to do the same, that he may attain life eternal ?

We see merchants go over sea and land, and put their

is in hazard to gain a little money. We see tradesmen and sweat, and do even mean and offensive works, to their poor nourishment. We see hired servants obey to the will of their masters, and watch and perform gently the services they must render them, to gain a little hire.

And a Christian will not do these things, to keep himself out of the snares of his enemy, and to acquire true peace, which guides his soul to eternal life. Would it not be a great weakness to say, that it is difficult to watch ourselves over our words and actions, that we may be well-pleasing to God, while we see men do the same thing, in accounts that no way deserve it?

How much care does a faithful servant take to serve his master well? He studies night and day to do what is possible to him; he performs diligently what he knows to be his will; and when he has served him well, he obtains nothing but temporal wages.

I have heard a story of a servant, who had faithfully served a Prince, so that he was well satisfied with him; therefore promised to give him whatever he would ask of him. It happened that the servant fell sick, and was near to die; when he felt himself in extremity, he begged earnestly for a visit from his Prince; who being come to bedside, asked what he desired of him. The servant begged that he might not die, and that he might live for some years. But the master told him, that was not in his power, and he must ask something else. After this, the servant begged one year's life, or one month's, and at last one day's life only. But the Prince continues to tell him, that he could not give him what he asked, seeing it was not in his power; and that he must ask of him money, physic, places, or other things that were in his power. But the servant replied, that he needed neither money, nor places, nor physic, which could not prolong his life for one day; and he begged of him the assurance of his salvation, since he could not prolong his life; that if he must die, he might at last die in peace, and with assurance to be saved.

This demand afflicted the Prince very much, and he told him that his salvation depended upon the grace of God, and consequently, it was not in his power to promise it to him, and far less to give it.

This grieved the servant so, that turning away from his Prince, and turning his face to the wall, he said, 'O wretch that I am! Have I passed all my life in serving a master, who is not able to assist me in my greatest need? Not so much as to give me one hour's life; I will not henceforth serve so impotent a master.' And in this resolution he made a vow to God, 'That if he should restore him his health, he would serve God only, and attend the perfection of his soul; and so give himself to a Lord who could give him life and salvation.'

Which he did indeed; for God having restored him to health, he for some years led a good life, and in the end died well.

Does not this story open your understanding, to perceive the blindness of men, who spare nothing in the service of the world, but bestow therein their cares and labours, to please men such as themselves, or to gain a little earthly goods?

Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle.



LETTER XVIII.

On the same subject.

MY DEAR CHILD,

SPIRITUAL diligence is the most necessary of all virtues, without which you cannot persevere in any virtue; and the Devil will always endeavour to make you lose them by degrees, if you keep not firmly that of spiritual diligence.

For if he see that you have obtained humility, he will

excite occasions of pride, as the praises of men, prosperity in temporal goods, and such like, to make you lose that humility. Be always on your guard then, with spiritual diligence, otherwise you shall lose humility, ere you be aware.

Which happened to me ; for after that God had given me the virtue of humility, I felt pride arise again in my heart ; I felt a dissatisfaction when men did not give me honour, but called me by my simple name ; and though I discovered nothing of it outwardly, my humility was notwithstanding weakened inwardly.

So that, if God had not given me spiritual diligence, to watch continually over my soul, I had assuredly lost my humility, as also my voluntary poverty. For after that I was entirely disengaged from coveting this world's goods, and had actually forsaken them, I felt covetous thoughts for many years. For some pious persons desired me to put some money in fellowship with them in their trading, which I did with an intention to bestow all the gain upon the poor. After I had taken this resolution, I began to argue with myself, if it would not be enough to leave them half of the gain, and keep the rest for myself?

But when I examined my conscience with spiritual diligence, I discovered that the Devil intended thereby to make me relapse into coveting the goods which I had abandoned. This happened to me also many years after : on a time when I was at Malines about some affair, I took a fancy to buy some laces, (for they are made there in abundance,) with a design to sell them at Lisle, and to save the expense of my voyage. After I had bought them, and saw appearance of gain, I thought I might keep that gain to myself ; though I was then in an hospital, which I had undertaken to govern out of charity, and to employ all my labour for the advantage of poor children.

Thus the Devil endeavours always to surprise us by subtle snares, unless we remain firmly fixed in spiritual diligence. For though it seems often that our actions are reasonable, and for a good end ; yet the Devil slips in, and

attempts to get his advantage. And when he cannot gain much, he contents himself with little; but yet he always does some hurt to the perfection of our souls, or that of others.

So that we must be diligent, that we may hinder him from gaining any thing. Now he can do us no hurt, when we perceive it, and have our will fixed in God; for when we discover the snares of the Devil, we shall assuredly resist him; but if we fall into spiritual negligence, he will ensnare us in all things. And I believe we shall not speak a word, from which the Devil will not draw some advantage against our souls, or those of others. For he will make us be silent of what we ought to speak for our spiritual or temporal advancement, and for the good and edification of our neighbour.

We must not say, (as many ignorants,) that CHRIST has satisfied all for us; seeing he exhorts us to seek the kingdom of heaven, to pray, to knock, and to do all that we can to obtain it: teaching thereby, that this spiritual diligence is necessary to salvation.

So our LORD admonishes us, "To watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." Now if the merits of CHRIST had thus satisfied all, what need should we have to watch and pray? We needed but to remain in ease and quiet.

Then we needed not to do any thing; for it would be in vain to knock, and pray, and seek, if all were in that sense obtained by the merits of CHRIST. This may let you see, my son, that men are now abandoned to the Spirit of Error, and that they know not the truth of things: for they make one another believe falsehoods for truths; and would by their glosses annul the doctrine of JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles.

Now this excites continually to spiritual diligence, seeing CHRIST says, "We must pray always." We must always be diligent to watch over all our words and actions: Otherwise we shall not speak a word without committing a sin, nor do any action that shall not be defiled; to wit,

so long as we live in corrupt nature, in which we are born; for this corruption loving itself, turns to its own glory and profit all that we say and do.

This is a continual sin, which we cannot avoid, but by spiritual diligence, or continual prayer, which is the same. For being continually attacked by sin, we must continually combat it, or yield ourselves its slaves. And though there were no other devil but the corruption of man's nature, we ought notwithstanding to resist it continually; seeing that corruption is as much the enemy of our salvation as the Devil.

If you would examine yourself, you would find by experience, that you do not so much as one action, (how good soever in itself,) which is not defiled with self-love and self-seeking; and that you speak not one word, which you aim not for your own advantage or praise, or to excuse and justify yourself.

For self-love seeks always its own ease and satisfaction, and will not have the blame in any thing. It would appear innocent in the grossest faults which it commits: it speaks to excuse them, reasons to maintain its opinions, or what it has fancied or undertaken to maintain. In short, it employs all the powers of the body and the spirit to disown its guilt. So proud is this corrupt nature, that it will not be blamed in any thing, if it can avoid it.

Now all these things are manifest sins, which shut out of our hearts the love of God, that we may love and esteem ourselves; and so break the command, of loving God with all our heart.

Husum, January 2, 1674.

LETTER XIX.

Spiritual Diligence is necessary to Salvation.

I CANNOT say enough to you of the necessity of spiritual diligence, since it must occasion your eternal salvation, and all the good things we attain in this life, and in that which is to come.

Weigh well this necessity, that you may lay hold on it, and put it in practice. For though you had acquired many other virtues, yet the Devil could easily ensnare you by spiritual negligence, and let you do well for one time, that he may ensnare you at another.

He could not hinder you from forsaking the world, that you might give yourself to the service of GOD, since this was your absolute resolution; neither could he hinder you from detesting sin, and undertaking to follow true virtue. But he waits for you in the passage, that he may stop your course, and hinder your perseverance by divers temptations. He will stir up men of good will, to raise suspicions of your resolution, and that even upon pious pretexts. He will make you sometimes doubt, if you should not do better to remain in the world, and make your light shine to others. At another time, he will represent to you, if you had not better trade yet, that you might assist your neighbour out of your superfluity, or by your good example.

For the Devil tempts by all sorts of means, and when he cannot make us fall into sin by evil actions, he insinuates himself into our good works; yea, even into our good intentions, and mingles therewith some little of his venom, when he cannot get in much.

He gives sometimes a weariness in the way of virtue, and makes that seem heavy, which in fact is light; giving the soul a backwardness to do well, to overcome itself. He takes away also the hope of surmounting our imperfections, and of attaining true virtue, that he may render our souls cowardly and slothful, because they do not see the

means whereby to arrive at solid virtue. He confounds our spirits, that they may not discover the truth of things as they are before **GOD**; but may please themselves still with seeming virtues, and fine speculations. Let us therefore watch always, that he make not our first fervour cool, and our good resolution of embracing true virtue.

He will attempt, even when we have acquired virtue, to lead us into spiritual negligence; persuading us, that we may well rest, seeing that we have acquired it, and that we cannot advance further in it. I have known such persons, as have said to me, that they were arrived at the highest degree of virtue to which they could attain; and they said so because they had read all they could read of it: and so they judged that to read more, was but to repeat what they had already read and understood; which to me seemed great pride, and spiritual negligence, which the Devil had planted in their heart. Not to advance in virtue, is to fall back; seeing that man never attains that perfection that he ought.

It is written in the Holy Scripture, “Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” to teach us, that we should tend to the perfection of **GOD** himself, and never stop in the way of virtue; but always tend to a greater perfection, even to the last moment of our life, that we may come the nearer to the perfection of our heavenly **FATHER**.

I must now show you the evils which spiritual negligence causes. It is a pestilence in the good air of virtue: for though you had acquired many virtues, they could not subsist in your soul without spiritual diligence, seeing in this world we cannot be free from enemies, who continually attack us.

We might be for some time at rest in virtue; but this repose would be the most dangerous combat of our souls, which think to rest, as did the rich man in the Gospel, who had his granaries filled; but it was said unto him, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be?” The same shall

be said to them who think they have acquired many virtues, and yet have not spiritual diligence : they shall find themselves deceived at death, because they have not watched over their virtues, having suffered the corruption of their nature to reign there.

What evils does not negligence bring in civil affairs ? Countries and cities are ruined by want of foresight. For if a lord, or governor, of a country is not diligent to watch over it, his enemies will surprise him, and he will lose his honour and goods while asleep : and if the magistrate of a town is not diligent to watch over the inhabitants, they will neglect their duty, and bring into the commonwealth things which afterwards they cannot remedy.

It is the same as to the superior of a house or society ; if he neglect to watch over those who are under his care, he will find himself oppressed with confusion, which he cannot redress afterwards. Negligence in business impoverishes many, and makes them lose themselves.

By negligence, also, the grain and fruits of the earth are lost, when they are not sown and reaped in season. It spoils household provision ; rusts the iron ; brings moths in clothes ; in short, negligence has brought many rich men to poverty ; and many who were in honour and reputation, into disgrace ; and it brings damage and evil unto every thing, even to the least things.

But this negligence in civil things, though it causes so many evils, is nothing in comparison of spiritual negligence ; seeing the first causes only temporal and transitory evils, but the other such as are eternal. It deprives man of all manner of good, and subjects him to all manner of evil.

For he that has not spiritual diligence to watch against the enemies of his soul, and over the means that he must take for his salvation, must perish were it only by this negligence, though he should commit no other sin : for it is of our souls that the Scripture says in a perfect sense,

“The ground that is not laboured, shall bring forth thorns and thistles:” because the ground of our souls became cursed by sin; and being fallen into this curse, it can no longer bring forth any wholesome fruit, without bestowing on it great diligence, to kill the tares and weeds of corruption.

For if these be not rooted out, they will always choke the good seed, even though it were sown in abundance in our souls. It must be maintained by continual diligence, otherwise it will bring forth no fruit; we must watch against our enemies; we must still resist the inclinations of this corrupt nature; and, finally, we must continually study the knowledge of ourselves. For he who does not know himself, is ignorant of all, and cannot arrive at the virtue “to be meek and lowly,” which JESUS CHRIST says, “we must learn of him.”

Husum, February 3, 1674.



LETTER XX.

How we must pass three bridges to come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

MY CHILD,

It seems you understand not what poverty of spirit is, or that you are not willing to practise it; for as soon as it comes in your fancy to have any thing, you call for it or buy it; and often after you have got it, you lose it or suffer it to be spoiled. These are no other but the desires of corrupt nature, which always covets that which it hath not, and is never satisfied with that which it hath, desiring always to have more; and he who followeth this corruption, goeth softly to hell, because it inclines to all kinds of sins: wherefore he that would become a Christian, ought never to follow it, neither in little or great things, to

which JESUS CHRIST adviseth us when he saith, “ Deny yourself.”

Not that GOD stands in need of this denial, but because we perish in following this corrupt nature, which is an enemy to GOD, and evermore incites us to do evil. You laid the foundation of virtue in your soul, when you forsook the world, your country, and your relations, to follow JESUS CHRIST. But the edifice of this virtue must be perfected, before GOD take up his residence in your soul.

Wherefore you need not wonder, if you do not feel him acting in your soul, according to your desires ; because GOD cannot dwell with self-will. And although you feel him sometimes in good desires, yet this lasts not, but is quickly changed into coldness or evil desires : which evils are engendered by self-will, which, being an enemy to GOD, is wholly corrupted, insomuch that it can do no good, but bringeth forth all sorts of evils. For this cause you ought always to suspect your own will, and never to follow it, no more in small things than in great.

It seemeth to you often, that your own will is good, and that the thing which you desire to do, or leave undone, will be good. But if you knew the corruption of your own will, you would follow it in nothing, in regard that the Devil and sin may mingle themselves with the most holy things. For this cause you ought to be jealous of all kinds of desires, to the end you may always contradict this self-will, which is so corrupt, that it leads always to evil, directly or indirectly.

If you could well understand this point, and war against your own will, I should quickly see the SPIRIT of GOD revive in you : there is nothing but your self-will that opposeth this, which hindereth the SPIRIT of CHRIST ; which makes me often sigh, when I see that the Devil hath still so much power over the children of GOD, to make them do what he pleases by their self-will.

So long as they follow their own wills, GOD shall never have the dominion over their souls : because he cannot

come and dwell in their souls, unless man, of his free choice, shall render up to GOD that free-will which GOD gave him when he created him : and renouncing self-will, submit his will in all things to the will of GOD, suffering himself to be governed and guided in all things by that divine will, which evermore willeth our greatest good, and cannot but will things that are good for our spiritual and temporal advantage.

A person can never be without displeasure, for having followed his own will ; when we consider the evil which self-will procureth to us. For life and death depend upon our will, seeing that in resigning it to the will of GOD, we shall live eternally, and in following it for our own satisfaction, we shall die eternally. And this is the “ fire and the water,” in the midst of which man is placed ; and he may turn himself to what side he will, and nobody can constrain him : for he is free to follow his own will, as he is free to resign that will to the will of GOD.

And therefore, ye must resolve to choose the one or the other, life or death. For ye must not deceive yourselves : nobody shall attain to life eternal by following his own will ; and nobody can ever be damned in submitting the same to the will of GOD. I know very well, ye will all say to me with your mouths, that ye will submit your wills to that of GOD, whilst in effect ye do not submit it upon occasion, and your own wills are always followed, maintained, and defended, as if they were good, though they be always evil.

For my own part, I dare never follow my own will in any thing, because I find it to be corrupt : and I am sure it can only do evil, that it is an enemy to GOD, and contrary to the love of my neighbour. And, therefore, I evermore suspect that which cometh of my self-love, and dare never execute the motions of self-love, although the things it proposes to me, seem to me to be perfect. I would not, for all that, follow or put them in practice, before I recommended them to GOD, and learned from him, if the motions of my own will be conformable to the

will of GOD, and then I freely put them in execution : but I desist from them when I do not understand that GOD confirms them.

For, to come to our eternal salvation, we must of necessity pass three bridges, before we can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. The first bridge is, "To forsake the world, and to retire from the dangers of sin." The second bridge is, "To forsake riches and worldly pleasures, and to covet nothing in this world." The third bridge is, "To renounce our own will, that we may be entirely guided and governed by the will of GOD." And nobody shall ever attain to life eternal, without having passed these three bridges.

First, To forsake the world. Man may well be amused by divers earthly things, but he can never be satisfied therein, in regard that all these things are without man, and can only flatter his senses ; but GOD being in the centre of the soul of man, is alone able to satisfy him ; because our soul is a vessel capable of GOD, nothing but He can fill or content it. Behold the reason why all the men in the world are in covetousness, because they cannot be filled with all things which they covet ; and the more they have of them, the more insatiably do they desire them ; because all these earthly things are not suitable nourishment for our souls. They must be fed with GOD himself, or they can never be content.

Wherefore, think it not strange, that you always covet some other thing than that which you have, because this covetousness is rooted in the nature of all men ; and those who do not believe this, deceive themselves ; for there is nothing more deceitful than the heart of man, which will needs imagine that it is not proud, covetous, and infected with other sins, though it be born in all kind of sin, and inclined to all sort of evil. And therefore, no person can be delivered from his covetousness, except those who have overcome corrupt nature, which you have not done yet : for as yet, you too much follow the inclinations of

this corruption, and you often covet that which you have not.

And if you followed true virtue, you would never desire but things necessary; and when the will of doing, of saying, or of coveting, any thing, taketh you, you ought to stop the course of these desires, and maturely to consider, if that which you covet be saving, or necessary for life. And when you do not judge your desires saving or necessary, you ought not to follow them, but assuredly to believe, that this coveting is vicious: and therefore you ought to resist it, and not to follow it.

For example: If you are at table, to take your refreshment, and there ariseth in you a desire to eat some other thing than what is set before you; that is a sinful coveting: when the victuals which you have are sufficient to nourish your body, be content, without wishing for those which would please your taste better; for otherwise, you fall into the sin of gluttony, besides that of covetousness. And if you have a house that can shelter you from rain and winds, you do ill to covet another more beautiful; seeing necessity should suffice a Christian, and he ought never to desire more: although he could have it he should despise it, because CHRIST, his Master, 'did always choose the least and most despised.' If you have a suit which preserves you from cold, and doth honestly cover your body, you ought not to desire another, though you could easily have it; for this would be a sinful covetousness, or a piece of pride, in desiring to appear fine before men: wherefore, you should never desire other linen, other clothes, or any other new thing, so long as your own may serve your need, if you would abide in the grace of GOD; seeing all sorts of covetousness are sins, and sin makes a man GOD's enemy.

So long as covetousness remaineth in the soul, the love of GOD cannot abide there; seeing the Scripture saith, "Where your heart is, there is your treasure." And if your affections be yet set on drink, meat, apparel, lying

well, and good furniture, or other transitory things; these are the treasures which you have chosen, and you ought to expect none in heaven: since 'your heart is yet on the earth,' by consequence "your treasure is there also."

But you who have undertaken a journey to the "heavenly Jerusalem," pass the second bridge of "coveting earthly things;" or otherwise you shall never come to the end, for which you have forsaken the world.

The only remedy for this evil is, to covet nothing, and to be always content with that which God giveth: if he send abundance, we ought to bless him for it, and use it well; if he give little, we ought to be as well satisfied with this little as with much. And this is the true way of being happy in this world, and of enjoying eternal happiness. But on the contrary, coveting this world makes us miserable, and is the cause that we are never content.

The person that wisheth nothing, is much happier than he who can have much: and so much the rather, as it is a certain rule, that the more content we are with little, the more closely do we follow CHRIST; and he who would have more, can only follow him at a greater distance. Choose then, and if you love to follow JESUS CHRIST closely, choose always the least of these things that serve for your use. Never take the best, though you may easily have it; for he who taketh the least, because he cannot have that which is better, is a slave that followeth JESUS CHRIST by constraint. But be ye lawful children of JESUS CHRIST, and follow him in his abasement willingly and joyfully, and "you shall find rest to your souls;" having passed this second bridge of covetousness, and going on to the third, which is, "to renounce your own will."

This bridge is the last which must be passed, to come to eternal life; for enjoying whereof we may well deprive ourselves of the delights of this miserable life, which are so base and imperfect, that they deserve not to be called delights or pleasures: besides, that they are of so short a continuance, and that one moment of these pleasures begetteth a year's trouble. Suffer then, my child, some little

inconveniences in this world, and do not wish to be delivered from them ; for eternal joy is well worth this small pittance of sufferings. In the renouncing your own will, ye will not find so many enemies, if you have a strong resolution, and an absolute desire, to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem.

As concerning myself, I have no need of lands or houses : a little chamber of ten feet length sufficeth me for all the days of my life, though I should never go out of it : and for clothes and food, I have more of them than is sufficient, without pretending to any thing from others. I have no need to speak or write to nourish my own soul, in respect it is all filled with GOD : so that all I speak and do in this world, doth only regard the advantage of my neighbour.

And you may be well assured, that I have no other will but that of GOD ; and that my own doth not live any more in me. For I have, by the grace of GOD, passed this third bridge of renouncing my own will ; and I have resigned it to GOD, who turns and sets it according to his good pleasure ; wherewith I am always content, as I suppose you have seen abundantly by experience : for I bless him in all times, in ease and hardships, in adversity as in prosperity : and I would not that any thing had gone otherwise, than all the adversities you have seen befall me ; seeing all have fallen out for my good, and GOD hath reaped his glory from the injuries of our adversaries.

As to good works, do as many as you can, and you shall be recompensed for every one of them to all eternity : From which you ought not to desist, for the inventions of men, who say, that they are filthiness, or that it is to justify one's self to do good works to be saved. But you must strive to do good works, according as you have a desire to approach nearer to CHRIST ; with this condition notwithstanding, that ye do your good works to please GOD, and not to satisfy yourself or any other creature.

For in this consisteth all the good and evil of your good works ; seeing the same works will be holy when they

shall be done in the will of GOD, and they will be evil when they shall be done to satisfy ourselves. For all sins and all virtue consist in following the will of GOD, or in following our own will; seeing there is no other sin in substance, but that of withdrawing our affections from GOD, to place them upon any creature: and there is no other true virtue in substance, but that of having all our affections fixed upon GOD.

And by this you may comprehend how the good works of men are filthiness: for of necessity every good work done to please men, or to satisfy ourselves, must be disagreeable to GOD; seeing man was created for no other end but to love him, and that notwithstanding he carrieth his affections unto vile and abject creatures, in contempt of the end for which he was created. He incurreth also his wrath, so long as he abideth out of his love; and he abides out of his love, so far as he loves himself, or other creatures: and therefore all the works which he doeth in that state, are defiled by sin: although in themselves they are good, they are rendered evil for being done out of the grace of GOD, and shall be condemned by him as filthiness.

Howbeit, we should not forbear to do as many good works as we can, during this mortal life, into which we are sent to fight against our enemies: how can we abide without fighting, or doing good works, without being overcome by our mortal enemies, the Devil and the flesh? which enemies we must continually overcome, if we would be saved. And for this, good works are precisely necessary to salvation. Not that GOD hath need of our good works to save us; but we have need to do good works to be saved.

Does not CHRIST say to his Apostles, concerning some devils, "This kind of devils goes not forth, but by fasting and prayer?" Upon which I would willingly ask them who despise good works, how they can be freed from these kinds of devils, if they will not fast nor pray to obtain their salvation? And how shall those carry the

kingdom of heaven by force, who will do nothing to have it ?

Whereby we may see, in how great an error those are who despise good works, and in how dangerous a time we live; seeing in it, a lie is taught for the truth. And although these Preachers teach the Gospel by words, they belie it by their glosses and by their actions, and teach the people, that they cannot imitate **JESUS CHRIST**, although he saith expressly, “ Be ye followers of me ; ” and that to do good works to be saved, is to justify ourselves : whereas the Scripture saith, “ Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; ” and in another place, “ Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.” By which it appears, that **GOD** precisely commandeth to labour and to good works, for obtaining eternal life ; for he saith, “ Ask, and ye shall obtain ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ; and he that seeketh findeth.”

But these new doctors have found out so subtle inventions to seduce men, that it were impossible to discover them without the **SPIRIT** of **GOD** ; for they cover their errors with holiness and humility ; they say, we must do good works only in acknowledgment of that which **CHRIST** hath done. Which things give a colour of piety to their sins, in seeking to give thanks to **GOD** by their good works and acknowledging they can merit nothing by their good works, nor have salvation by their merits, which is most true ; for salvation was given us immediately by **GOD**, at the time of our creation ; and all men were created in **ADAM** to salvation, and made heirs of heaven. Insomuch that they ought to do nothing to have this kingdom, which was freely given them in property. And also temporal man could not merit the least thing that is eternal. And all the good works of angels and men together can never merit the least degree of eternal glory. Likewise, **GOD** will never have need of any merits to save men, seeing he is **ALMIGHTY**, independent of all things, particularly of the merits of men.

But though this be true, with relation to GOD, yet it is not true with relation to men, seeing they have need to employ all kinds of means to recover the grace of GOD, after having so carelessly lost it by their sins: and after man hath voluntarily thrown himself into hell, can it be said that he would be presumptuous, or that he would justify himself, in doing his endeavour to come out of it? Is it not a greater presumption to say, that he would do nothing to come out of it, and that GOD must deliver him from it, if he would save him? For GOD hath no need of men; and he remains as glorious, when man abides in hell, as when he saves himself: seeing GOD is a Sovereign, independent of all things, whose glory depends upon nothing but himself. And if man doeth good works, it is only for himself: for GOD has no need of our acknowledgments.

And it is a great pride to think that GOD would have man to do good works to honour him, or to recompense that which he hath done for men; seeing he hath nothing worthy of GOD, and that man can never do any thing in acknowledgment of the favours received from his GOD: in regard that man is but a poor nothing, mere weakness and corruption, from which can proceed nothing worthy to be offered to GOD, in acknowledgment of that which GOD has done for man. For these new casuists themselves say, that the good works of men are filthiness: How then will they present to GOD filthiness in recompense of that which GOD has done for them? This were odious: for the proverb says, 'That it were better to have our vessel empty, than filled with uncleanness.'

By which it appears, that those ignorant persons contradict themselves by their evil doctrines, while they say on the one side, That good works are filthiness and thorns, which pierce the body of JESUS CHRIST; and on the other side, That we must do good works in testimony of the love we bear to GOD; which cannot agree: For a person would hold it for a great affront, if any should

present him with filthiness and thorns, that pierce his body, in recompense of the good deeds which he had received from that person. Must we not then believe, that **God** would find himself much more affronted, when his creature should present him with filthiness and things that offend him? This is what these Reformed do, who say, That good works are filthiness; and on the other side, That they must do good works in testimony of the love they bear unto **God**.

Surely it is time that **God** send his **HOLY SPIRIT** that "leads men into all truth," seeing they are in so great darkness, that they know not whither they are going, and take (almost in all things) that which is false for true. Reckon yourself happy for having known the truth from lying, and follow it faithfully even unto death.

God hath no need of our actions, but willeth that we should prove ourselves, to know if we be entirely subject to the will of **God**, and if we be ready to obey him when we discover his holy will, in things small and great. If we would have eternal life, we must obey him in this life in small things, because men have no great matters to do here; all their greatest affairs are but trifles before **God**: But he considers in all our works the obedience and submission we have for him.

For it is most true, that the same actions may be sin and virtue, according to the different intentions wherewith they are done. For example: Ye may be neat, cleanly, and order your actions well, to be esteemed a good manager, or for human respects; and these ends are sins. But to do all these things carefully to obey **God**, and to please him; these ends are virtuous, and make a man perfect, although otherwise he have nothing singular or extraordinary in his behaviour: It is enough that he suffer himself to be governed by the will of **God**.

And ye need not resort to Universities to learn this lesson; seeing the simplest peasant in the world may suffer himself to be governed by the **SPIRIT** of **God** in every

thing, if he will submit himself to him. There are only three words to be learned, which are, Submission to the will of GOD, voluntarily and without contradiction.

Behold a short lesson, easy to be practised by him who has firmly resolved upon it: for all consists in knowing, if ye will or will not obey GOD in every thing; forasmuch as in this point consist all perfection and imperfection, all virtue and impiety; yea, life and death eternal depend upon following our own will or the will of GOD. Not one single person shall be saved, dying out of the conduct of GOD, and nobody shall ever be damned but he who will die in his own will. Wherefore, there needs not so many books, studies, or practices, to teach the way of salvation; seeing it consists in denying our own will, to resign ourselves to the will of GOD. This resignation of your own will to that of GOD, will assuredly conduct you to the heavenly Jerusalem, whither we may all arrive by this single and only means of resignation to the will of GOD.

April 1, 1674.



LETTER XXI.

That it is profitable to know our own corruption.

MY CHILD,

I HAVE seen your confession, and your resolution to submit yourself entirely to the will of GOD in all things: and I shall never ask more, provided you will make it effectual. But if you cannot do that, I would rather desire that you do not stay with me, because we should breed trouble to one another without profit. For as for me, I cannot forbear to do the will of GOD, so far as I know it; and when you do not follow it, I must needs tell you it, if I would discharge my conscience, and that sometimes even with rough words, which your corrupt nature cannot endure.

And you would have some reason to dislike it, if I had reproved you out of passion: for I have no authority over you, besides that you willingly give me. Neither would I ever have authority over any body, no, not over my servants, from whom I would have no other but voluntary services, in leaving them always free to serve me, or to leave me. And if I do this towards wicked creatures, what ought I not to do towards the children of GOD? I will not take away this liberty from any body, no, not from the children whom GOD hath given me, who shall be always free for me, to follow me, or to leave me when they please.

But so long as I see they are willing to accomplish the will of GOD, according to their power, I cannot leave them, because of the covenant I have entered into with them, which nobody can dissolve, because it is GOD himself who hath bound it up. And there is nothing but sin which can separate the mother from the children, who, notwithstanding, has an order from their father not to suffer their sins any longer: whereof I have advertised them, to the end that they may take their measures thereby, and be surprised with nothing; and if you have for yourself, resolved before GOD and men to submit your own will to that of GOD, come stay with me, you shall be very welcome; for they are such children whom I esteem and seek after. I will assist them as well in reference to their bodies as their souls: but those who still continue to follow their own wills, have nothing to do to trouble me, or to come near me, to breed me the displeasure of seeing them live in sin, without being able to amend them.

If I followed this corrupt will of mine, I should perhaps commit greater faults than you do; you commit them often, because you have not discovered the original of this evil, which proceedeth from this, that you love as yet to follow your own will.

And so long as you continue in this affection, you will continually fall from one evil to another, and will never have the liberty of a true child of GOD, who, being entirely resigned unto the conduct of GOD, lives as a child with-

out care, carried in the arms of his father, delivered from the slavery of the Devil, who can have no hold upon the person who hates his own will, and will follow it no more in any thing. I know well that you have not a desire to do evil, but a resolution to please GOD: nevertheless, you do evil and displease GOD in following your own will; you have passed the two first bridges, have forsaken the world, and the love of the riches and pleasures thereof. But you find difficulty to pass the third, which is, to forsake the desire of following your own will. This hath always seemed the easiest to me, although it seem the hardest to you; for that you have not sufficiently penetrated the thing itself, and have suffered yourselves insensibly to be carried away by the motives of your own wills, without discovering that this was evil, whilst I see no more in you but this which hinders you from receiving the SPIRIT of GOD according to your wish.

My children, do not think that I require any complacency or man-pleasing from you; I should be troubled to see you aiming at that: but I should have great joy, if I saw that the hatred of your own wills were planted in the bottom of your souls, and that you were in a firm effectual resolution never to follow them any more. Then there should be no more differences among us. What one willed, another would do by the same SPIRIT of GOD, which would govern us all without opposition.

Nov. 11, 1676.



LETTER XXII.

That the Self-will of Children ought to be mortified.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

I WAS glad to see by yours of the 16th of November, that you praise GOD for having found in my writings

profitable and wholesome instructions, because I doubted if you were content to forsake the miserable world, to find rest to your soul. You now know how much the nature of men is corrupted by sin, and is become evil to such a degree, that there needs no more but to follow it to go to hell.

Now for resisting it, we must do violence to ourselves, and contradict every thing that corrupt nature desires. This is troublesome to persons of age, who by long custom have inured themselves to follow their own will ; but young children are more tractable to comply with reason, when they are governed by it. This depends upon the good conduct of those who have the charge of them : for a child is like soft wax, on which you may impress what seal you please ; and if christian virtue were stamped upon them from their tender age, they would follow it with as much joy as they do their corrupt nature, which is insolent and never satisfied or content, but still desiring that which it hath not. For this cause the fathers and mothers of Christian children ought to govern their children according to reason, and to give them their necessities by weight and measure, without following that to which they are inclined, because that natural inclination is always vicious ; and if you suffer these vices to grow up with the child, you will find it very difficult to amend them, when they are become strong.

Wherefore, I advise you, to govern your children well, and to give them only that which you clearly see to be necessary for their maintenance, without asking them what they would have, or what they would not have ; but to make them content with that which is good and wholesome for them, without giving them, through too great a fondness, all they desire, seeing their desires can never be good, as proceeding from their own corrupt nature, wherein they are born, as all the children of ADAM, who are children of wrath and sin : and if during this mortal life they do not overcome this corruption, they die children of wrath, and perish eternally.

Therefore if you love yours, you must govern them according to the will of God, and not according to their own appetites and perverse wills. For if you shall govern them well, they will bless you in heaven to all eternity: but if you suffer them to follow their own wills, they will despise you in this world, and curse you to all eternity. And mothers may likewise greatly contribute to their salvation, when during their tender years they instruct them in the Christian doctrine, exercising their manners in the practice thereof, until this practice is changed into nature, and makes them happy both in this world, and that which is to come.

Now it concerns you, my friends, to know if ye be resolved to become true Christians or not. But if ye wish this happiness to your own souls, prepare it also for those of your children, and habituate them in their tender years to deny their own wills. Never give them what they desire, when ye see that the thing which they desire is not good or necessary. Break their wills as much as ye can, and ye shall make them happy in time and eternity.

Seeing there are so many noble persons, and persons of quality, who break the self-will of their children in all things, to make them esteemed among men, how much more ought a Christian to do this, to make their children acceptable unto God? And those parents dare not sometimes give their children as much as they have need of, for fear they become too gross: others dare not suffer an easy garment for their bodies, or shoe for their feet, to be made for them, for fear they grow too big: they make bare their arms and neck, even in the time of the greatest colds, and the children suffer all this willingly, because it seems good to their parents, who sometimes mortify them so much, that they eat not a morsel according to their own will.

And this will not hurt the health of your children. Rather, children who are suffered to follow their own wills, are languishing, lean, and perish: and I know by experience, and by having governed a great number of

children in the Hospital of Lisle, that children and other persons keep their health much better by living regularly, eating and drinking moderately, and of common fare, taken at the ordinary time, than those who follow their appetites; by eating unseasonably, or of dainty meats, or abundance of meat and drink. For I have many times received into that hospital, children descended both of rich and poor parents, who had been equally accustomed to eat and drink at all hours, when they had a mind to it, or to have meat and drink according to their taste, and would not eat this or that, forbearing to eat when they had not dainties according to their fancies, while in the mean time they appeared extenuated, of a yellow colour, and pale, like decaying or sick persons: but after I had kept them three months in the hospital, nourished with common fare, and well ordered in time, as all the rest, these children, who before were spoiled, became healthy and cheerful, changing their colour, and growing sensibly better, after they had done some violence to themselves in the beginning, and I had constrained them to submit to the rule appointed for doing every thing; for I did not suffer any to eat or drink out of time, but precisely at eight o'clock in the morning, at twelve o'clock of the day, and eight at night. At other times, nobody ate so much as an apple; for when any fruit was brought from their parents, it was carried to the buttery, and set on the table at meal-time before her for whom it was brought, who distributed the same to her companions as she thought fit, but could carry nothing away from the table, the rest being laid up until to-morrow. I likewise caused them all to rise and lie down in summer and winter at the same hour, readily to pray to **God**, and to work altogether at the appointed time, without any partiality or exception. And I found by experience, that this government gave good health to all those that were under my charge, and they were content after they were accustomed to the rules of the house. Nobody murmured at it, and every one took well with it, even those who had been accustomed before to eat and drink,

sleep and work, when and how they pleased : and many of these young maids, whom I placed in service with the inhabitants of the town, gave me thanks for having so reclaimed their natures that they were for that cause loved and contented where they stayed, as their masters and mistresses also came often to thank me for giving them so good maid-servants, because this is so rare among poor people, since they often spoil their children more in their tender years, than the rich, believing they do them good by suffering them to follow all their wills ; which is a great abuse, since, on the contrary, it is really to do them great evil, and to make them miserable in time and in eternity.

For a child that is not broken in his tender age, will not willingly be subject to another when he is grown up, and would always follow his own will as he has been accustomed, and likewise will not be content with the fare which he gets elsewhere, when he has been used to eat that which his corrupt nature loved best at home. This change must needs be troublesome to him, whereas the accustoming to a good rule makes him happy and contented wheresoever he may chance to be ; and to eat coarse meats with as good a stomach as those that are delicate, regarding nothing but necessity.

But children who are accustomed to follow their own wills in their younger years, will follow it in every thing when they are of age, if they have the means to do it : and if they be used in their tender age, to eat and drink at all hours, according to their appetite, they will hold on this course after they are grown up.

Behold then, how fathers and mothers oft-times contribute to the damnation of their children, whilst in the mean time, they may be damned themselves for not having governed their children well. We hear that ELI, the High Priest, was punished of God, who broke his neck by falling backwards, when he heard that the ark of the covenant was taken, and his two sons killed. Every one knows, that this man was of a good life, and that he was not

chastised for his own sins, but because he had not chastised his children for their misdeeds, but had only told them mildly, that they did ill and offended the LORD.

And if this sin of omission was so exemplarily punished in a holy man, how much more will the negligences be punished, which fathers and mothers commit in relation to their children, whom they love so sottishly as to suffer them to follow their corrupt natures, to make them miserable in time and eternity, through too great tenderness, being unwilling to mortify them in their youth. Surely they ought to expect eternal chastisements on this account, for that they sin divers ways in their children: some by counselling them to do evil for their revenge, and others by tolerating their evil; some by defending it, another by praising or flattering it; others by abetting and maintaining it; others by not revealing it, or sharing in it.

Thus men are so blind, that they not only do not see all the sins which they commit in another, but also teach their children to sin in their youth, without thinking they do evil; yea, they believe they give a testimony of their friendship to their children, by inculcating sin upon their souls from their tender age: since as soon as a child is born, they cover it with rich cloth, carrying it to baptism covered with gold, silk, or embroidery; and as soon as he begins to have his eyes open to behold vanities, they show them to him, praising them as beautiful, that they may entice his tender heart to covet them. And we see plainly that the corruption of the child's nature taketh delight to see any thing that is beautiful and shining, even before it have any sentiment of reason, because of the inclination to evil wherein man is born, which inclination the parents cherish, instead of rooting it out.

Yea, they incite them to sin more than their nature is inclined, by praising to them vanities, and every thing that is beautiful and good to the senses, before the spirit of the children be capable to love them themselves; for if they clothe them with any white linen, or some fashionable stuff, they tell them over and over again that this is pretty,

and the child is fine, that by these commendations the child may imprint on its heart the vanity of being fine, and the desire of being well clothed. They do the same in relation to meat and drink, which they give not to children according to their necessities, but according to their sensuality; saying to them, 'O how good is it! How delicious is it! Eat, it is so good!' And by those means they urge them to take delicate morsels, and to delight in them, settling their tender affections upon them, instead of settling them upon God; and they grow up, thus turned away from the love of God, to place their affections on drinking, eating, clothing, and other sensual things.

Hence it is, that persons advanced in age know not what it is to love God, because they were not taught this in their youth, but to love themselves and the pleasures of all their senses, according to which they live and die, without apprehending the danger of their salvation. Thus living as the beasts, by seeking after that which is most beautiful, and the best, according to their appetites and desires, as if they had no other felicity to expect, but the sensual pleasures which they can taste in this world.

But if you would become true Christians, exercise yourselves in the mortification of your senses, and endeavour likewise to exercise your children therein while they are young, to the end you may make them happy in this temporal life, and that which is eternal.

The 13th of December, 1676.



LETTER XXIII.

That solid Virtue doth not consist barely in good Desires.

MY FRIEND,

By yours of the fifth of this month, I see that you feel in your soul strong motions, and desire to know if they

come from **GOD**, because of the dangers of Antichrist ; which ought to be feared ; for at present he seduceth much under the appearance of holiness, whereby well-meaning persons are seduced by the Devil, who imprints upon their spirit, that they have already attained a disengagement from earthly things, yea, to resignation ; although as yet they do not so much as know what true virtue is, which consists in the renouncing our own wills, to leave ourselves in all things to the will of **GOD**, so as not to follow corrupt nature in any thing. If you be in that state, you are without doubt to believe, that the motions you feel in your soul come from the **HOLY SPIRIT**. But if they do not produce in your soul such operations, you must suspect these motions and not follow them, but so far as they induce you to the love of **GOD**, and hatred of yourself.

For to rely upon some sensible sweetnesses, or views of divine things, is dangerous, even though those sweetnesses and good thoughts did come from **GOD** ; because nature always flatters itself, and there is nothing more deceitful than the heart of man.

This I find by experience more and more ; for I know persons who esteem themselves virtuous, because they have good desires ; or believe they are regenerate, because they have a desire to be so ; which are nothing but amusements of **SATAN**, who endeavours to fill men with false hopes, that do not produce their effects, to the end he may make them spend their life in spiritual negligence, and live and die in the corruption whereinto they are fallen by the sin of **ADAM**, that they may never attain to the true new birth by the **SPIRIT** of **JESUS CHRIST**. This is the most cunning device of **SATAN**, wherewith he makes many to perish, although desirous of virtue : hence it is said, ‘ That hell is paved with good intentions.’ These are necessary for attaining salvation ; yet men will not be saved by them, when they do not put them in execution to the utmost of their power.

For a good desire is nothing but a good motion. which

God puts in the soul to see if it will correspond therewith. And if God do not give this, man could never have it of himself; for of himself he is ever inclined to do evil, and not good. It is God who of his pure mercy gives good desires to men, without their being able to deserve them in the least; yea, gives them sometimes to great sinners, who, in the midst of their sins, often feel desires to forsake sin, and be converted to God; because God "desireth not the death of a sinner, but that he may be converted and live." For this end he never fails to give man good desires, yea, occasions for doing good; but it is man's own fault if he do not co-operate with these good desires which God hath given him: for as it is God's work to inspire good, so it is also man's part to execute the good wherewith God inspires him.

Not that man of himself hath strength to execute the good inspirations of God, in regard he is so corrupted that he can do no good without a particular grace, or the increase of new and continual grace; but it is most certain that God, on his part, giveth and continually augmenteth his grace to him who truly seeks and desires it.

For if the soul were faithful to the desire which God gives, to become a true Christian, it would assuredly find all the means of doing this, by embracing the Gospel law; but if a person will continue in corrupt nature, without being willing to renounce the same, it is impossible he can become a true Christian, though God often give him the desire thereof.

God will force nobody, after he hath created all men free. He inspires them, and draws them by good motions, which they ought to follow without constraint, by taking and seeking all the means which may lead them to christian perfection. And in doing this God will assist them, by augmenting his grace, strength, and light every moment.

But if a person neglect to seek him, he shall not have the grace to find him. Wherefore the Scripture saith,

“He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

God always knocks at our heart first by good desires, and by his light makes us see the vanity of the world, the looseness of Christians, the wickedness of men, and the danger that is in conversing with them. When all these things are discovered by our understanding, it is God who hath knocked at the door of our heart, to awake us out of the sleep of death ; and he strikes yet more forcibly, when he gives us the desire of forsaking the world, and coming out of the dangers thereof, that we may not partake of its sins ; and God strikes this third blow on the heart of man, when he gives him the resolution to become a true Christian.

Behold what God does on his part, to draw us to him ; but if man turn a deaf ear, and do not embrace the means to follow these lights, and to effectuate these good desires, God ceaseth to knock and to give new strength, limiting his graces to the correspondence which the soul makes to the first, to which having corresponded, the soul shall always feel new strength, and an augmentation of light and grace, by the goodness and mercies of God.

Wherefore men greatly deceive themselves, to expect an augmentation of grace, so long as they do not correspond with the first, since God hath promised to set those over great things, who have been faithful in small things.

I see, my Friend, that you are willing to correspond with the grace of God, since you have forsaken the world to follow JESUS CHRIST: This is to have passed the first bridge, to come at the heavenly Jerusalem. You must endeavour also to pass the other two, that you may not die in the wilderness, without ever coming to the Land of Promise. I perceive well that you are walking on the second, and that your heart is disengaged from covetousness ; there remains no more for you to do, but to pass the third bridge of the denial of your own will, which is

not yet wholly submitted to the will of GOD. Entirely submit to the will of GOD in every thing, without being willing to follow your own in any thing.

The 17th of June, 1675.



LETTER XXIV

That we must renounce the Ease and Pleasures of Nature.

MY CHILD,

I WAS glad to understand your safe arrival, with the provisions; but I am sorry to hear that the meat and work do not please you. I gave the charge of governing these affairs to CLAS FLORIS, that he may dispose of them according as he finds convenient; and I am not present to see myself how he doeth; for this cause, I cannot give him a particular rule for his behaviour. He must do as he understands, seeing he is a man of spirit and of conscience. But it may be he hath more zeal for overcoming corrupt nature than others have.

In which he excels you; since, being free to take the best, he is willing to content himself with that which is mean. And this should serve you for an example, rather than an occasion of murmuring, since he, being old, doeth willingly that which you, who are young, do unwillingly; for you know that he came out of the same house out of which you are come, where men studied to take the best of every thing, to satisfy corrupt nature, and hath cast himself, of his own accord, into an abstinence from these things. He might have drunk wine and milk, and nevertheless was willing to content himself with whey and butter-milk, having eaten very little flesh and eggs during so severe a winter, in which they daily removed the snow, ere he could get out of the house. In short, his life has

·been nothing but labour and mortification, for overcoming in himself the flesh and the world, which he had forsaken, to become a disciple of **JESUS CHRIST**.

And you have also forsaken the world for the same end. Will you not then use the same means which he found so advantageous, that he wrote from the bottom of his heart, he wished to have the same labour all the days of his life ?

Wherein he testified, that his penitence was voluntary, and not constrained : but it seems that yours is not such, and that you endure labour and sobriety unwillingly ; which must needs be troublesome to you, since nature doth then suffer much, when it cannot have that which it desires.

But these sufferings are mitigated, when men ask their reason why this corruption suffers, and for what end ? Reason answers, It is to overcome your corruptions, and to save your soul. This should make all contradictions light, since life eternal well deserves that we should do some violence to ourselves ; which life nobody can obtain, without resisting this corruption.

But because men do not understand the Scriptures, they believe it is prudence to take the most beautiful or the best, and to give way to ease and sensual appetite ; although this is quite contrary to the doctrine of **JESUS CHRIST** and his Apostles, and to the practice of the ancient Fathers, and of the Christians of the primitive Church ; instead of which, the Apostles speak of nothing but of labours, of sufferings, of torments, and persecutions.

How is it possible that he who would become a true Christian should not remember all these things, and the ways wherein the first Christians walked, who, forsaking all, willingly exposed themselves to the want of all temporal things, embracing the poverty of **JESUS CHRIST**, though poverty brings many hardships ? Those that were desirous to follow **JESUS CHRIST**, did not fear all these things, but embraced them with joy, and practised them with contentment.

You have read in what austerities the ancient hermits of Egypt lived, most of whom lay upon the naked earth, eating nothing but raw herbs and roots, being poorly clothed, enduring patiently the great colds and heats of these desert places; some carried great stones all the day long from one mountain to another, to beat down their bodies; others lay naked in the snow, for the same effect; the most part ate but once a day after sun-set, esteeming themselves happy when they had water for their drink.

This example should encourage you to suffer the little inconveniences which you find in the service of God, since you desire to be saved; as well as those that endured so much, to overcome the corruption of their nature. And since God doth not require such austerities of you, suffer willingly the accidents that happen; and when your meat or drink does not please your taste, bless God, who (it may be) permits this, for subduing the sensual appetites which you have followed in time past.

Wherefore well-ordered Christians strive to mortify the corruption of nature in every thing: in drinking, eating, speaking, hearing, seeing, by doing the quite contrary to that which sensuality desireth. One of my acquaintance told me, that he was present in the cloister of Douay, when the son of a Prince was received among them, and that the first day he received the habit, the whole Convent had for their broth, beans boiled in water, without any other sauce than a little salt. When the Prince's portion was set before him, the very steam of these beans in his nose made the blood gush out in abundance; which the Prior seeing, said to the novice, My brother, eat these beans; they are good. And though the novice endeavoured to eat them, he could not swallow them down without being moved divers times to vomit; whilst in the mean time they gave him no other thing but these beans for his meal: and seeing that he ate nothing, the Prior said in the end, I perceive our brother hath no stomach for these beans to day; he must get of them tomorrow, he will eat them better. And so for three days the novice got no other

thing to eat, but the beans which had been served up to him the first day, and by this means he overcame the sense of taste, ate the beans, and afterwards all kinds of meats, how harsh or coarse soever.

I do not approve that so great severity should be used in this point toward beginners ; but I would greatly commend, that a novice should study to mortify himself, by taking contentedly all that is set before him, blessing God when he gives him any thing that is good, in regard of his weakness ; and contenting himself with things that do not please his taste, because he knows himself unworthy, by reason of his sins, to have even dry bread.

This should be the exercise and practice of him that desires to become a true Christian ; for if a person will needs continue seeking his appetite, he shall never attain Christian perfection.

You think, if the body were treated, the soul would be the calmer. This may readily deceive you, seeing ordinarily the spirit lives according as the flesh dies ; and you have told me, that you knew this by your own experience, and that the flesh doth not so much trouble you in Northstrand as it did when you were in the world, and when its appetite was better served ; which proveth sufficiently that the labour and victuals of Northstrand are more wholesome than the labour and victuals which you had in Hamburgh.

This should make you resolve to love abstinence and labour, more than ease and good fare ; embracing the cross of CHRIST rather than ease and repose ; for to follow your corrupt nature, leads unto hell.

The 23d of August, 1676.

LETTER XXV.

He that denies not himself cannot be a true Christian.

MY FRIENDS,

I HAVE received a letter written by you both, the 9th of January this year, by which you acquaint me with the resolution which ye have taken together, to forsake the world, and to retire to Northstrand, where you desire to buy some possession, to live there together with your family; which seemeth to me very good, provided you were constant to persevere therein.

But I have seen you so changeable, that I cannot advise you any more. I must leave you to do as you shall think fit, because you are not resigned to the will of GOD. You will, and you will not: for as soon as you find any difficulties in the service of GOD, you look back, with LOT'S wife; and instead of embracing the cross, to follow JESUS CHRIST, you seek to be delivered from it as soon as may be, and give ear to men who flatter corrupt nature: and so long as you shall continue in this disposition, you will always change; but when a person finds himself thus changeable, he may be sure it is the Devil that governs him.

For the good Spirit is firm, and constant, and unchangeable; rendering us patient to wait GOD'S disposal, to suffer and endure all things willingly for his service: for it would be a delusion to desire to enter into the service of GOD, that we may suffer nothing; since we find ourselves obliged to suffer so much in the service of the world, wherein crosses are inevitable, and much heavier than can be in the service of GOD, where a man ought to rejoice in sufferings, because these sufferings serve to perfect our souls, and the crosses of the world afflict both the body and the soul.

I know by experience, the crosses which GOD has sent me in his service, did more comfort my soul than the greatest pleasures I could take in the service of the world; for I have an inward consolation, when I think that

JESUS CHRIST declares them blessed that suffer in his service, saying, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." And if I should have suffered crosses, persecutions, and contempt, in the service of the world, as I have suffered in the service of GOD, methinks I could not have endured them; but the resolution which I have to embrace the cross, to follow CHRIST, makes all the difficulties that befall me light; blessing GOD that He has made me able to follow JESUS CHRIST in suffering.

Wherefore I am astonished to see you (with so many others) look back for trifles, or some words or actions that did not please you, or for some imperfections of others, which in no wise concern you, since GOD will ask an account of you of your own state only, not that of others. So that all these reasons ought not to make you turn back from a resolution which you had taken, to become true Christians: for though you had not found in the service of GOD all your ease and conveniences, and had endured the imperfections of others, yea, the reproaches and contempt of your brethren; all these things should not have made you turn back in the voyage of eternity, which you had undertaken by the grace of GOD.

If the desire of travelling towards eternity had been absolute in you both, so small things as you met with in the way, would not have been capable of turning you aside from it, and crosses would have confirmed you the more in virtue, which can never be solid in you before it be exercised by sufferings and contradictions. As a pilgrim cannot travel into far countries without-being provided with victuals, no more can a person travel towards eternity, without carrying with him the food of his soul, which is the cross, sufferings, and spiritual conversation: all which things you might have found with us. For it is impossible in a community of different humours and natures, that persons can live without mutual forbearance; because yourselves not being perfect more than others, it is necessary that they bear with you, and you with them; since

otherwise your several virtues would not be exercised, nor your faults amended, if they were not observed and admonished by others. This is the advantage which is found in communities, that they may exercise and admonish one another. For this cause it is that DAVID says, "It is good for brethren to dwell together;" and that the Scripture says, "Woe to him that is alone, for if he fall there will be none to lift him up." But he that goes out of a community, that he may live after his own way and be reprov'd by nobody, deprives himself of all these advantages.

You both did leave your country and kindred, that you might become true Christians; but when you were come hither, you sought for a convenient house, not willing to content yourself with such a place as I could afford you. After this, you murmured against the victuals which our brethren gave you, and bought for yourselves apart. And you did likewise take offence at some things which our brethren said or did, contrary to your sentiments, and sought persons to murmur with you, that you might second corrupt nature. All those things sufficiently declare, that you came to Holstein to seek your pleasures, as you had sought them in the world, and to take the most beautiful and the best, if you could have it.

This a person should never do, when he resolves to become a true Christian; because CHRIST teaches him, "to deny himself," and to take the last place, even then when he may easily have the first; as CHRIST did, who being LORD and Master of all that was most beautiful and best, did choose the least of all things for his use, taking more pleasure in poverty than in all riches.

Whereby you may see, that you came not to Holstein to imitate CHRIST, but rather to live there according to the motions of corrupt nature; which, not having according to its wish, it hath made you turn back, and will do it yet, if you do not resolve to make war against it, and give it the contrary of that which it desires, to the end you may gain "the kingdom of heaven by force;" which kingdom I

cannot see that you have truly sought hitherto : since I know by experience, that he who seeketh the kingdom of heaven, is not solicitous about that which he shall eat or drink, wherewith he shall be clothed, or in what place he shall reside ; it sufficeth him that he advances in his voyage, without turning aside from it, to seek after a better lodging, or a better table : for he thinks it enough for him to find simply wherewith to entertain his life, without desiring any other thing, or so much as looking after a house where he shall lodge at night, until weariness oblige him to rest ; and then he takes it as he finds it.

I travelled so, when I came out of my country, and my Father's house, to follow CHRIST, and to become a Christian. I had taken a resolution to travel all the day, and to rest where the night should surprise me ; and if I had found a stable, I would have gone into it to pass the night ; and if I had not found any house, I would have reposed in the fields ; for I had no other care, but to arrive at eternity ; all other things were only accidental to me. I had neither scrip, nor money, nor any human help, believing firmly, that GOD was able to preserve me in life, even without eating, if that should fail ; as I truly found by experience.

For the first day that I came out of my Father's house, without taking a penny with me, I travelled about ten leagues, without drinking or eating, and I had neither hunger nor thirst, being so full that I could not drink a drop, or eat a morsel that was presented to me in the house where I lodged at night. And I esteemed myself happy when I could lodge in a barn ; where I thanked the persons that gave me a bundle of straw to lie upon, and the next day bread and a glass of water for my food ; and I rejoiced in the bottom of my soul for the happiness I had, to follow the poverty of JESUS CHRIST at some distance, after I had left the pleasures and conveniences of my Father's house. I did not regret the want of his fine house, or my well furnished chamber ; but was afraid lest I should be known, to be forced to return thither.

If **GOD** love you, he will treat you as he did the disciples of **JESUS CHRIST**, who followed their Master in all kinds of labours, and in the end were almost all put to death, for having followed the truth of the Gospel.

And now those who seek to be disciples of the same master, will not suffer contempt, or any hardship, and seek their conveniences as much in following him, as they did in the service of the world, which I cannot comprehend ; since **JESUS CHRIST** yesterday and to-day is always the same, and will never change. His Gospel is the last of laws **GOD** will give men ; we are not to expect another ; and the persons who at this day desire to become true Christians, ought to have the same dispositions that those of the primitive Church had ; otherwise they deceive themselves as much as others, who persuade themselves, that they can become true Christians in abiding in self-love, and seeking their pleasures and conveniences.

For you must imitate **JESUS CHRIST**, that you may be his disciples ; and you must deny yourself to follow him. And if you have not a resolution to do this, you ought not to return to me, since my bodily presence cannot save you, no more than all those were saved who followed **JESUS CHRIST** to hear his word, seeing many of them were damned : for the Scripture tells us, that **JESUS CHRIST** said unto them, who said to him that he had walked in their streets, “ I know you not ; ” to teach us, that he will reject those who have followed him, and heard his word, when they shall have not put the same in practice.

It is very displeasing to a traveller, to be in the company of persons travelling with him, who complain and murmur at all things, saying at sometimes, that the sun is too hot, and then that the air is too cold ; that the rain wets them, or the dust blinds their eyes ; that the way is too rough, too hard, or too dirty ; that they are weary, and desiring to rest, when it is time to travel ; being discontent that they cannot find meat and drink according to their mind.

All these things would be troublesome to a pilgrim, who is accustomed joyfully, and with patience, to suffer the

inconveniences of travelling, and he would have reason to say to such a company, ‘ He who would have his ease should stay at home ; ’ because ill accommodations are inseparable from travelling, to which hardships belong.

I say the same to all those who desire to follow me in the voyage to eternity, in which sensual persons are stones of stumbling to me, by making the way tedious with their complaints. For this cause, I love better to travel alone towards eternity, than to be accompanied by persons who seek their sensual ease and accommodations.

I mean not that we must die of hunger or labour, because **God** doth always provide for our necessity. And I have travelled many years in these ways, without ever wanting any thing necessary for life. But I was always content with that which **God** gave me.

And when he gives me any victuals I eat them, and do not consider if they are exactly to my taste or not: for sharp and sweet, cold and hot, are all alike to me. If I find abundance, I take no more thereof but what is necessary: and if I meet with scarcity, I endure it joyfully. I take as much of travel as I can bear, and rest when I may conveniently. When I am thirsty, and have nothing to drink, I put a pin into my mouth, and chew it, to bring spittle; and when I cannot relieve myself, I endure all with patience, though it were death itself, if **God** should send it.

Behold the deportment of one who travels towards eternity. If any one will bear her company after this manner, he shall be acceptable to her; for if nature be social, the spirit is yet more so, willingly uniting itself with its like: and their journey seems light and pleasant unto them, in discoursing together of the felicities which they shall find at the end of their journey, and in speaking of the shortest and easiest ways to come at it.

This comforts the soul, and makes that a person feels neither hunger nor thirst, nor weariness or bodily inconvenience. Thus “ man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from **God**.” Which a person

may find by experience, that seriously entertains himself with discourses of life eternal, or with the words of God. He shall find even his body satisfied, which will have less need of bodily nourishment than it was wont to have, when he amused himself with talking of meat and drink, and other vain things.

For God nourisheth both the body and the soul, and blesseth the bodily food which is taken only for necessity : so that a person needs not take so great a quantity thereof for preserving health. But he that seeketh his pleasure in drinking and eating, shall not find this blessing in his victuals.

Not that God requires of us so great an austerity as that of the ancient hermits, who lay upon the ground, having nothing but herbs to eat ; since he gives us food and conveniences, such as little children might well subsist by : but he requires of them a resignation of their-wills to his, to suffer themselves to be entirely governed by his wisdom, not seeking any thing any more, but to know his holy will, to fulfil it constantly even unto death, remaining evermore content with every thing which God shall permit to befall them, and blessing Him always, as much for having little as for having much.

I am told, that they who have departed from me, say, they found God every where ; as well in being by themselves, as in the company of Christians. I should rejoice if this were true ; but I know the Devil deceives them, as he hath deceived you ; and that they will never find true virtue in staying by themselves.

If you had had charity, you would not have thought ill of the words or actions of our brethren, when you were with them : and if you had seriously laid to heart the perfection of your own souls, you would not have spent your time in observing the imperfections of others : you would have had work enough in amending your own ; for it is a great defect to expect to find more virtue in another, than we have acquired ourselves.

You ought to have had compassion upon the defects of

those, who strive to attain christian perfection, since yourselves have so great a difficulty to attain thereto, though you have the desire thereof. Ought you not then to believe that another hath also the same difficulty, because being all born in sin, we cannot do well but by force? And he that wrestles with his defects should not be despised, because he has not overcome them all: but he ought to be much esteemed, who seeks to overcome them.

And thus ought Christians to assist one another in their combats, without reproaching them, that in so long a time they have not yet carried the victory; because you do not know yourselves, in how much time you shall overcome one imperfection. It doth not belong to us to limit a time to any body; because this depends upon the grace of **God**, who knows better what is fitter for every one, than our short sight can penetrate.

You ought to be judges of yourselves only, and to condemn your own defects, without casting an eye upon the defects of others, of whom you have not the charge, since the Scripture doth severely threaten “those who meddle with other men’s business.”

How could you receive the light of the **HOLY SPIRIT**, in coming to us with an evil eye, to spy out our defects? You ought to have come with a child-like simplicity to learn, instead of desiring to give orders for the deportment of others, who seek to be governed by the **HOLY SPIRIT**, and to follow his direction; though in effect they do not obey Him according to their wish, and do not that which they would gladly do, but often that which they would not: “For the spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak.”

You thought they did ill to cheapen so nicely, and look so narrowly to every thing, though in effect they did this with reluctancy; for it is against natural inclination to apply ourselves to small things, because corrupt nature is always proud, and would appear liberal, to the end it may be esteemed of worldly persons, to whom it will not give trouble, by contradicting them, or refusing to give them that which they would have.

But **GOD** hath commanded me to resist them, and to give them nothing but that which is just and reasonable; because it is better to have their contempt and dislike, than to co-operate with their fraud and avarice: and I teach those things which I have learned of **GOD** to my children, who do not as yet follow them so much as I desire, because this is repugnant to their nature, which would like better to give every one what they ask, and to be esteemed and honoured even of the wicked. This is much more pleasant, and flatters the senses, which love ease and honour.

Yet I am not covetous: if **GOD** saw in my soul a coveting of temporal things, he could not give me his grace, and his lights in so great abundance as he doeth, and my soul would not be possessed by Him: because **GOD** and sin are two contraries which always drive out one another, and cannot dwell together, no more than in nature fire abideth in water. There is a greater disproportion between covetousness and the love of **GOD**, than between fire and water.

Wherefore, nobody should expect ever to have the love of **GOD**, so long as his heart is covetous.

Many indeed think it is niggardliness to look so narrowly to small matters, that I will not willingly suffer a pin to be lost, because they know the covetous do so also; and measuring me they do not penetrate from what principle this care of preserving all things doth proceed.

I was, by my natural inclination, disposed to negligence and prodigality, and did not look to small things, because I had what I desired for myself or others, to whom I gave willingly, to be esteemed and loved by them. And my corrupt nature judged itself happy, in being able to give freely to every one, "For there is more honour in giving than in receiving."

And I exceeded in these two vices, to wit, in negligence and prodigality; for from my infancy, I was so careless that I lost my books in the school, my aprons, my shoes,

and all things that were not sewed or strongly tied, for which my mother was often angry with me and chastised me, without being able to make me amend. I was likewise so liberal, that I gave all the meat and fruit which was brought me to the school, to poor children, and loved rather to suffer hunger, than to refuse any thing to them that asked it of me. And when I was come to the age of understanding, I continued thus, yea, exceeded in this liberality; I gave not only that whereof I had abundance, but also that which I had need of myself. For being as yet young in my father's house, I used not to eat the delicate meat which was served up there, but kept it, together with the wine, to carry to poor sick persons, to whom I carried the clean linen of my bed to be used by them. And when I had the management of my own goods, I dispensed them to those that had need of them. I lent to some, and gave to others, until I was forced to abstain from so doing, through the wickedness of those to whom I had lent, who studied to steal from me, and to live in sloth and gluttony with the money which I gave and lent them. And thus I was forced to give over lending to my neighbour, after I had lost considerable sums which I had lent them; though all their wickedness could not make me forsake the liberality which I had in my soul; for I resolved to take poor young girls into my lodging, and to instruct them in the fear of God, teaching them a trade whereby they might honestly gain their living, believing my liberality could not be better employed, (since I saw before my eyes to what my alms were applied,) than for the good of the soul and body of my neighbours; and I resolved to employ all the revenue which God had lent me, that way, believing that this would be acceptable to him, and that I might well exercise the inclination which I had to do good to others.

But God hath since made me see, that there is yet something more perfect than this liberality, which ministered only to the temporal accommodation of men, who did not serve God better with my assistance, than they had done

without it. On the contrary, they took occasion from thence to offend **God** more, as well by ingratitude, as by sloth, luxury, and gluttony; for so long as **I** gave them wherewith to live, they would not labour, because nature is so slothful, that it would never work, if without labour it could have what it desires.

Insomuch that **God** having made me know these things, **I** determined to change my resolution, and to overcome, by virtue, my natural negligence and liberality, to the end **I** might study for the time to come, to please **God** more than **I** had done men.

I now love rather to endure their contempt, than to disobey **God**, who commands me “to fulfil all righteousness,” to do all things in order, to put every thing to profit for the good of my neighbour.” And although these persons will not receive these instructions, yet **I** will fulfil them to the utmost of my power; knowing that it is not just to give the goods dedicated to **God**, to sensual persons, who would not employ them but to commit sin.

I cannot therefore, with peace of conscience, endure in my company, a person that by his excess or sloth brings loss, disorder, and confusion, into my household affairs; **I** must either reprove them for this, or else dismiss them; otherwise **I** co-operate with their sloth and negligence: and **I** have yet more reason to dismiss them, when they will needs make me understand that they do well in their way, and that **I** do ill in sifting them so narrowly, meaning to teach me that it were better to suffer them to follow their unruly passions, than to reprove them, or to be displeased with them.

Consider now if **I** have reason to restrain myself from giving to the wicked, and if **I** have not likewise ground to pay as little as **I** can for the things that **I** buy, or to persons whom **I** employ in any work, when they are covetous and unfaithful, seeking to make me pay more for things than they are worth. For the same charity should be exercised towards all kinds of persons, and the righteousness which **JESUS CHRIST** hath recommended, should be

put in practice on all occasions. And you ought not to consider, if the person be rich or poor whom you pay, or from whom you buy, but you are only to take notice if you pay the just price of that which you buy, or if you give the just wages of the work done, according to the rate of the place where you are ; for if you give more, you contribute to the frauds, to the lies and cheats which they put upon you, who would make you pay more than the just price of the things that you have need of ; whether it be their labour or merchandise : for their wickedness increaseth, according as you give easily to the wicked that which he desires ; and if to day you give him a penny more than he should have, tomorrow he would have two more, and the next day three, and afterwards four or five ; and this will increase to infinity, because covetousness is insatiable.

We must not then give our goods to the wicked that offend God by those gifts, nor pay covetous and deceitful merchants all they ask : for they do not only ask the just value of things, but the double, yea, thrice the double, and more, if they perceive you have not knowledge of that you are to buy, or that you are in great need of their wares : then will they straiten you, and cut you even to the bone, or they will leave you in your necessity.

I have seen this by experience ; merchants would not give me their merchandise, unless for more than the worth, when they saw I had need of it : though this is directly against charity, which obliges all men to assist their neighbour in his need, whether poor or rich ; it is a universal law, to which all men in general are subjected : so that if a person, be what he may, good or bad, die for want of our assistance, when we know his need, we are murderers before God, as guilty before Him as if we had killed him with a knife.

April 28th, 1676.

AN EXTRACT
FROM
A SERMON,
PREACHED AT CRIPPLEGATE,
BY
THE REV. MR. KITCHEN,
OF ST. MARY, ABCHURCH.

A SERMON.

HOW MUST WE REPROVE, THAT WE MAY NOT PARTAKE
OF OTHER MEN'S SINS.

1 TIM. v. 22.

Neither be partaker of other men's sins : keep thyself pure.

THIS caution is not intended to Ministers only, neither is it to be confined to the case of ordination ; but as CHRIST said upon another occasion, " What I say unto you, I say unto all ;" so here, what ST. PAUL writes to TIMOTHY, he speaks to all : a private Christian, as well as a Minister, must be sure to take heed, that he " be not partaker of other men's sins."

But how must we reprove, and not partake of other men's sins ? This case is double. I. About participation of other men's sins. II. About reprovng of other men's sins.

And I. It ought to be every man's care, not to partake of any man's sin. In the handling of which, I shall endeavour to show you, *First*, How many ways a man may be said to partake of other men's sins. *Secondly*, Why a Christian must be careful not to partake of them. I shall, *Thirdly*, Apply it.

First, How a man may be said to partake of other men's sins : to this I answer, There are many ways. I will name some of them.

There are eight ways especially noted in Scripture, by which a man is made partaker of the sins of others.

1. By contrivance : and this is in a high degree to be guilty of other men's sins : thus JONADAB was guilty of

AMNON'S incest, by his subtle contriving of that wickedness." (2 *Sam.* xiii. 5.)

When a man shall wittingly, and willingly, spread a snare in his brother's way, and either drive him in by provocation, or decoy him in by allurements, he makes himself a partaker of his sin: so to provoke a man to passion, to tempt a person to drunkenness or uncleanness, to draw souls into error, heresy, or blasphemy; this is to adopt the sin, and to make it a man's own.

You know the story there, (2 *Sam.* xi.,) **URIAH** was slain, and the Ammonites slew him; but because **DAVID** contrived all this, the Scripture tells us that **DAVID** was the murderer: "Thou hast killed **URIAH** the Hittite with the sword; thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon." (2 *Sam.* xii. 9.) **ST. PAUL** tell us, he "was a blasphemer, and a persecutor." (1 *Tim.* i. 13.) We do not read of any blasphemy that **PAUL** uttered, in all the Bible. O but, says he, "I compelled the saints to blaspheme." (*Acts* xxvi. 11.) There was his blasphemy, in compelling others to blaspheme.

To incite and provoke any to sinful practices, to seduce and solicit any to erroneous opinions, is to be doubly guilty of those sins, once by infection, and again by instigation.

In a word, he that shall either hinder another from doing that good which is commanded, or shall further another to the doing of that evil which is prohibited, is justly chargeable with both their sins.

2. By Compliance: by consenting and complying with sin and sinners, a man makes himself partaker; though he has no hand in it, yet, if he has a heart in it, though he does not act it, yet if he likes it, and loves it, though he does not persecute **GOD'S** saints and ministers, yet if he saith, "Aha! aha! so we would have it," it is enough to make him guilty before **GOD**.

SAUL had no hand in **ST. STEPHEN'S** death; he did not cast one stone at him: but because he looked on with

approbation, therefore was he esteemed guilty of his blood. So himself confesses, when GOD had awakened him : “ When the blood of thy martyr STEPHEN was shed, I was consenting to his death.” (*Acts xxii. 20.*)

GOD looks not upon the outward man so much as upon the heart ; according to the frame and inclination of this, according as the pulse of the heart beats, so is every man in the account of GOD. If sin has once stormed the fort-royal of the heart, though it never appears in the out-works, the garrison is lost : that which is upon the stage of the heart after consent, is as truly acted in the sight of GOD, as that which appears in the outward man by commission. “ Out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.” (*Matt. xv. 19.*) From the hand proceed murders and thefts ; from the eye proceed adulteries and fornications ; and from the tongue proceed false witnessess and blasphemies : but the heart is the forge of all.

You may murder a man with a thought, as they say the Basilisk will with a look : such a poisonous thing a wicked heart is : and, let me tell you, it is the heart-murder, the heart-adultery, the heart-blasphemy, and the heart-iniquity, that GOD especially judges, according to that well-known place : “ I the LORD search the heart, to give to every man according to his ways,” (*Jer. xvii. 10.*) *i. e.* according to what I see acted upon the stage of the heart : he does not only judge the actions, but the very intentions.

3. By Connivance : by dissembling and winking at others in their wickedness, men become guilty of others' sins : “ The leaders of this people cause them to err.” (*Isai. ix. 16.*) It is in the Hebrew, “ The blessers of this people cause them to err.” Beloved, the blessers of men in wickedness, are the leaders of men in wickedness ; he that shall wink at men in sins, when he knows they do wickedly, makes himself captain and master of mis-rule among them. And thus we are too prone to be partakers of Magistrates' sins, and Governors' sins, and great men's sins, patrons' sins, and landlords' sins. If the grandees of

the world profane the Sabbath, dishonour GOD, scoff at religion,—out of a base cowardly spirit, or out of a carnal covetous heart, we let them alone; it may be, applaud them: O this is to be deeply guilty of other men's sins.

4. By Sufferance: by permitting the sins of others, so we become guilty, by suffering others to sin, whom we are bound in duty, and may be able by authority, to hinder: and thus as in the former particular, we are guilty of Magistrates' sins; in this particular, Magistrates oft-times become guilty of our sins. Kings and Rulers, and subordinate Magistrates, become oft-times deeply guilty of their people's sins, namely, by sufferance, by tolerating blasphemies on the one hand, or by suffering wickedness and profaneness on the other.

Sabbath-breaking abounds; let it pass, says the Mayor of a town: drunkenness abounds; let it alone, says the Justice of Peace: profaneness abounds; let it alone, says the Minister. Sirs, if it should be thus, this were to bear the sins of a whole parish, and a whole country, and a whole nation, upon a man's back at once.

5. By influence of bad Example: by setting bad examples for others to imitate, so men are guilty of others' sins; as when children sin by the example of their parents, those very parents are guilty of their children's sin. So we have some families that inherit the lusts, as well as the lands of their ancestors: parents swear and curse, and so do children; parents are drunkards, and so are children; parents are unclean, and so are children: as they make them rich by their livings, so they make them wretched and debauched by their lives: this is to make themselves partakers of all their sins. So when people sin by the looseness of their Minister, that Minister is guilty of those very sins that the people so commit; which made AUSTIN so jealous of himself in this case, that it was his constant prayer, *Libera me, Domine, a peccatis meis alienis*; "LORD, deliver me from mine other men's sins:" those sins that others have committed through my carelessness and incogitancy.

He that sets an evil example, sins not alone; he draws hundreds, it may be, into sin after him. He is like a man that sets his own house on fire; it burns many of his neighbours', and he is to be answerable for all the ruins.

6. **By Inference from a bad example, or by Imitation:** so a man is guilty of another man's sin, not only by pattern, in setting bad examples, but also by practice, in following bad examples: and thus, that man that will be drunk because another was drunk, or that breaks the Sabbath because others do the like, is not only guilty of his own particular sin, but he is guilty also of their sins whom he imitates.

Hence it is that **GOD** is said "to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," because they make themselves guilty by imitation; and this may be a key to unlock that place of the Apostle: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 *Tim.* iii. 13.) Deceivers are worse, but the deceived are worse and worse; if they see a bad example, and will not avoid it, but copy it, they are worse than worse. The deceiver is guilty of the deceived's sin by instigation, and the deceived is guilty of the deceiver's sin by imitation.

And this is the intricate, perplexed labyrinth, into which sin doth precipitate careless sinners. If thou committest that sin, which none before committed but thee, thou art guilty of all the sins of future generations by thy example, as **ADAM** was in the world, and **JEROBOAM** in Israel. And if thou committest any sin, because others have committed it before, thou art guilty of all the sins of former generations, by thy imitation: witness that dreadful place: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city:" Mark, "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous **ABEL** unto the blood of **ZACHARIAS**, the son of **BARACHIAS**, whom ye slew" (though slain in **JEHOASH**'s reign, almost nine hundred years before, yet ye

slew) “between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation :” (*Matt.* xxiii. 34—36 :) and why? Because they “sinned after the similitude of their father’s transgression.” O what matter of humiliation is this to every soul that continues in any known sin !

7. By Countenance: If by society and company with wicked men, we countenance them, we become partakers of their sins. We cannot be intimate with such, without contracting their guilt to our own souls. It is true indeed, all commerce with such is not forbidden ; for then (as the Apostle says) “we must go out of the world ;” but intimate society is, upon this account.

We read in Scripture, where wicked men have often fared better for the good, as LABAN for JACOB, and POTIPHAR for JOSEPH, and AHAB for JEHOSEPHAT ; but we never read that good men fared better for the company of the wicked. “Depart from me, (saith DAVID,) for I will keep the commandments of my GOD.” (*Psa.* cxix. 115.) It is a very hard matter to keep wicked company, and to keep the commandments of GOD together.

8. By Maintenance: by upholding and encouraging men in their sins, though thou never committest them thyself, yet thou art guilty. “He that biddeth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.” (*2 John* 11.) Though thou dost not commit it, yet if thou dost applaud it, thou art a partner ; if thou art not the father, yet thou art the guardian of it.

Thus I have done with the first thing, how many ways we may be partakers of other men’s sins : there are many more that might be named, as by hindering good, by excusing evil, by administering occasion, by not reproving, not mourning, not reclaiming, &c. But these, and many more, are but under sprigs from the general branches that I have opened.

Secondly. Consider we, Why a Christian must be careful not to partake of other men’s sins? I answer, 1. Out of a principle of charity to our brethren. 2. Out

of a principle of pity to ourselves. 3. Out of a principle of piety to God.

1. Out of charity to our brethren, that we be not instruments to promote their ruin and destruction: for, to partake of other men's sins, though it does not more burthen us, yet it does never a whit ease them, but does rather harden them, and confirm them in their practices; for company in sin makes men act it with greater confidence. Now this is to do the Devil's part in the habit of a friend. Sirs, we must be charitable; charity is the golden rule, charity is the bond of perfection. Now, if it be a piece of charity to help up our brother's ox or ass, when he is fallen into a ditch; sure it is more charity to do as much for his soul. "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." (*Jude 23.*) Sin is the deep ditch of the soul, and sin is the hell-fire of the soul, as it were; here should be lifting and plucking indeed.

The neglect of this duty of keeping one another from sin, the Scripture calls a hating of our brother: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt not suffer sin upon him." (*Lev. xix. 17.*) I observe in company, that if many persons sit together by a fire, and a spark fly upon any one of them, every one is ready to shake or beat it off; and why should not we be as friendly and charitable to men's souls, when sin, which is as hell-flakes, lies burning upon their souls?

2. Out of pity to ourselves; that we may keep ourselves from the blood of other men's souls, and secure ourselves from the judgments of other men's sins. For the former, says ST. PAUL, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (*Acts xx. 26, 27.*) Had the Apostle connived at, or consented to, their sins, God would have made inquisition for their blood at his hands. For the latter, says JACOB, "SIMEON and LEVI are brethren, instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul! come not into their secrets: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united."

Why? "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." (*Gen. xlix. 5—7.*) He would not have a hand in their sinful union, because he would not have a share in their dreadful division: they were united in sin, and they must be divided in punishment.

3. Out of piety towards GOD: GOD forbids it, nay, GOD absolutely abhors and condemns it: "When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with the adulterers: these things hast thou done, but I will reprove, and set them in order before thee." (*Psa. l. 18, 21.*) This sin is a breach of all the law at once, being against the rule of charity. He that hath his own sins alone, doth only commit them; but he that takes other men's sins, doth highly approve them; and this greatly dishonours GOD: It is worse partaking of sin, than committing of sin: They "not only do the same," saith the Apostle, "but have pleasure in them that do them." (*Rom. i. 32.*) Wherefore ZELOPHEHAD's daughters pleaded in mitigation of their father's offence, that he died in his own sin, "He was not partner with KORAH, but died in his own sin." It is worse to be a partner, than to be an actor.

I proceed, *Thirdly*, to the application.

And, 1. Is there such a thing as partaking of other men's sins after this manner?

(1.) Hence you may be informed of the equity and justice of GOD's proceeding in punishment. You oft-times see GOD punishing one man's sins upon another, or at least hear of it, and you think it strange. This clue will conduct you through the labyrinth: they have been some way or other partakers of those sins, either by contrivance, or by compliance, or by connivance, one way or other, else GOD would never punish them. If they have not been actors, they have been abettors: "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" (*Exod. xxxiv. 7.*) GOD punishes children for the sins of their parents; but those children have been partakers certainly by approbation, it may be by imitation: GOD punisheth servants for the sins of their masters; (*Gen. xii.*

17;) but sure the servants were partakers by consenting, it may be by executing: GOD punishes wives for the sins of their husbands; (*Gen. xx. 18*;) but those wives were partakers still by admitting, by inducing: GOD punishes Ministers for the sins of the people; (*Ezek. xxxiii. 8*;) but then those Ministers are partakers, by not instructing, by not reprovng; still the justice of GOD is vindicated.

(2.) Hence, be informed what piety, and strictness, and watchfulness, are more especially required of those that have the care of others; *i. e.*, Kings and Parents, Masters, Magistrates, and Ministers: they should be exemplary in godliness: They have care of other men's souls, and therefore they should look well to their own. The want of this, was her crime and complaint. (*Cant. i. 6.*) O, those that are keepers of vineyards, had need to have special care of their own vineyard.

(3.) Hence, take an account, why the wicked so hate the good, and reproach and revile them: it is this, They will not be partakers of their sins, they will not commit them, neither will they connive at them. AHAH hates MICAH, and himself gives the reason: Because he reprov'd him: "I hate him, he never speaks well of me." (*1 Kings xxii. 8.*) HEROD hates JOHN BAPTIST, because he reprov'd him. No wonder that Ministers, of all kinds of men in the world, are most hated: the case is plain—Because they are reprovers. Good Ministers are wicked men's reprovers, and wicked men are good Ministers' reproachers. "They think it strange you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (*1 Pet. iv. 4.*)

(4.) Here is matter of reproof and humiliation this day, for our want of watchfulness in this kind. Oh, which of us can say, that we are free from the guilt of other men's sins? Every man may cast this reproof and lamentation at his own conscience, and there let it stick. Parents every one,—Ah, my children's sins; Masters, Ah, my servants' sins; Ministers, Ah, my people's sins; Rulers, Ah, my subjects' sins. O let us deeply mourn for this, and more frequently

and fervently pray that prayer, **LORD**, forgive me other men's sins.

2. The second use is of exhortation and caution together. Is it so, that it ought to be every man's care, not to partake of any man's sins ?

O Christians ! let me entreat you then to be very mindful of this duty ; be persuaded, beloved, and the **LORD** persuade you to be tenderly careful and watchful, that you do not partake of other men's sins. These are infectious times and places that we live in, and multitudes there are that catch diseases from others ; but, let me tell you, bodily diseases are not half so catching as sin.

Sin is an infectious, contagious, pestilential plague, that spreads mightily in the world. O take heed, take heed, that the guilt of other men's sins be not one day put upon your account.

Give me leave to prosecute this, 1. By laying down some arguments to press this caution and exhortation. 2. By pointing out the sins especially you must not partake of. 3. By showing you how you may so manage, as not to be partakers of other men's sins.

1. To lay down the arguments.

(1.) Consider, you have sins enough of your own, you have no reason to partake of other men's ; it is cruel to add affliction to your bonds. **JESUS CHRIST** had no sins of his own, and therefore he could, and did bear ours ; though he did not partake of any man's sins, all were his by imputation. " He hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all," (*Isai.* liii. 6,) but none were his by perpetration or participation. It is not so with us, alas ! We have sins enough of our own. Man, woman, thine own pride will damn thee, if thou dost not repent ; and thine own formality, and worldliness, and hardness of heart ; thou hast no need to take the sins of others. Said the daughters of **ZELOPHEHAD**, Qur " father died in his own sin." Aye, that is enough to kill a man, and damn a man ; his own sin.

(2.) Consider, it is a most monstrous sin to partake of

other men's sins. The Apostle speaks of "committing iniquity with greediness." (*Eph.* iv. 19.) Sirs, there is no such greedy sinning as this, for a man to lick up, and swallow down, and devour other men's sins. O Christians! this sin of devouring other men's sins, is a dreadful sin, a devilish sin; and therefore take heed of it.

(3.) Consider, if you partake of other men's sins, you shall certainly partake of other men's plagues. "Come out of her, my people," says God, namely, from Babylon, "that you be not partakers of her sins, that so ye receive not of her plagues." (*Rev.* xviii. 4.) "A companion of fools shall be destroyed:" (*Prov.* xiii. 20:) not only fools shall be destroyed, but "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." If you sin with them, you shall suffer with them, and you shall suffer more because of them. This will be the shrieking and howling in hell among damned souls, one to another: "O woe the day, that ever I saw thy face! O that ever I saw thy face! Thou hast brought me hither; and thou hast brought me hither:" and so they will torment one another to all eternity.

2. What sins we must especially take heed of partaking of?

I answer, Of all sin whatsoever. "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" (*1 Thess.* v. 22;) but especially of three sorts of sins, which may be called epidemical plagues.

(1.) Church sins: (2.) National sins: (3.) Family sins. But I shall speak nothing of the first, but little of the second, and most to the third.

(2.) Among national sins, especially take heed of profaneness: This is obvious, this is a universal spreading plague, that is like to infect the whole kingdom, if God does not in mercy prevent it. There is a deluge of profaneness breaking in on every side; swearing, drinking, whoring, sabbath-breaking, scoffing, and mocking at religion. O take heed of partaking here!

(3.) Family sins, we must have a care of partaking, and so much the more watchful must we be, in that family sins of all sins are most catching and infectious: As it is with

bodily diseases, if one be sick in a house, they of the family are likeliest to catch the distemper, because of their intimate converse : so if there be any predominant lust lurking in a family, all are apt to be infected with it, if they are not marvellously circumspect and watchful.

And therefore parents, and masters, and governors of families, had need to be reformers both of themselves, and all under their charge, as they desire to have their souls and consciences free from the guilt of other men's sins.

PLATO seeing a child do mischief in the streets, went forthwith and corrected his father for it : that father that does not correct his child when he does amiss, is justly corrected for his faults ; and it is the pattern of GOD's judicial proceedings : as He visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children who imitate them ; so he visits the iniquities of the children upon the fathers, who countenance and indulge them. JACOB was accountable to LABAN for the whole flock ; not a sheep or a lamb was lost or torn, but it was required at his hands. (*Gen. xxxi. 39.*) Thus must family governors be accountable to GOD for every lamb in the fold, for every child in the family, for every servant in the house. GOD will one day cry aloud in thine ears, *Quintili Vare, redde legiones* : Husband, father, master, wife, give an account of thy husbandship ; give an account of thy fathership ; give an account of thy mastership ; give an account of thy wifeship. This made JOSHUA undertake for his house, as well as for himself. (*Josh. xxiv. 15.*) And this made DAVID careful of his house, as well as his heart : " I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." (*Psa. ci. 2.*) Not only with a perfect heart, but in his house with a perfect heart ; to reform his family, that that may be the church of GOD ; as well as to reform himself, that he may be the temple of GOD.

Ah, how many families are there, whose houses are not the church of GOD, but the synagogue of SATAN rather. It is said of NOAH's ark, that it was pitched within and without : such is the condition of many a man's house : it is pitched within and without ; nothing but the pollutions

of sin in every room, and passage, and corner. Idleness stands at the door ; unconscionableness walks in the shop ; covetousness lurks in the counting house ; luxury sits at the table ; pride looks out at the window ; wantonness lodges in the bed ; all pitchy and filthy both within and without.

And therefore, for the LORD's sake, out with all this rubbish, if it should be found in your families : Here delight to have your houses clean, and hereupon sweep them, and wash them, and rub them. O that you would be as careful to cleanse your families from sin, as you are to cleanse your houses from dirt ; how soon would this great city become a habitation of righteousness, and a mountain of holiness ; how would this family-reformation prevent the guilt of family sins, and keep out family distractions, and set up family watchfulness and family correction. Set about family reading, and family conference, and especially family prayer ; that all your houses may be GOD's house : You know his is called a "house of prayer." (*Isai. lvi. 7.*) So should yours be houses of prayer, all of them : if they be not, let me tell you, they are no better than dens of thieves. Saith CHRIST, "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." (*Matt. xxi. 13.*) There is no medium betwixt these two : if your houses be not houses of prayer, they are certainly dens of thieves ; if you do not pray to GOD for your mercies before you receive them, and praise GOD for your mercies when you enjoy them, you do but rob GOD of his mercies : they are not given, but thrown ; and snatched, rather than received.

3. In the last place we come to consider, How we must so carry it as not to partake of other men's sins.

And, (1.) Exercise a holy jealousy over others, especially thy relations ; and this is the way to deliver thy soul from their sins. JOB, sacrificing for his children, said, "It may be they have sinned." (*Job i. 5.*)

(2.) Watch against the sins of others, have your eyes about you ; take heed of contriving, complying, winking

at them, if it be in your power, take heed of suffering them.

This is the direction in the text : "Keep thyself pure : " take heed of infectious places, and infectious practices, and infectious company.

(3.) Pray against them : pray against profaneness ; pray AUGUSTINE'S prayer, LORD deliver me from other men's sins.

(4.) Mourn for them : mourn for the sins of the nation, and mourn for the sins of thy relations ; for the sins of thy brethren in their obstinacy, that they will not be reformed. CHRIST came to sinful Jerusalem with weeping eyes, and with a mourning heart. DAVID mourned for the wickedness of the times that he saw. (*Psa. cxix. 136.*) "Many walk," says PAUL, "of whom I tell you weeping."

Thus did GOD'S people of old free themselves from national sins, and particular men's sins. When they could not be reformers they turned mourners. And see how prevalent this is with GOD ; these mourners are the only people to deliver a nation, or at least to deliver themselves from the sin and plagues of a nation, when GOD makes an overflowing scourge to pass through. (*Ezek. ix. 4.*) On the other side, not mourning for the sins of others, makes us adopt and espouse the sins of others. (*Dan. v. 22.*)

(5.) Reprove them. If we would not partake of the sins of others, we must reprove the sins of others ; so the Apostle saith expressly, (*Eph. v. 11,*) intimating, that you certainly approve, if you do not reprove them. Reprove heresy, blasphemy, drunkenness, oaths, sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, and every sin you hear or see committed.

But this sword of reproof is a very dangerous weapon, if it be not rightly handled : There is required great skill, prudence, wisdom, and watchfulness, to a successful managing of it. He that would fasten this nail of reproof in the conscience of his offending brother, had need be a wise man. To this end I shall give you these rules :—

1. He that reproves another, must be careful that he himself be blameless, as much as may be ; otherwise

he is not acting his charity, but bewraying his hypocrisy. There are two things couched in this :—

(1.) A man must be faultless in reference to sin in general, as much as may be, that will reprove another. It behoves that man that will reprove others, to be very upright and circumspect in all things ; and then he may reprove with greater advantage, authority, and efficacy. “Let the righteous smite me,” saith DAVID. A man of a strict and severe life, and religious conversation, carries a kind of a majesty and authority with him, at which the guilty consciences of sinners cannot but recoil. And then,

(2.) A man must be blameless in reference to that sin he reproves especially ; else, in healing his brother, he doth but stab himself : if thou reprovest pride in others, and art proud thyself,—covetousness, and art covetous thyself,—drunkenness, and art a drunkard thyself,—thou dost but, like DAVID in NATHAN’S parable, pronounce the sentence of thine own condemnation. But here I must enter one caution,—None is exempted from this duty for unfitness ; no, “this thou oughtest to have done, and not to have left the other undone.”

2. As he must take heed that himself be faultless, so he must be sure that his brother be faulty : for otherwise it is not to reprove him, but to reproach him ; and so instead of doing a Christian duty, a man commits a devilish sin ; he becomes an accuser of the brethren, instead of a re-prover of the brethren. And here are likewise two things to be considered :—(1.) It must be a truth that thou reprovest him for. (2.) It must be a sin that thou reprovest him for.

{1.) A conjecture, or imagination, or jealousy, or rumour, or hearsay, is not ground sufficient for reproof ; for all these may be false, and the rule of charity is, ‘Every man is presumed to be good, until he is proved to be evil :’ But verily the way of the world is far otherwise ; we deal with our brethren as the persecuting Pagans did with the primitive Christians ; put them into lions’ skins and bears’ skins, and then bait them and tear them in pieces. Alas ! the

poor Christians were harmless, meek lambs, but they disguised them, and so abused them. Thus it is now: Christians are apt and ready to put their poor brethren into I know not what kind of monstrous shapes, of their own imagining and devising, or else of other men's reporting, and without more ado they fall upon them.

2. It must be a breach of some command, affirmative or negative; either the omission of that which is good, or the commission of that which is evil.

3. He must manage his reproof to sincere ends; must take heed that his aim be upright and honest: Take heed of mingling any wild-fire of pride or vain-glory, or love of contradicting and controlling others, with thy zeal of reproof. This heat must be a holy heat, a fire of the sanctuary; as free from the smoke of by-ends as may be; purely for God's glory, and out of hatred to sin, and out of love to the salvation of thy brother's soul.

4. He must manage his reproof in fit season. There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent: Reproof is a duty grounded upon an affirmative precept. Now it is well observed by Divines, that affirmative precepts bind *semper*, but not *ad semper*; we must always reprove, but not reprove always; it is a constant duty, but it must be done in a seasonable opportunity. There are certain *mollia fandi tempora*,—words upon the wheels, as SOLOMON calls them, that are like apples of gold; and let me tell you, Christians, one word spoken in season, is worth a thousand other words. Now it is impossible to define and determine all the nicks of time wherein a man should strike in with a reproof; for this must be left to the wisdom and experience of every Christian, that makes it his business to be his brother's keeper; and let him assure himself he must expect to lose many an admonition, shoot many an arrow of reproof, as JONATHAN did his, under and over, on this side and the other side, before he hit the mark.

(1.) He must take a season wherein the offender is capable of reproof. If a man be drunk, we must stay until

he be sober ; so if a man be all in a heat of passion, we must stay, and come to him, as **GOD** did to **ADAM**, in the cool of the day, when the fit is over.

(2.) We must take a season wherein we have occasion to commend a man for something, and then reprove him for his fault : Sir, you are thus and thus ; O, but if you would but mend this and that, how excellent it would be !

(3.) We must do it as soon as ever we can, and the sooner the better : a green wound is easier healed than an old sore.

(4.) If you have long waited for fit seasons, and yet cannot find them, we had better make a breach upon one's prudence than one's conscience ; discretion then must give place to necessity : out with it, and leave the success to **GOD**.

(5.) He must manage his reproof with due conditions and qualifications : and there are seven properties of that reproof that will in all likelihood benefit our brother, and secure ourselves from participation of his sins.

[1.] We must reprove seriously and in good earnest, so as to knock the nail up to the head in the conscience of the sinner. In our reproofs of our brother, we should charge him home : These things thou hast done there is no denying ; "Thou art the man," says **NATHAN** unto **DAVID** ; "this **JESUS**, whom ye have crucified," says **PETER** to the **Jews**. And thus we should set things in order before him : 'Sir, is not this and that highly to dishonour **GOD**, to shame your profession, to impair your body, to wound your conscience, and to damn your precious and immortal soul ? And therefore, for the **LORD**'s sake, think of it, and amend it.'

[2.] We must reprove impartially, without respect to persons. Good men, if they miscarry, must be reproved, as well as bad men. If **PETER** temporize, **PAUL** will not spare him, nor **BARNABAS** neither ; they shall hear of it. (*Gal. ii.*) Great men, be they never so great, should be admonished as well as others, so long as they are under the great **GOD**, and subject to great failings ; Kings, and

Nobles, and Magistrates, as well as inferior persons. NATHAN reprov'd DAVID, though a King; and so did ELIJAH, AHAB; and NEHEMIAH reprov'd the Nobles and Rulers for usury and Sabbath-profanation. Certainly, if any be fit to teach great men, they are as fit to reprove them, for they must go together. (2 *Tim.* iv. 2.) It is the great unhappiness of Princes and Nobles that they have so many flatterers, and so few reprovers.

[3.] We must reprove discreetly, making a difference between man and man: for though it is true, that all are to be reprov'd that are offenders, especially within the pale of the Church, yet all must not be handled in the same manner. Some will do more with a rod, than others will do with a scorpion; some must be dealt withal with lenitives, others with corrosives; some gently reprov'd, others sharply rebuked, according to the tenderness or stubbornness of their disposition, and according to the nature and quality of their offences. And here abundance of rules might be laid down about public and private, great and small, seldom or frequent offences. In one word, a reprov'er must be like the thresher that the Prophet describes. (*Isai.* xxviii. 27, 28.)

[4.] We must reprove compassionately, with the deepest sense of our own failings, and so with the greater pity to their infirmities. (*Gal.* vi. 1.) BERNARD said of himself, "That he never saw another man sin, but he was distrustful and jealous of his own heart." This would take off a great deal of that rigour and roughness that render a reproof so displeasing and so unprofitable: for a Christian tenderness and compassion in the reprov'er, is the best way to work sense and passion in the sinner.

This is the way to mollify men's hearts; whereas by an austere rigid reproof, instead of rendering thy brother GOD's friend, thou dost but render thyself his enemy.

[5.] We must reprove charitably, and with the greatest love to men's persons, even when we show the greatest zeal against their sins; for it is one thing to be angry with the sins, and another with his person; therefore we should

consult our brother's credit and person, while we stab his sin; and not, in healing a wound in his conscience and conversation, leave a scar of reproach upon his person, and a brand of shame and ignominy upon his name. That were to do the work of an enemy under the vizard of a friend.

[6.] We must reprove meekly; not in rage, and passion, and bitterness, but in meekness, and sweetness of spirit. This rule the Apostle gives. (2 *Tim.* ii. 25.) Though there may be some warmth in a reproof, yet it must not be too hot. Take soft words and hard arguments to convince gainsayers; and gentle reproofs and solid reasons to reduce offenders.

[7.] We must reprove scripturally: that is, as near as we can to reprove our brethren in Scripture-text and Scripture-language, that so it may not seem to be we that speak, so much as the SPIRIT of our FATHER that speaks in us; and this is to reprove with authority. (*Tit.* ii. 15.) What greater authority and majesty can there be, wherewith to awaken the conscience of a sinner than the word of GOD, by which he should be ruled, and by which he must certainly be judged?

AN EXTRACT

FROM

TWO SERMONS,
PREACHED AT CRIPPLEGATE,

BY

THE REV. MATTHEW POOL.

SERMON I.

HOW WE MAY BE UNIVERSALLY AND EXACTLY
CONSCIENTIOUS.

ACTS xxiv. 16.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

In this text are these six things singularly considerable :

1. Here is the index to the book of conscience ; the eye to the portraiture of a Christian, that, according to your several standings, looks upon the business, the time, the manner, and the cause of it.

“Herein :” In this, *i. e.* in this business ; *q. d.*, Here I am arraigned as a malefactor, charged with sedition, schism, and heresy, in this my conscience acquits me. Again,—

“Herein :” In or at this time, *q. d.*, It is but five days ago, since I was struck on the mouth for this defence, and I see those present that so rashly and illegally censured me ; yet now, before more equal judges, I bring the same defence. Again,—

“Herein :” In this manner, *q. d.*, “My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that I lived after the strictest sect of our religion :” and I am not conscious to myself of any crime in respect of their law, either in my Judaism or Christianity. Or thus,—

“Herein :” *q. d.*, “I have hope towards God,—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust ; and therefore with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment ; yea, I judge not mine own self, for I know nothing by myself,

yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the LORD." And therefore, having an eye to the resurrection and last judgment, "I exercise myself to live," &c.

2. Here is the act with the quality included; "I exercise;" I am musing and exercising my mind; I am learning and busying my thoughts: the word also notes industry and endeavour, pains and labour; *q. d.*, This is my meditation, my study, my work, and employment, to get, to keep, and use "a conscience void of offence."

3. Consider the subject of this exercise, "Myself:" it was himself, not his hearers only; he took on him the care of all the churches, but he would not have it charged upon him, that he kept others' vineyards and neglected his own: he would be sure so to exercise himself, that he might not by any means, "when he had preached to others, himself be a cast-away."

4. Consider the object of this exercise, and that is "conscience;" and pray consider the manner of expressing himself: "To have a conscience," to be owner of a good conscience. All men have a conscience, but we may say of most, conscience hath them: they have a conscience, as they have a fever: conscience is troublesome, and disquiets them; they cannot sin so freely, as if they had no inward gripe, and therefore they had rather be rid of their consciences, than be thus troubled with them. But the Apostle would have a conscience to commune with; he would do nothing but what he is willing his deputy judge shall approve of.

5. Consider the quality of the subject: "Void of offence;" *i. e.*, without any thing which will not endure the scrutiny of both divine and human judgment. The distribution notes the entireness, exactness, and excellency of his Gospel-carriage, in his religion towards GOD, and in his conversation among men. He made it his business to live purely before GOD, and religiously among men.

6. Consider the continuance of this exercise: "Always;" it is not only by fits and starts, when in some good mood, or under some pangs of conviction; it is not only when

arrested by sickness, or affrighted by the apprehension of death; but "always," at all times.

The words thus opened, the general case that lies upon me to resolve is this: How we may be universally and exactly conscientious? Universally, in respect of things; exactly, in respect of manner.

To answer this, (so far as I can crowd it into a sermon,) I shall present you with four things. 1. What conscience is. 2. What its objects. 3. What its offices. 4. What are the kinds of consciences: wherein various directions are necessary, for remedies and rules, which when laid together will resolve the case.

1. Conscience is man's judgment of himself; *i. e.*, of his estate and actions, as they are subjected to the judgment of GOD.

For conscience, the Hebrews ordinarily make use of two words, *viz.*, heart, and spirit; but in English, (as also in the Greek and Latin, whence we borrow it,) it is called conscience: Knowledge with another; which excellently sets forth the scriptural nature of it, as, "My witness is in heaven;" (*Job* xvi. 19;) and, "I say the truth, my conscience also bearing me witness in the HOLY GHOST." (*Rom.* ix. 1.) In both places, *q. d.*, GOD witnesseth with my conscience: conscience is placed in the middle; under GOD, and above man. I will close this with BROCHMAND'S description of conscience, to be 'A kind of silent reasoning of the mind, whose definitive sentence is received by some affection of the heart, whereby those things which are judged to be good and right, are approved of with delight; but those things which are evil, are disapproved with sorrow. GOD hath placed this in all men, partly to be a judgment and testimony of that integrity to which man was at first created, and of that corruption that followed sin; partly that GOD may have a tribunal erected in the breasts of men to accuse delinquents, and to excuse those that do what is good and right.'

2. The object of conscience is very various. Conscience hath great employment, and much business with the whole

man, and with all his actions; it is like those living creatures in the Revelation, all over eyes; it looks to the understanding, whether our wisdom be carnal or gracious; to the will, whether it go beyond, or fall short in ability of good performances; to the affections, whether the entertainment or refusal of the Gospel be the matter of greatest joy or sorrow: it pries into all our actions both towards **GOD** and man. Towards **GOD**, whether in general our estate be good; in special, whether our service be inward and spiritual, or only outward and formal. More particularly, it surveys all our duties, whether we pray in faith; whether we hear with profit; whether through our baptism, we can go unto **GOD** as unto an oracle; whether in the **LORD'S** Supper we have singular communion with **CHRIST**; in short, whether we do and will stick close to religion; as knowing, that if conscience do not steer right, religion will be shipwrecked. Thus duties towards **GOD** are the great object of conscience: but duties towards man, are the secondary, and like unto it. Towards man in our whole conversation: particularly, that we be obedient to rulers; (and that which is in one place charged upon us for conscience' sake, is in another place commanded for the **LORD'S** sake;) in short, that we be just in all our dealings, avoiding all justly offensive things, words, thoughts; that we express singular charity, especially to souls; and this in prayer, when we can do nothing else: and conscience doth not only do all this at present urging to duty, or shooting or tingling under the commission of sin, but it foresees things future, provoking to good, and cautioning against evil; and also looks back upon things past with joy or torment, so that it is easier to reckon what is not the object of conscience, than what is: in a word, every thing of duty and sin is the object of conscience.

3. The offices of conscience are likewise various. In general, the proper office of conscience is to apply that light which is in the mind to particular actions or cases. The light which is in the mind is either the light of nature, or rather preventing grace; or the light of divine revelation.

By the light of nature, I understand those common notions which are written in the hearts of men, which (as a brand plucked out of the common burning) are the relics of the image of God after the fall. Not only Scripture, but experience evidences, that those which are practical Atheists, say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways ;" yet cannot get rid of his deputy, their conscience : they carry a spy, a register, a monitor in their bosom, that doth accuse and trouble them ; they cannot sin in quiet. Those that are without, or reject the sunshine of Scripture, yet they cannot blow out God's candle of conscience. By divine revelation, I mean, both the standing rule of Scripture, and God's extraordinary discoveries of himself, whether by dreams, or visions, or prophecies, or other spiritual communications ; all which, though (if they be from God) they are according to Scripture ; yet the former are afforded upon particular providences, and the last are the privileges of particular favourites. But it is the office of conscience to apply all these, and that it doth by a kind of a practical syllogism : *e. g.*,—

"Whosoever believeth," *i. e.*, accepteth of CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOUR, "shall be saved." But I accept of CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOUR, therefore shall I be saved. Or,—

"Whosoever committeth sin," *i. e.*, makes a trade of sin, "is of the Devil ;" *i. e.*, the child of the Devil. But I make a trade of sin, therefore I am a child of the Devil.

In the first proposition, you have the dictate of conscience : In the second, you have the testimony of conscience ; and in the conclusion, you have the judgment of conscience. In the first, the power of conscience is very great ; so great that it can do any thing but make evil good ; for it can make an indifferent action good or evil ; and it can make a good action evil : Therefore in things necessary, it doth so bind, that no human laws can loosen. Thus far the dictate of conscience. In the testimony of conscience, conscience examines and tries our actions : this in Scripture is called, a returning into a man's own

heart, a thinking of our ways, a speaking to our heart, a laying things to heart, a setting our heart upon a business, an examination and trial of ourselves; and thence the conclusion is inferred from the premises, according to our apprehension of the rule and account of our actions. Yet this is worthy of special observation, that though both the premises be undeniably true, yet there is nothing more ordinary, than for not only wicked but gracious persons, (though upon different grounds,) to deny the conclusion; and the truth is, without the SPIRIT'S assistance by way of conviction to the wicked, and relief to the godly, neither of them will prove any better logicians, than still to deny the conclusion.

Graceless persons will not conclude against themselves: for, (1.) They will not weigh the cogency of any scriptural argument. (2.) They have sucked in other self-flattering conclusions: and, (3.) They are willing to put a cheat upon themselves: So these will not conclude against themselves.

And on the other hand, gracious persons dare not conclude themselves so happy as the Scripture represents them. (1.) Through the prevalency of temptations, SATAN frights them from their comforts. (2.) They think it is too good to be true, especially considering, (3.) Their sense of unworthiness. What! *they* pass a sentence of approbation upon their actions! No, they dare not. In short, the only remedy I shall commend to both sorts is this, *viz.*, beg of God to persuade thy heart to close with convincing truth.

Christians, do but suffer and help your conscience to do its office, and then "shall you have rejoicing in yourselves alone, and not in another;" *i. e.*, you will find cause of rejoicing in the testimony of your own conscience, and not in others thinking you to be better than you are, nor in thinking yourselves to be better than others. Thus you have the offices of conscience. I come in the last place to speak of,—

4. The kinds of conscience; which are commonly reduced to these four, *viz.*,—Good and quiet; good and troubled; evil and quiet; evil and troubled. But intend-

ing the resolution of the case before me, in speaking to conscience under the several kinds of it, I shall speak to eight kinds of consciences. The two first, *viz.*, the sleepy and the seared conscience, are peculiar to the worst of men. The four next, *viz.*, the erring, doubting, scrupulous and trembling consciences, are almost indifferent to good and bad; only the two former have a greater bias to bad, and the two latter have a greater tendency to good: but the two last kinds, *viz.*, the good and honest, and the good and quiet consciences, are peculiar to GOD's children. In treating of these, I shall endeavour to acquaint you with the nature of each; how to cure the evil, and how to obtain the good; and hereby the application will be entwisted with the explication throughout my discourse.

I. The first, and one of the worst kinds of consciences in the world, is the sleepy conscience; such is the conscience of every unconverted person that is not yet under horror; their spirit, *i. e.*, their conscience is asleep; that as bodily sleep bindeth up all the senses and animal spirits, so this spiritual (or rather unspiritual) sleepiness, bindeth up the soul from all sense of the evil of sin, and want of grace, and therefore in conversion CHRIST doth awaken the conscience. The disciples of CHRIST have their spirits waking, when their bodies are slumbering. CHRIST complains of unkindness, that his spouse sleeps in the morning, when he knocks for early entertainment; but the unconverted let CHRIST stand knocking all the day, until supper time; they will spend the day with their lusts, and if CHRIST will knock and wait until the day of their life be almost spent, then they will pretend to open. But how long must GOD call, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" And they will answer, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The plain truth is, though wicked men cannot quite stifle their consciences; yet their consciences do but as it were talk in their sleep, and they take no more notice of them, than they do of their dreams.

Causes of a sleepy conscience are, (besides the sluggishness of our depraved nature,)—

1. A spiritual intoxication. All unconverted persons are drunk with the love of sin, and therein behave themselves like SOLOMON'S drunkard, that lies down to sleep in the heart of the sea, or upon the top of a mast, in the very midst of the greatest danger. He doeth that daily which JONAH did once,—run away from GOD; and then compositeth himself to sleep, when GOD is pursuing him with judgments, and dreams of nothing but impunity and happiness. Love of sin is the Devil's opium, whereby he casts the conscience into a dead sleep, that no arm but that of Omnipotency can waken it. He meets with something in the world, which he likes better than the holy ways of GOD, and therefore will not seek GOD; GOD'S ways are always grievous to him:—"He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: GOD hath forgotten, he hideth his face, he will never see it: He contemns GOD, and saith in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." They wink, and then conclude GOD doth not see them.

2. Carnal conceits of grace and heaven. At the best, human wisdom is their highest guide, their supreme oracle; in their mis-shapen apprehensions of their need of mercy, they are willing to be flattered, that it may be had without such severities in religion, as they are unwilling to undertake. Why should they be wiser than their neighbours? All men are not fools. Men as wise and as learned, neither press nor practise such strictness; and do you think they have not a care of their souls? They do not doubt but they shall do as well as the best. Though, poor souls, they know, that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Mark that, "that find it;" he doth not say, that enter into it; but, "that find it." Those that do not walk in the way of holiness, it is impossible they should ever find it. The gate doth not lead to the way, but the way to the

gate. Do not think to get to heaven first, and learn heavenly-mindedness after: yea, heaven must suffer violence: striving is the condition of entering. Rouse up, therefore, and shake off your worldly wisdom, your ignorant self-love, your abuse of mercies, your contempt of God, and your forgetfulness of death and judgment. But how shall we do this?

(1.) The first remedy I shall commend is consideration. Let the subject of thy consideration be what thou wilt, (only I could wish it may relate to eternity, whither thou art posting,) and I shall not doubt of the success. Let me for once insert a relation I heard between the preaching and the transcribing of this sermon. ‘The father of a prodigal left it as his death-bed charge unto his only son, to spend a quarter of an hour every day in retired thinking; but left him at liberty to think of what he would, only engaged him to spend a quarter of an hour in thinking. The son having this liberty to please himself in the subject, set himself to the performance of his promise; his thoughts one day recall his past pleasures; another, contrive his future delights; but at length his thoughts became inquisitive, what might be his father’s end in proposing this task: he thought his father was a wise and good man, therefore surely he intended and hoped that he would some time or other think of religion. When this leavened his thoughts, they multiplied abundantly, neither could he contain them in so short a confinement, but was that night sleepless, and afterwards restless, until he became seriously religious.’ O that I could persuade you to go and do likewise.

(2.) Observe what means thou shunnest as too startling, and make use of them for thy awakening. This, with the blessing of God, will savingly awaken thee.

II. The second kind of conscience proposed, is, The seared conscience: Such is theirs who have given up their names to CHRIST, but lift up their heel against him; of which the Apostle speaks: “Having their consciences seared with a hot iron;” (1 *Tim.* iv. 2;) *i. e.*, having a corrupt and putrefied conscience, that hath the Devil’s

brand-mark upon it. Plainly, a seared conscience, is a rotten, venomous, ulcerate, pestilent, filthy, gangrenate conscience, that doth not perform any of his offices, but is even past feeling. To this rank of profligate sinners I refer all those that frequent (as well as those that reject) ordinances, that make a profession (as well as that hate the profession) of religion, yet have a reserve of sin, which they will not part with.

The causes of a seared conscience are, conscience-wasting sins on man's part procuring it, and divine withdrawing from the sinner on GOD's part inflicting it. As there are some bodily diseases that follow bodily weakness, so this soul-disease is the peculiar punishment of sins against knowledge. Methinks that text is dreadful: "As they did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge, GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind." (*Rom* i. 28.) It is observable, the oftener they rebelled against the light, the more severely GOD punished them, with that which they counted impunity, *viz.*, he gave them up to their swing of (1.) natural lust, (2.) unnatural, and (3.) of all unrighteousness. Custom of sinning, takes away conscience of sinning.

For cure; seriously set yourselves against those peculiar ways of sinning which have brought you to this. You know them; there is not any one that hath a seared conscience, but he doth, or easily may, know how it came so. Your work, in some respect, is not so large as in case of the sleepy conscience: it is but one or two sorts of sins that are eminently mischievous to your souls in this case. Though a seared conscience is worse than a sleepy conscience; yet as it is more easily discernible, so it is but reasonable you should more speedily and vigorously set upon the cure. Take heed of accounting any sin small, lest at last you account not any sin great. I will commend one text to you, and close this particular: "In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, until I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it, I will not go back, neither will I spare.

neither will I repent." (*Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.*) Sirs, GOD hath been your Physician, hath used variety of remedies; if nothing will prevail, but you will industriously singe your consciences, to make them senseless, as sure as GOD is true, he will make you sensible of your sin by everlasting burnings!

III. An erring conscience is that which judgeth otherwise than the thing is. Conscience is sometimes deceived through ignorance of what is right, by apprehending a false rule for a true, an error for the will of GOD; sometimes through ignorance of the fact, by misapplying a right rule to a wrong action. Conscience evil informed, takes human traditions, and false doctrines, proposed under the show of divine authority, to be the will of GOD. A famous instance you have of this in JEROBOAM'S case: He fears that if the people should go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, he should lose his kingdom; this puts him upon inquiry, whether there should not be a double sanctuary, as well as a double kingdom? Hereupon a council is called, flattering prophets come, they have dreams and visions, worthy of their affections, suitable to their purpose: a decree is made, *q.d.*, It is sufficient that you have hitherto gone up to Jerusalem, now behold your gods; these calves are like the cherubims of the sanctuary, which are as ministering spirits before the face of GOD. That these calves had the shape of cherubims, you may gather by comparing Scriptures; that which is called the face of an ox in one place, is called the face of a cherub in the other. This seems to the people a satisfying warrant for them readily to follow the King's commandment. I might add another instance of the good old Prophet, who was plausibly seduced to his bodily destruction.

Now it is a great question, (among the Papists especially,) Whether, and how far, an erring conscience binds?

One of their most learned casuists peremptorily determines, that the law of an erring conscience is not dispensable by GOD himself: Others, that it is good to follow an erring conscience, when it is agreeable to reason: Others

that a right and an erroneous conscience both bind, though in a different respect: a right conscience, as it is conformable to the law of GOD; an erring conscience, as it is thought to be the law of GOD.

The plain truth is, error cannot bind us to follow it: an erring conscience may so bind, that it may be a sin to go against it; but it can never so bind as it may be a virtue to follow it. To follow an erring conscience is, for the blind sinner to follow his blind conscience until both fall into the ditch. The violation of conscience is always evil, and the following of an erring conscience is evil; but there is a middle way that is safe and good, *viz.*, the informing of conscience better by GOD's word, and following of it accordingly.

The causes of an erring conscience (besides original sin, the effect whereof is blindness in the understanding; and the just judgment of GOD upon persons for not entertaining, obeying, and loving the truth, as it is in JESUS) are reducible to these three heads:—

1. Negligence of learning the will of GOD, through slothfulness, and love of ease, and low esteem of the ways of GOD.

2. Pride, whereby a man is ashamed to consult others, and to be taught by them. Those that are sincerely conscientious, are not free from a kind of proud modesty, in being shy of making inquiry into practical cases; there is something of pride in their bashfulness to discover their ignorance, in asking of questions for conscience' sake. But those that are ungodly, arrogate so much to their own judgment, that (to speak their own boasting) they know as much as any man can teach them: but as wise as they are, a wiser than they calls them fools; and their folly misleads them.

3. Passion, or inordinate affection about that whereof we are ignorant. This warpeth our conscience; for he that seeks truth with a bias, will run counter when he comes near it, and not find it, though he come within sight of it.

You may gather the remedies from the opposites to these three causes of error. (1.) Be industriously diligent to know your duty. (2.) Be humbly willing to receive instruction. And (3.) Let not your affections out-run your judgment.

But there is one rule I shall commend, which if you will conscientiously improve, you shall never be much hurt by an erring conscience; and I dare appeal to your own consciences, that it is your indispensable duty, you must use it; and it is so plain and easy, you may use it.

Do what you know, and God will teach you what to do. Do what you know to be your present duty, and God will acquaint you with your future duty, as it comes to be present. Make it your business to avoid known omissions, and God will keep you from feared commissions.

This rule is of great moment, and therefore I will charge it upon you by express Scripture. "Shew me thy ways, O LORD;" (*Psa. xxv. 4;*) *i. e.*, those ways wherein I cannot err. "Teach me thy paths;" *i. e.*, that narrow path which is too commonly unknown, those commands that are most strict and difficult. "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me;" (*ver. 5;*) *i. e.*, teach me evidently, that I may not be deceived; so teach me, that I may not only know thy will, but do it. Here is his prayer; but what grounds hath he to expect audience? "For thou art the God of my salvation;" *q. d.*, thou, LORD, wilt save me, and therefore do not refuse to teach me. "On thee do I wait all the day;" *i. e.*, the whole day, and every day. Other arguments are couched in the following verses; but what answer? "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way;" (*ver. 9;*) *i. e.*, those that submit their neck to his yoke, those that are not conceited that they can guide themselves better than he can guide them, he will teach them his ways; in necessary, great, and weighty matters they shall not err. Again, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding. If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For

the LORD giveth wisdom : out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous ; he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity, and every good path :” (*Prov. ii. 3—9*;) *q. d.*, Be but as diligent to get knowledge, as a covetous man to get money, and GOD will certainly give you such knowledge of his ways as shall preserve you from error, and will teach you how to behave yourselves both towards GOD and man. One Scripture more, that in the evidence of three witnesses this rule may be established : “ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of myself ;” (*John vii. 17*;) *q. d.*, Hinder not yourselves from learning truth, through fear of error ; for you shall never want the SPIRIT’S guidance, while you practically follow his conduct.

IV. A doubting conscience is that which, with trouble and anxiety, suspends its judgment, not knowing which way to determine. Doubtfulness of conscience is that ambiguity of mind which consists in a standing (or rather in a wavering) balance, neither assenting nor dissenting. To speak strictly, a doubting conscience is no conscience ; but only improperly, as a dead man may be said to be a man. Conscience is a judgment of something done, or to be done : but where there is no assent, there is no judgment ; and therefore so far as it may be called a conscience, it is an evil conscience.

The Apostle tells us, “ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” By faith there, we must understand that persuasion and security of mind, whereby we believe and determine, that such a thing pleaseth or displeaseth GOD, is lawful or forbidden. It is not spoken of justifying faith, as if men sinned in eating or not eating, because their sins were, or were not pardoned. In all duties then, that belong to practice, we must be unweariedly diligent to perceive the truth, that doubtfulness may be driven away ; for the more

certain knowledge we have of those things we do, the more confident we may be in the doing of them, and the more joyful afterwards. What therefore is the cause of doubting that it may be banished?

The causes of doubting, which I shall speak of briefly, (to say nothing of our ignorance and weakness,) are these two:—

1. Either want or equality of reasons; that when we poise and weigh things most impartially, yet we are not able to come to a determination, but the mind is still in suspense.

2. Doubts arise from some peculiar reasons. General reasons are not sufficient to make a conscientious doubt; there must be intention of mind upon some particular reasons that must be duly weighed, else we may be said to doubt of what we scarce think of. They have not so good as a doubting conscience, whose doubts lurk in generals, who have only some cloudy notions from without, or foggy mists from within, which they take no due course to clear. Too many deal with their doubts, as cripples with their sores, which might easily be healed, but they make them a begging argument: so the formalists have always their doubts and fears about things general, or of lesser moment, which they might easily answer, and employ themselves in things more profitable. Shall I tell you how? You cannot expect I should resolve the almost infinite particulars of doubtful cases; but I will propose two remedies, which, with the blessing of God upon the conscientious improvement, will give you light for smoke, in things both sacred and civil.

1. About lesser matters, this rule commonly holds good, *viz.*, in things doubtful, take the safest course. In things doubtful, ordinarily one way is clear, take that; *e. g.*, I question whether such a recreation be lawful, but I am sure it is not unlawful to let it alone; therefore, to prevent the after-reckonings of conscience, I will not meddle with it, but this will not reach all cases; therefore,—

2. Bring the case to a point, wherein the stress of your

doubt lies; but be sure it be a case of conscience, (not of interest, or prejudice,) such as you are unreservedly willing to be resolved in, that you can in prayer (as it were) bring GOD a blank to write what he pleaseth. And (2.) Pare off all those demurs, and carnal reasonings, which may puzzle, but can never satisfy you. These things premised, (3.) Write down your case as nakedly as you can, with the grounds of your hesitation: in your writing, make two columns; on the one side write those reasons you judge cogent, *for*, on the other side, the reasons you judge of moment *against*, that whereof you doubt: compare these together, and poise them impartially. You will find that your perplexed thoughts have another aspect when written than when floating; and yourselves will be able to resolve your own doubts: but if not, this will ripen the boil, where it doth not break and heal it; you will be ready for advice.

In your consulting of others, do it with expressions equivalent to those of the Jews to JEREMIAH, (but with more sincere affections,) "Pray for us unto the LORD thy GOD." (*Jer.* xlii. 2.)—"That the LORD thy GOD may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do." (*Ver.* 3.)—"The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not, according to all things, for the which the LORD thy GOD shall send thee to us." (*Ver.* 5.)—"Whether it be good, or whether it be evil," (*i. e.*, seem it never so disadvantageous or dangerous to us,) "we will obey the voice of the LORD our GOD, to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our GOD." (*Ver.* 6.)

If you cannot out of these collect a satisfying resolution, (yet the case will be brought into a narrower compass,) be unwearied therefore to take the same course again, apply yourselves to the same persons, or others; [one] case thus thoroughly resolved, will be singularly useful for the scattering of all future doubts in all other cases: and though this may prove a business of time, yet suspend your acting until you are satisfied: though the duty in question

be of greatest moment, yet while you can approve your heart unto **God**, that it is neither love of sin nor ease, it is neither slighting of **CHRIST** nor duty, but a restless inquisitiveness to know **God's** mind in the case, your suspense (at the worst) will be reckoned among your infirmities, and be compassionately overlooked. To conclude this: "Whereto ye have already attained, walk by rule exactly; and if in any thing you be doubtfully minded, **God** shall reveal even this unto you."

V A scrupulous conscience is that which doth determine a thing to be lawful, yet scarcely to be done, lest it should be unlawful. There is some anxiety, reluctancy, and fear, in the determination. A scruple in the mind is as gravel in the shoe, it vexeth the conscience as that hurts the foot. A scruple is a hovering kind of fearfulness, arising from light arguments, that hinder or disturb the soul in performances of duties.

The difference between a doubting conscience and a scrupulous conscience, is this: A doubting conscience assents to neither part of the question; a scrupulous conscience consents, but with some vexation.

I shall name but two causes (forbearing to mention our ignorance and pride) which have a great influence upon all kinds of error, doubts, and scruples.

1. The first cause of scrupulousness is natural, *viz.*, a cold complexion, which is always timorous: those that are phlegmatic and melancholy are naturally fearful.

2. The second and the chief cause is temptations. **SATAN**, if he cannot keep the heart a secure prisoner, will do his utmost to overwhelm it with fears and jealousies, and suits his temptations to our temper. He doth not tempt the riotous with rewards, nor the passionate to fearfulness; he doth not tempt the melancholy to security, nor the phlegmatic to great achievements.

1. The first remedy I shall commend to you is this: *viz.*, be not discouraged with your scruples, but keep off from the other extreme also; do not indulge them; they

tend to much spiritual damage: They (1.) are occasions of sin. (2.) They render the ways of GOD more strait, horrid, and impossible. (3.) They retard the work of grace. (4.) They hinder cheerfulness in the service of GOD. (5.) They quench the SPIRIT. (6.) They unfit us for any duty. These may all serve for arguments to strive against them: but yet, be not discouraged, for GOD is pleased through over-powering grace to make good use of them. (1.) To further mortification. (2.) To restrain us from worldly vanities. (3.) To abate pride. (4.) To make us more watchful. (5.) To make us more spiritual. (6.) To (little less than) force us to live more upon CHRIST: yet,—

2. Do what possibly you can to get rid of your scruples: but if you cannot get rid of them, act against them. It is not only lawful, but necessary, to go against a scrupulous conscience, or you will never have either grace or peace. Should a Christian forbear praying, or receiving the sacrament, every time his scrupulous conscience tells him he had better wholly omit the duty, than perform it in such a manner, he would soon find, to his sorrow, the mischief of his scruples; but grace will not leave him to his scrupulous humour. Be resolute, therefore, and tell the Devil, that as you do not perform your duty at his command, so neither will you omit it as his bidding. Do by religious duties, as they that are afraid to go by water, or to go over a narrow bridge; they cease to fear when they have gone often over: so by the performance of duties, your scrupulous fears will vanish. Act against your scruples, (1.) Positively, by disputing them down, and opposing their reasons. (2.) Negatively, by slighting of them, and not hearkening to them. In short, in all necessary known duties; always do what you can, when you cannot do what you would.

VI. The trembling conscience is that which is disquieted and distressed with the (apprehended) hazard of the soul's condition, that doth nothing but accuse, and

condemn, and affright the soul. This, of any, needs least enlargement, for every one that feels it is rhetorical enough in expressing it.

There is a twin cause of a trembling conscience, *viz.*, sense of sin, and fear of wrath. Never sin like mine! Never heart like mine! Never case like mine! Such are the constant complaints of a troubled spirit.

For the cure, I can give but hints. Never keep the Devil's counsel. Break through all carnal reasonings, to acquaint yourselves with some faithful spiritual Physician, or experienced Christian, that may show you the methods of divine grace, and what others have successfully done that have been just in your condition. This premised,—

1. Notwithstanding (yea, in the midst of) your saddest complaints, bless GOD for an awakened conscience, while there is hope of cure. It is a good rule, be not too quick in administering comforts; but we cannot be too quick in provoking to thankfulness. If you can at present be thankful that you are out of hell, you shall, ere long, be thankful for assurance of heaven. This rule may seem strange, but (upon experience) its practice will discover its excellency.

2. Observe, it is GOD's usual method to bring the soul through these perplexities, to the most solid, spiritual peace. AUGUSTINE excellently expresseth his spiritual conflict, how GOD followed him with severe mercy, until he made him instant for thorough holiness. GOD kept him trembling, that he might leave dallying. Believe it, Christian, GOD is now storing thee with experiences, which will be a useful treasury throughout thy life. Therefore,—

3. Do but hold on in the vigorous use of all means of grace, and reckon GOD's keeping thee from turning thy back upon his ways, when thou hast no comfort in them, for evidences, that the SPIRIT is at work in thy heart; and for pledges, that he will perfect his own work; *e. g.*, count thy growing importunity in prayer, (or sorrowful complaint for the want of it,) a gracious answer of that prayer, which

thou thinkest is disregarded. Count thy watching for a word to direct and support thee, a notable efficacy of that word, which thou countest doeth thee no good. Count thy restless dissatisfaction with every thing on this side **GOD**, to be a token from **GOD**, that he will be thy satisfying portion; and in the interim, ask those well grown Christians, that are now in the spiritually sensible embraces of divine love, whether they are not glad that **GOD** formerly took that course with them, which he now takes with thee, to bring them to these joys. Be encouraged, therefore; though thou hast a sorrowful seed-time, thou shalt have a joyful harvest.

Thus having spoken of those kinds of conscience that are either evil or troublesome, and how to cure them, I now come to those desirable kinds of conscience, that, next to Deity, and heavenly glory, admit no hyperbole in their commendation, *viz.*, the good honest conscience, and the good peaceable conscience, and how to obtain them.

VII. That conscience is good, in respect of its integrity, which gives a right judgment of every thing, according to the word of **GOD**. I grant that the law of nature binds, ecclesiastical laws bind, and political laws bind; but the word of **GOD** is the principal rule, which precisely binds the conscience in regard of its author: "There is one Law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy. Fear not them which kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

VIII. That conscience is a good, peaceable conscience, that excuseth, absolveth, and comforteth, as it ought; that conscience that is pacified by the blood of **CHRIST**. But how shall we get such consciences? Christians, be but persuaded to practise these directions, and your consciences will certainly be right, and seasonably be comfortable.

1. Take heed of every sin; count no sin small. Screw up your obedience to every command to the highest. Ferret out every sin, to the most secret corruption. When

you have set your watch against the first risings of sin, beware of the borders of sin, shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon occasions or temptations to sin : those that dare venture upon occasions, as children upon the ice, shall find there is always danger, never any good. Morality itself will teach you this lesson, to keep clear of evil, if ever you would either be good or enjoy it ; but seeing, as on the one hand, there cannot be truth of grace, and truce with sin ; so, on the other hand, while grace is imperfect, sin will have (and make us feel it hath) a being. Therefore,—

2. Forthwith set upon the healing duty of repentance ; and upon every slip into sin, speedily renew it. O that I could snatch you out of your state of impenitency, and persuade you to daily actual repentance ! To those that are resolved to delay their repentance, I have sometimes given counsel suitable to such resolutions, *viz.*, The next sickness that seizeth upon you, chide it away ; tell your disease you cannot have while to be sick ; say to it, as FELIX to PAUL, “ Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” If death summon thee, tell it you will not obey its summons ; you have other business to do than to die ; you have estates unsettled, and children unprovided for ; and you would repent too before you die, but you cannot yet have while. If this will not serve, but die you must ; charge your souls before they go out of your bodies, not to come near the prison of impenitent persons ; charge your friends to lock up your bodies so safe, or bury them so deep, that all the angels in heaven may not be able to drag them to judgment. But, alas my brethren ! do you not think this wild counsel ? And well you may. Yet unless you could do something equivalent to this, you are mad to defer your repentance. What, cannot I keep pain from my body, nor the use of reason in my soul one minute, and shall I continue in my impenitency, that will damn me the very moment of my death ? I beseech you therefore, for your own soul’s sake, that you may not be guilty of the worst self-murder, *i. e.*, soul-

murder, speedily set upon repentance. And those of you that have repented, let your repentance daily supplant sin, by taking it by the heel certainly to lame it, until you can take it by the head utterly to kill it. And be very careful never to return to sins repented of. That you may be serious in both these,—

3. Compose thyself to live as under **God's** eye; live as in the (more than) sensible presence of the jealous **God**. Remember, all things are naked and bare before Him; you cannot deceive Him, for he is infinite wisdom; you cannot fly from Him, for he is every where; you cannot bribe Him, for he is righteousness itself. Keep therefore fresh apprehensions of **God** in your thoughts; speak, as knowing **God** hears you; walk, as knowing **God** is nearer to you than you are to yourselves. The **Lord** is with you, while you are with him; *i. e.*, you shall enjoy his favourable presence, while you live in his awful presence. There is one **Psalm**, which it were well if Christians would do by it, as **Pythagoras** by his golden precepts, every morning and evening repeat it: it is **David's** appeal of a good conscience unto **God**, against the calumnies of men: “**O Lord**, thou hast searched me and known me;” (*Psa.* cxxxix. 1;) *q. d.*, **O Lord**, thou art the heart-searching **God**, who perfectly knowest all the thoughts, counsels, studies, endeavours, and actions of all men, and therefore mine. “Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off;” (*ver.* 2;) *q. d.*, Thou knowest my rest and motion, and my thoughts in both. “Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways;” (*ver.* 3;) *q. d.*, thou fannest and winnowest me, *i. e.*, thou discussest and triest me to the utmost. “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, **O Lord**, thou knowest it altogether;” (*ver.* 4;) *q. d.*, I cannot speak a word, though never so secret, obscure, or subtle, but thou knowest what, and why, and with what mind it was uttered. “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;” (*ver.* 5;) *q. d.*, Thou keepest me within the compass of thy

knowledge, like a man that will not let his servant go out of his sight. I cannot break away from thee. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;" (*ver. 6*;) *q. d.*, The knowledge of thy great and glorious majesty and infiniteness, is utterly past all human comprehension. ("Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or, whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (*Ver. 7.*) Whither can I flee from thee, whose essence, presence, and power, is every where. "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there:" (*ver. 8*;) there is no height above thee, there is no depth below thee. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea;" (*ver. 9*;) if I had wings to fly as swift as the morning light, from the East to the West, that I could in a moment get to the furthest part of the world; "even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right shall hold me:" (*ver. 10*;) thence shall thy hand lead me back, and hold me fast like a fugitive. "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me:" (*ver. 11*;) though darkness hinders man's sight, it doth not thine. In a word, look which way you will, there is no hiding place from God. "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." (*Job xxxiv. 21, 22.*) Therefore, Christians, do nothing but what you are willing God should take notice of; and judge in yourselves whether this be not the way to have a good and quiet conscience?

4. Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. This is so necessary to the getting and keeping of a right and peaceable conscience, that it is impossible to have either without it. There are some duties and graces, like those parts of the body, that may supply the defect of other parts; or like some drugs in physic, which when they cannot be had, some of the like nature may serve: but this is like those, the defect whereof nothing else can supply. The Heathens have found out

this rule. **PYTHAGORAS** gives it as a precept; and **SENECA** backs it by the example of **SEXTIUS**, who every night, before he composed himself to sleep, asked himself, What evil hast thou this day healed? What vice hast thou resisted? Wherein art thou better? O how sweet is that sleep which follows such a recognition of himself, who made every night a scrutiny into the words and deeds of the whole day! He would neither pass by, nor hide any thing from himself: he so ripped up his faults, that he would not pardon them to himself, without a self-charge not to repeat them. Have you gone thus far? Certainly, my brethren, not to out-strip them is inexcusable. It is a shame to see the carelessness of most, that are better acquainted with any thing than themselves; there are many that know the histories of a thousand years past, and yet cannot tell you the particulars of their own lives; men well acquainted with the mysteries of arts and nature, but utterly ignorant of the secrets of their own souls. How few are there amongst us, that can say as **DAVID**, "I have thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies?" Nay, we have a thousand matters to think on all the day long, the night too, the week, the year; but who questions with his own heart, What am I? What do I? How live I? Is the course I follow good and lawful? Is that which I omit, my duty, or not? Is **GOD** my friend? Am I his? What hope have I of heaven? Say, I die tomorrow, to day, this very hour, where is my assurance I shall be saved? What apology can I make against the accusations of **SATAN** and my conscience? Will **CHRIST** be my advocate, when I shall stand in judgment? Do I grow in grace, or do I decay? Am I better this year than I was the last? What sins have I conquered now, that held me in combat then? What graces have I obtained now, that I had not then? Christians, do you do thus? If you do, that is not enough, unless you do it frequently, daily. Every evening, ere you sleep, review your carriage in the day, what you have done, or spoken, or thought, that is but so much as indecent; whether your hearts have been intent upon religion, and indifferent to the world. Briefly,

have special care of two portions of your time, *viz.*, morning and evening; the morning to forethink what ought to be done, and the evening to examine whether you have done what you ought.

5. Be much in prayer; in all manner of prayer, but especially in secret prayer. Do not nonsuit yourselves by the love of sin, and you shall certainly be heard when you pray for grace: believe it, Christian, it is not thine inevitable weakness, nor thy sensible dulness, nor thy lamented rovings, nor thy opposed distractions; it is not any, nor all these, can shut out thy prayers, if thou dost not regard iniquity in thy heart: therefore, be encouraged, it is the voice of your Beloved that saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever you shall ask the FATHER in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing (to what you might ask) in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

6. Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only: propose some end to yourselves in every thing, and let your lesser and subordinate ends be plainly reducible to the great end of your living. The emphasis of the Apostle's exhortation is very great: "Exercise thyself unto godliness;" *q. d.*, Be as diligent in religion, as thou wouldest have thy children that go to school be in learning: or thus; Let thy whole life be in preparation for heaven, like the wrestler's or combatant's preparation for victory: or thus; Strip thyself of all incumbrances, that thou mayest attend unto piety: pleasures may sooth thee for a while, but they have a heart-aching farewell. Thou mayest call thy riches goods; but within a few days what good will they do thee? Men may flatter thee for thy greatness; but with GOD, thy account will be the greater. Therefore, always mind that which will always be advantage.

7. Live more upon CHRIST than upon inherent grace. Do not venture upon sin, because CHRIST hath purchased a pardon: that is a most horrible and impious abuse of CHRIST. For this very reason, there was no sacrifice under the Law for any wilful wickedness, lest

people might think they knew the price of sins, as those do that truck with popish indulgences and pardons. But that none may be overwhelmed with the sense of their unworthiness, be it known to you, "We have an advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the righteous;" and our salvation is better, safer, more for GOD's glory, and our comfort, in His hand, than in ours.

8. Be every way nothing in your own eyes: it is the humble soul that thrives exceedingly, and, alas! what have we to be proud of? Look we either at our constitution or conversation; our conception sinful, our birth penal, our life toilsome, and our death, we know not what; but all this is nothing to the state of our soul. A stoick would give this rule, If any one tell you of another speaking evil of thee, do not excuse thyself, but say, He did not know me, or else he would have spoken worse. A convert, when he once comes to be sensible of sin, sees more cause to be weary of his life, than proud of his graces. To rise and fall; to see others outrun us that set out after us; to recover that time for communion with GOD, which we trifle away in unobserved impertinencies; surely for such persons to be low and vile in their own eyes, deserves not to be called humility, though the contrary be worse than devilish pride. Be persuaded, therefore, to believe of yourselves AGUR's words of himself: "Surely I am more brutish than any man;" (*Prov. xxx. 2;*) *q. d.*, I do not make use of my reason. "I have not the knowledge of the holy;" (*ver. 3;*) *q. d.*, My knowledge of holy mysteries is very little; in comparison of my ignorance, nothing. Be as willing that others should speak ill of you, as you are to speak ill of yourselves; and be as unwilling that others should commend you, as you are to commend yourselves.

9. Entertain good thoughts of GOD, whatever he doeth with you, whatever he requires of you, whatever he lays upon you. We never arrive to any considerable holiness, or peace, until we lose ourselves in Deity; until our understandings be filled with admiration; until our wills be, in a sober sense, divine; until our affections be, in a spiritual sense, transported. When we can at once unriddle GOD's

methods of grace, and make good constructions of GOD's methods of Providence, making a spiritual improvement of both, then we are not far from being universally and exactly conscientious. There is one thing yet wanting, and that is implied in this, but it must be expressed also.

10. Do all you do out of love to GOD. Spiritual love sickness, is the soul's heathfullest constitution. When love to GOD is both cause, means, motive, and end, of all our activity in the business of religion, then the soul is upon the wing towards its rest : then is our love to other things regular, when the alone goodness of GOD moves us to love them ; as the alone respect to health makes me use physic : the means hath no proper goodness distinct from the goodness of the end. Those means which were profitable, though they remain unchanged in themselves, yet they become unprofitable by the alone change of the end : *e. g.*, Health being recovered, physic is unprofitable ; which, while we were infirm, was profitable. So we are not to love any means without relation to the end ; because it is contrary to the purity of that love which we owe to GOD : for we ought so to love GOD, that with him, or under him, we love nothing else ; but all things only in him, because, otherwise, we do not love him with our whole heart : *e. g.*, In men's loving their wives, and wives their husbands, in parents loving their children, and children their parents, it is a rare pitch to love all these in GOD ; that is, to advance our love to GOD by them, and so far as any of them draw off our love to GOD, to say to them, as CHRIST to PETER, " Get thee behind me, SATAN ; thou art an offence unto me." -

Love is extended to good : the more good, therefore, any thing is, the more it is to be beloved : ' But thou, O LORD my GOD, (saith BRADWARDINE,) art the good of every good, good above all things that are good, a good most infinitely infinite : how much, therefore, should I rationally love thee ? Should not my love be proportionably infinite ? I would I could so love thee ; but how shall I, that am so very little and finite, love thee infinitely ! And yet, without so loving thee, how will there be kept

any due proportion in loving thee, who dost infinitely exceed all other lovely things? I ought to love thee infinitely as to the manner, though I cannot as to the act of my love: *i. e.*, I ought to love thee finally for thyself; and may love thee in some sort infinitely, as to the act, both intensively and extensively: In some sort intensively; *i. e.*, more intensely, more firmly, more strongly than any finite good, because I love them but for thee: In some sort extensively; by comparing all things, how many, or how great soever, with thee, and loving thee before all, and above all; that I had rather all things in the world, and myself too to have no being, than once to offend thee. But, LORD, Thou lovest thy friends in an unspeakable manner, more than they can love thee. O therefore, thou great LORD, thou great good, that fillest heaven and earth, why dost thou not fill my very little soul? O my soul, that art so little, so miserable, why dost thou not open all thy little doors? Why dost thou not extend thy utmost capacity, that thou mayest be wholly possessed, wholly satiated, wholly ravished with the sweetness of so great love; especially, seeing thou art so very little, yet nothing less will satisfy thee. O therefore, my most loving GOD, I beseech thee tell me, what may most effectually draw out my love to thee, considering what prevention of love, what good things I receive from thee, infinite in greatness, infinite in multitude: it is a wonder that any one can think of these things, and not be wholly swallowed up of love, wholly turned into love: but I see, LORD, it is easier to speak these things, and to write them, than to do them. Thou, therefore, most good and most powerful LORD, to whom nothing is difficult, give, I beseech thee, that I may more easily do these things in my heart, than utter them with my mouth. Open, I beseech thee, thy most bountiful hand, and enable me, that nothing may be more easy, nothing more sweet, nothing more delightful, than most effectually, and most affectionately, to fulfil that which I speak about loving of thee. LORD, give me leave a little to presume above my hope, and to plead with thee about thy magnificent goodness: human friendship will not give

the repulse to a poor, wanting, begging friend; O therefore, most liberal LORD, help me that I may love thee.' Christians, it is worth your while to make it your business to climb up to this: this you will find to be a completing rule, an effectual means, and a singular exercise of exact and conscientious walking.

I shall briefly name two arguments, or motives, to persuade the use of these directions:—

1. You cannot possibly get rid of your conscience; therefore be persuaded to get a good one. There is nothing more common than for wicked men to do what they can to extinguish conscience: they flatter it with carnal reasoning; they bribe it with mock devotions; they wound it with heinous provocations; they sear it with customary wickedness; they trample it under foot by sinning in despite of it; they run away from it, and will not endure to hear it, by diversions; and yet they can sooner turn their souls out of their bodies, than conscience out of their souls: yea, amongst all these indignities, it doth but watch its opportunity, when it will be heard, when it will make that which was done perhaps forty years ago, as if it had been done but yesterday. What ails the great Emperors of the world? What causes their terror in the land of the living? What ails them to tremble with inward conviction? Is it a vain fear? Why then do they not shake it off? Is it the fear of men? No; they are above human punishments. Is it the fear of shame? No; the sin perhaps was secret. What is the matter? O they are haunted by the fury of their own consciences. Would wicked men but tell what they sometimes feel, even then when they out-face a ministerial or friendly reproof, there would need no more to be said to evidence, that a conscience you will have, which will first or last do its office.

2. Your own conscience will be your best friend, or your greatest enemy (of any creature) unto eternity. There is no greater riches, no greater pleasure, no greater safety, than a good conscience. Let the pressures of the body, the hurry of the world, the affrightments of SATAN, be

they never so great, they cannot reach the conscience. A good conscience singularly cheers the dying body, joyfully accompanies unto GOD the departing soul, triumphingly presents both soul and body unto the desired tribunal. There is no more profitable means, nor surer testimony, nor eminent conveyor of eternal happiness, than a good conscience. And, on the contrary, there is no greater torment than an evil conscience: though its gentler checks may be disregarded, its louder clamours will make you tremble. O Sirs, what will you do when conscience shall upbraid you with your abuse of mercies, incorrigibleness under judgments, contempt of CHRIST, and hatred of holiness? You cannot now endure to hear what conscience hath to say; how will you endure it unto eternity? If one that killed his own father, could not, in some Egyptian's account, be more cruelly punished than by being compelled to behold the murdered body for three days, what a torment will it be to be forced to behold every sin, with every aggravation, to eternity? Here in bodily sickness there are some intervals to revive the spirits; but hereafter there will not be a moment's intermission of unexpressible horror to eternity. The conscience shall roar under infinite wrath; and the sinner shall be kept from annihilation under it by infinite power.

Thus I have, in a weak manner, performed my promise in speaking to several kinds of consciences, with remedies and rules, which, laid together, will, I think, amount to sufficient instructions, how we may be universally and exactly conscientious: *viz.*,—1. Get your consciences awakened from their natural lethargy. 2. Preserve them tender from acquired searedness. 3. Rectify their errors, as you would get cured of blindness. 4. Resolve their doubts, as you would a claim to your lands. 5. Break from your scruples, as from thieves on the road. 6. Lay your head in CHRIST's bosom, to cure your trembling. And then, 7. for the integrity, 8. and quiet of your consciences, observe the rules proposed, as punctually as you would Physicians' bills in a tedious sickness. (1.) Avoid sinning, as you would a train of gunpowder. (2.) Be as

quick in your repentance, as in the cure of a pleurisy. (3.) Live under the apprehended presence of the jealous God. (4.) Examine your hearts as Princes sift out treason. (5.) Pray for suitable grace, as starving persons cry for food. (6.) Let every action be as an arrow shot at a mark. (7.) Think of God as of a wise Physician. (8.) Be as vile in your own esteem, as you are in the eyes of a captious enemy. (9.) Live upon CHRIST, as the-child in the womb lives upon the mother. (10.) Love God, (as near as possibly you can,) as God loves you.

But if these rules, though thus contracted, be too many, and too long to be always remembered, that you may not be overcharged with that which should never be forgotten, I shall commend to you some (spiritually) chemical extractions, and (if I might so express it) spirits of directions, that may be to your souls in your pilgrimage towards heaven, as your ship-provisions in a sea-voyage; generally sufficient, when others cannot be had. Plainly practise these memorials of direction in all your conscientious walking.

1. Consult duty, not events. There is nothing in the world for us to do, but to mind our duty. Curious speculations, that tend not to holiness, may be reckoned among your superfluities; but misgiving predictions of what may or will befall you in the discharge of your duty, may be reckoned among your grosser iniquities; and to venture upon sin to avoid danger, is to sink the ship for fear of pirates,—and must be reckoned amongst your greatest follies, your worst of sins. Is not their reason (questionless their conscience is) dangerously distempered, that practically argue, this way of duty may probably procure man's displeasure, and therefore to prevent that, I will take the course which will certainly procure God's displeasure? Besides, by-ways will not lead you to the place you aim at; but, on the contrary, keep your consciences free from being violated, and you cannot be miserable. O how calm and quiet, as well as holy and heavenly, would our lives be, had we learned but this single lesson,—To be careful for nothing, but to know and do our duty, and leave all effects, consequences, and events to God! The truth is, it

is a daring boldness for silly dust to prescribe to infinite Wisdom, and to let go our work to meddle with God's. He hath managed the concernments of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving occasion to any one to complain, for above these five thousand years; and doth he now need your counsel? Therefore let it be your only business to mind duty. But how shall I mind my duty? Take a second memorial.

2. What advice you would give to another, take yourselves. The worst of men are apt enough to lay burdens on other men's shoulders, which if they would take upon their own, they would be rare Christians: *e. g.*, The very outcry of those that revile godliness, who deal by the mis-carriages of professors as the Levite by his concubine, quarter them and divulge them; even they expect that those which make a strict profession of religion, should be beyond exception blameless; and they, even they, scorn those that make any defection from their professed strictness. And, on the other side, those that are holy, they expect that even graceless persons should bear reproof, receive instruction, and change the course of their lives. In middle cases then, between these extremes, what exactness will serious Christians require, where the bias of their own corruptions doth not misguide them? Wherein this rule is too short, add a third.

3. Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Where prayer doth not lead, repentance must follow; and it is a desperate adventure to sin upon the hopes of repentance. Every action (and cessation too) of a Christian that is good, and not to be refused, is sanctified by the word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do any thing so trivial, that he cannot pray over it; and if he would but bestow a serious ejaculatory prayer upon every occurrent action, he would find that such a prayer would cut off all things sinful, demur all things doubtful, and encourage all things lawful. Therefore, do nothing but what you can preface with prayer. But these rules are all defective; I will therefore close with an example that is infinitely above defects.

4. Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded

CHRIST himself would do in your case, were he upon the earth. The Heathens proposed unto themselves the best examples they had, and therefore let us follow the best of ours. There are many rare examples in Scripture; but we may say of them, as it is said of most of DAVID'S worthies, whose highest commendation was with this diminution: "They attained not unto the first three." I propose therefore now neither great nor small, but the King of Saints. It becomes a Christian rather to be an example, than to follow one; but by imitating of CHRIST you will come as near as it is possible to the first three, for your fellowship shall be "with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, through the SPIRIT of holiness, who alone can teach you what it is to abide in CHRIST, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute copy. O Christians, how did CHRIST pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did CHRIST preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words, that his enemies could not but admire him! At what rate did CHRIST value the world? What time did CHRIST spend in impertinent discourse? Who made "their hearts burn within them," whom he occasionally fell in company with? How did CHRIST go up and down doing good to man, and always those things that were pleasing to GOD! Beloved, I commend to you these four memorials, to be as so many scarlet threads upon every finger of the right-hand one, that you may never put forth your hand to action, but these memorials may be in your eye. 1. Mind duty. 2. What is another's duty in your case is yours. 3. What you cannot say, The blessing of the LORD be upon it, do not meddle with. But above all, as soon forget your christian name, (the name of Christian,) as forget to eye CHRIST; and whatever entertainment you meet with from the profane world, remember your Exemplar, and follow His steps, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

SERMON II.

HOW MINISTERS OR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS MAY AND OUGHT TO APPLY THEMSELVES TO SICK PERSONS, FOR THEIR GOOD, AND THE DISCHARGE OF THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE.

JOB xxxiii. 23, 24.

If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

THESE words are part of ELIHU'S discourse, uttered by way of reprehension and conviction to JOB, and by way of vindication and apology for GOD in his dealings with men: and although he premiseth this, that GOD giveth no account of his matters, (*ver. 13,*) yet he doth give an account for GOD, and makes a defence, or gives a rationale, of GOD'S proceedings with men; where he shows that it is not man's torment or ruin that GOD desires, but his reformation: and that it may appear how sincerely and fervently he desires it, he shows that there are several ways which GOD useth, which are most likely to produce it.

1. He speaks to men in dreams: (*ver. 15, &c.*)

2. When that will not do, by afflictions: (*ver. 19, &c.*)

3. To make those afflictions more intelligible and more effectual, he sends a messenger. This is the business of the text; wherein you may observe two parts.

(1.) A supposition: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter." (*Ver. 23.*)

(2.) A position: "Then he is gracious to him." (*Ver. 24.*)

The words may be called, the sick man's cordial, or his restorative; wherein you may observe, 1. The patient; expressed in the word, "him." 2. The disease, his danger and misery: "He is going down to the pit." 3. The Physician; who is described, 1. By his office, "a messenger." 2. By his work: "an interpreter." 3. A rare man: "one of a thousand,—*multis é millibus unus*. 4. The physic: "to show unto a man his uprightness." 5. The cure: "then he is gracious."

"If a messenger,"—an angel, *i. e.*, by his office, not by nature, for so the word is often used in Scripture; and so it is most fitly understood here, both because God did then, and still doth, generally use the ministry of men rather than angels, in counselling and comforting afflicted men; and because he is called one of a thousand: a phrase which implies, as his excellency and fitness for that work, so the insufficiency of most of the same kind for it; which must not be charged upon the meanest of God's elect angels.

"An interpreter,"—*viz.*, of the mind and will of God. CHRIST is the great Interpreter; (*John* i. 18;) but when He ascended on high gave forth this gift, and left us interpreters in his stead. (*Eph.* iv. 11, &c.)

"To shew unto a man his righteousness;"—*i. e.* man's own righteousness; for it is the sin and unrighteousness of a man which causeth his disease, and the sense of that sin which makes his disease bitter and formidable; sin is the sting of every affliction. Now all cures are wrought by contraries: when, therefore, a faithful messenger, or Minister of CHRIST, having made the sick man sensible of his sin, and afterwards of the pardon of it, and when he comes to discover to him his righteousness, uprightness, holiness, "then God is gracious;" although it is not impossible that here may be a reference to CHRIST's righteousness also.

"Then he" (*i. e.*, God) "is gracious."—God is always gracious in himself; in his own nature; but he is gracious to none but in his own way, and upon his own terms.

God is not gracious to unrighteous and unholy persons ; but when men turn from their sins, God is gracious, and saith, Deliver him. He saith so to his Minister : He gives him commission to deliver him ; *i. e.*, to declare him to be delivered.

“ I have found a ransom.”—I have received satisfaction : *i. e.*, in the death of my SON, which was a ransom satisfactory for the sins of his people. And farther, it is by virtue of this ransom that God’s people are delivered, not only from hell, but from any other miseries. And well saith God, “ I have found a ransom ;” for it is beyond the wit of men or angels to find out such an admirable way for man’s salvation. Thus you have had the coherence, division, and sense of the words.

There are several doctrines which these words would afford, but I shall only speak of one.

That the seasonable instruction of sick persons, is a work as of great advantage, so of great skill and difficulty.

First, That it is a work of great advantage. It is a common mistake of many persons, that sick-bed applications are in a manner useless. It may be a discouragement which the Devil proposeth to Ministers or others, to make them neglect this work, or to be formal in it ; especially when the persons are ignorant and profane ; the Devil may suggest the invalidity of a sick-bed repentance, the customariness and hypocrisy of sick-bed desires. Now to obviate such suggestions, consider,—

1. That the instruction of sick persons is God’s institution. So you see in the text : “ a messenger,” *i. e.*, one sent of God for this purpose. Now God’s institutions are not in vain ; every institution of God carries a promise in its bowels to him that doth rightly use it. Ministers or christian friends may go about it with much comfort, for it is God’s work ; it is one of those ways (as you see in the chapter) which God ordained to reclaim sinners ; and when you attempt it, you may expect God’s concurrence. You may pray in faith for God’s assistance in his ordinance.

2. God's mercy may be offered even to languishing persons. It is true, it must be done cautiously; but it may be done. God doth tender his mercy, and we must not limit where God limits not. Ministers may safely follow God's example; and though such men only come to God as driven by necessity, yet God is so gracious, that he receives even such as mere necessity drives to him; and indeed all true converts are first persuaded to come to God by the sense of their own necessities, though afterwards they are elevated to a more noble disposition: God never rejected any upon this ground. How many came to CHRIST merely in a sense of their bodily maladies, and were sent away with a spiritual cure? CHRIST received her that came not to him until she had in vain tried all other Physicians; so in that parable of the Prodigal, (wherein God is pleased to represent the methods of his grace in the conversion and salvation of sinners,) you find that God doth not reject that poor prodigal, because he was forced home by insuperable straits and difficulties.

3. Sick-bed repentance is not impossible, though it be hard; sickness is one means that God useth to work repentance. God can work repentance even upon a sick-bed, and it is God that must do it even in health; and to speak truly and strictly, although the means of repentance be more probable, and the truth of repentance more discernible in health than in sickness, yet the practice of repentance is as hard a work in health as in sickness, seeing in both cases it is the great work of the omnipotent God, who hath ever challenged it as his Royal prerogative to give repentance; so that, in short, with men repentance is always impossible: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil:" (*Jer.* xiii. 23:) but with God it is always possible. And yet to prevent the abuse of this, by a presumptuous putting off repentance to the time of sickness and death, I must add, that such as put off repentance on such a pretext, seldom meet with it: God doth seldom give repentance to such persons. And

it is a general observation, that late repentance is seldom true, (though true repentance is never late,) it being the just judgment of GOD, that they that intend to mock GOD by putting off repentance, should deceive themselves, and die without repentance.

Secondly, That it is a work of great difficulty might easily be demonstrated; there are two arguments which the text suggests.

1. That it is a work which GOD hath put into the hands of his chief officers, his Ministers, who ought to be the most accomplished persons of all others. This is one of the works for which GOD hath vouchsafed such singular gifts to his messengers.

2. That it is not every Minister neither who is fit for this work, therefore it is required that he be “one of a thousand.”

But this I shall pass over, and come to the resolution of this great and important case of conscience,—How Ministers or Christian friends may and ought to apply themselves to sick persons for their good, and the discharge of their own consciences.

I take it to be one of the hardest parts of the Ministerial work, to make seasonable applications to such persons: I shall therefore answer it briefly in these eight propositions or directions.

1. Endeavour must be used to understand the state of the sick; as Physicians do by sick persons, they inquire into the manner of their life, diet, &c. It is a great step to the cure, to know the patient’s temper, because as bodily so spiritual physic must be suited to the temper and condition of the patient; and as Physicians take pains in this by conference with friends, and examining the patient, so should Ministers by discourse with religious acquaintance, and by searching conference with the sick persons, endeavour to find out the truth: for why should not men be as accurate in healing men’s souls, as their bodies?

2. The great business is to bring the sick man to a true

sight of his state. Indeed this is a happy thing, whatever his condition be : if sound and good, then it is a happiness to know it, that he may have the comfort of it ; if it be bad, yet it is a happiness to know it, that a man may be capable of counsel, and put into a way to amend it. It is true, evil men, like persons much in debt, care not to look into their books, and understand their debts ; but they must be brought to it : and the worse thy condition is, the more thou art concerned to discover it : for to be ignorant of thy condition, if it be good, only hinders thee from comforts ; but if it be bad, it hinders thee from salvation. You and they must both consider, that as the heart is always deceitful, so then especially for three reasons amongst others :—(1.) Then men are unable to examine themselves ; their natural parts are weakened, the eyes of their mind clouded, their mind is diverted by bodily pains, that it cannot attend, and so may sooner be cheated. (2.) Then men are slothful and listless, as to all spiritual exercises. If even good men are slothful in their most healthful times, how much more evil men in times of sickness ? The listlessness of the body generally makes an answerable impression upon the faculties of the soul. (3.) In times of sickness men are greedy of comfort, and so will catch even at a shadow. Upon all these grounds there needs the more caution, to set before their eyes the folly and misery of self-deceit, in everlasting matters.

3. Ministers and others must take great heed, lest while they avoid one extreme, they run upon another. Some, for the prevention of despair, have made such unseasonable applications of comfort, as have begotten presumptuous hopes ; others, to prevent presumption, have so indiscreetly aggravated things, as to render them hopeless and careless. There must therefore be a prudent tempering of things together, as the wise Physician mixeth several ingredients. He puts in things of a sharp and corroding nature, which may eat out or remove the noxious humours ; but addeth to them things of a more gentle temperature, to correct the acrimony of the former. God himself sets us a copy

by the mouth of SAMUEL: "You have done all this wickedness." (1 Sam. xii. 20.) There is the corrosive: He faithfully discovers that, and doth not daub with them; yet, lest the disease should rather be exasperated than removed, he adds this healing counsel: "Yet turn not aside from following the LORD;" and this cordial: "The LORD will not forsake his people." (Ver. 22.) And EZRA follows it: "We have trespassed against GOD, and have taken strange wives; yet there is hope in Israel concerning this: now, therefore, let us make a covenant with GOD." (Ezra x. 2.)

4. The same methods are not to be used to all. You might as well give the same pill to all diseased persons; whereas that which would cure one, will kill another. As discreet Physicians diversify their applications according to the difference of the patient's disposition and condition; so here. And there are many differences to be eyed here.

(1.) Difference of tempers, whether tender, rough and stubborn. As you read it is the husbandman's discretion that the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is the cart-wheel turned upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod; (*Isai. xxviii. 27*;) so it must be the discretion of a Minister, to have respect to the different tempers of men, in his applications to them. It is said of CHRIST, "He taught his disciples as they were able to bear."

(2.) Difference of education and conversation. Some have been bred in ignorance; others brought up in the knowledge of the truth. Not considering this, occasions much mischief. Discourse to an ignorant person of the necessity of faith and repentance; you lose your labour oft-times: he conceits he hath believed and repented; for he takes faith to be a believing, though without any grounds, that GOD hath pardoned him; and repentance, a crying 'GOD have mercy.' One must consider where foundations must be laid, and where we need only raise superstructures. Some have had a loose and profane education, others civil and

religious. The former require more terror, the latter more caution, lest they deceive themselves.

(3.) Difference of guilt. Great difference is to be made in the handling of sinners of a smaller size, and inveterate sinners. As God expects, so Ministers must endeavour, that sorrow may bear some proportion with the sin: PETER having sinned, "wept bitterly." (*Matt. xxvi. ult.*)

5. It is very bad for a guide to follow the counsels or desires of sick persons, or their carnal friends. It fares with faithful Ministers, as with honest and able Physicians, that are many times ill thought of by the sick man, and foolish friends, when they put him to pain or trouble; they charge him with cruelty, and delighting to torment the poor man unnecessarily, and it may be think of discharging him, and getting a Physician that will deal more gently with him: whereas indeed he is the sick man's best friend, and many times should he not pain him, he would kill him. So is it here: come to a sick man: he cries, 'Comfort, for God's sake;' so say his friends; and they think all is done if they can get comfort. Why you shall have it, but in due time; you shall have ease, health, but you must be contented to wait for it, and expect it in due order: first you must be sick: oft-times that physic is the best which makes you sickest. You shall be healed; but if you would proceed regularly, and work a true cure, you must first have your wound searched, and then healed, else you have only a palliative cure, and the wound will fester inwardly: and it is a horrible mistake of sick persons, they think comfort is all they are to look after. I tell you, it is not present comfort, but everlasting happiness, you must make your business to get; it is not AUGUSTUS's ἐὸδυσία, to die quietly, like a lamb, (as the vulgar phrase it,) but a Scripture ἐὸδυσία, to "die the death of the righteous." It is not so much a calm, and sweet, and easy passage, (the fishes have that, when they swim down the sweet stream of Jordan, into the Dead Sea, where they perish,) but a safe harbour.

6. The same course for substance is to be taken for the

conversion of sick and healthful persons. There is but one way to heaven for all persons ; and therefore consider with yourselves what you would do if you were in health, and what were necessary. Why that same course you must take now ; and if it be more troublesome to sick persons, they may thank themselves for it, who neglected the time of health. Indeed sick men are apt to favour themselves, and to think God will accept of less from them, than others ; whereas, if possible, they have need to do more than others, and to make the more haste, having the less time for their work.

7 The greatest care must be to keep sick persons from those errors whereby such commonly miscarry ; as,—

(1.) Insensibleness of their danger : whereas the first step to a cure, is to know one's malady. It is a dreadful thing to see poor, ignorant, and unconverted sinners at the very brink of the pit, ready to drop into hell, and not at all affected with it. If ever you mean to do them any good, you must awaken them out of that mortal lethargy, lighten their eyes with a conviction of their danger, lest they sleep the sleep of death.

(2.) Willingness to be deluded. You may know it thus : If a daubing Minister or friend offers comfort, how greedily they catch it ! They will receive comfort upon any ground, nay, upon no grounds, but upon the bare words (it may be) of a time-serving and man-pleasing Minister. But let a serious and faithful Minister come to them, and show them their sad, and sinful, and hazardous condition, and demonstrate it by irrefragable arguments, they will not yield to it ; but, as **ST. PETER** speaks, “ This they willingly are ignorant of.” (2 *Pet.* iii. 5.) You must possess them with the folly of such a temper, the unavoidable misery of self-deluding persons, and the dread of disappointment when too late.

(3.) Carelessness and listlessness. This is the temper of many : knowing the difficulty of believing, repenting, and remembering their own guilt, they cast off the care of that which they think will be to no purpose ; you must there-

fore possess them with the necessity of Christian carefulness. What madness it is to be careless now, which is the only season of caring to any purpose. What folly it is to free themselves from the care of a few days, to ascertain to themselves everlasting care and torment. Also you must possess them with the benefit of this care, and laying it to heart, that it is GOD'S course in opening the heart, to stir up this care.

(4.) Resting in generals. This deceives many to hell. You may discourse excellently against sin in the general, and raise in them some passion against it, yet not profit them at all : for true repentance takes notice of particular sins. And as generals have no existence, but in the particulars, according to principles of philosophy ; so it is sin in particular, which doth primarily affect the heart of a true penitent.

(5.) The concealment of some hidden way of wickedness, I believe, hath sent many to hell. They would never make their disease known, through fear of shame ; as some persons have died of those diseases which they have smothered. It is true, a man is not bound to make confession of all his sins to a Minister, as we rightly assert against Papists ; but yet all Divines grant, that in many cases it is both expedient and necessary to acknowledge thy wickedness to men. To say nothing of those cases wherein it is sometimes necessary, nor of many reasons which make it frequently expedient, I shall only instance in one, which is sufficient of itself many times : That the Physician knowing more exactly thy malady, may more effectually proportion his remedy. Possess them with this in such cases : How infinitely better it is to have some shame before a friend, who will cover your shame, and hate to reproach you with it, than before all the world.

(6.) Take heed of healing the souls of sick persons slightly. This we are very apt to, 1. From the sick man's greedy desire of comfort. 2. From the expectation and desire of carnal friends. 3. From our own careless hearts, that love not to put ourselves to any trouble or reproach,

which we shall meet with, if we be faithful in this case. However take heed of it: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." This is the case: A soul, whether in sickness or in health, must first be wounded, then healed. There must be sorrow and travail ere the man-child be brought forth. There must be true repentance and godly sorrow,—deep sorrow; they daub that tell you otherwise, and make GOD a liar. Repentance is neither a short nor a superficial work. Persuade them to wait GOD'S leisure, and in GOD'S way, for the cure, not to precipitate your work. Persuade them not to be afraid of sorrow and trouble, but rather to fear the want of it; for here is a common and fatal mistake: most men are afraid of sorrow, and labour to drive away sorrow; whereas indeed sorrow is the midwife of all true joy. Tears of penitential sorrow are the streams that lead us to "the rivers of pleasure, which are at GOD'S right hand." And on the contrary, to be a stranger to godly sorrow, is one of the most dreadful signs of a lost soul. The laughter of such a person is a *Risus Sardonicus*,—a deadly joy. Labour more to work a solid, than a sudden cure.

There are other directions I thought to have given, but these may suffice; and I will conclude all with two or three uses, first to Ministers, then to people.

1. To Ministers. Hence we may learn the great difficulty of the ministerial work. We see one reason why PAUL said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" O what a sin and shame it is to see what persons venture upon this work! That such undertake to be shepherds of CHRIST'S flock, that are hardly fit to be set with the dogs of the flock! "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Many act as if they thought this were all the work of a Minister, to make a few sermons, and read some prayers. No, no; a Minister must be thoroughly furnished to every good work; he must be apt and able for every work; this among others. O what angelical abilities doth it require! Acuteness, to discern the sick man's temper:

knowledge, to understand the nature of all spiritual diseases, the symptoms, the prognostics, as also the antidotes and remedies ; wisdom, to make suitable and speedy applications. O how hard a case is it ! Many sick men can endure neither the disease of their souls, nor their remedy. A Minister had need know all things, understand all persons, discern the subtleties of men's hearts, and not be ignorant of the wiles of the Devil.

How many knots must he be able speedily to untie ! How many cases must he be able to give speedy resolution to ! And he must be supposed to have laid up with great industry, because he must bring forth out of his treasure, "things both new and old." O the difficulty ! It is a sad thing to consider, that many souls do perish, not only by the force of their disease, but also by the error of their Physician,—by the mistakes of their Ministers. And as GALEN speaks of physic for the body, it is also true of the physic of the soul : *In medicinâ nihil exiguum* ;—'In physic nothing is little.' A little error there, may occasion fearful mischiefs : so a small mistake in souls' concerns, may occasion everlasting ruin.

2. To people. Is it of such difficulty ? O labour you to do your work in health, while time and strength last, before the evil days come ! He that neglects the time of health for the doing of his great work, he shall feel the worth of it by the want of it. I beseech you let me reason with you. Why will you run a hazard, when you may go a safe way ? Consider what woeful straits you will bring yourselves to : if you do not ponder your ways, and fix your thoughts, and afflict your hearts, you kill your souls ; if you do, perhaps your bodies. What a dreadful dilemma is this ! The Physician chargeth you not to trouble yourself with sad thoughts, lest you overthrow your bodies ; and the Minister, if he will be faithful, must charge you to trouble yourselves, lest you lose your souls. O consider now ; now you may consider, you have the use of reason : then reason may be lost. Now God will accept of you : then it may be he will reject you. Now you are

at leisure to consider, then “sufficient unto the day will be the evil thereof.” And therefore be persuaded to improve the time of health.

It is the general custom of sick persons, to send for Ministers to prepare them for the future life, when they despair of the enjoyment of this present life. Thus they begin to live at the end of their life : but you, if you be wise, take this counsel : (and O that my words might prevail with you!) Desire to speak with able and godly Ministers in the time of your health : That, that is the acceptable time ; then may they give counsel freely, and you may follow their counsel throughly. That was the course of those converts. (*Acts ii.*) They did not tarry until their souls were ready to breathe out themselves into eternity ; but in the time of their health, applied themselves to PETER, and the rest, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

3. Make such applications to your friends in health, as you must do in sickness, if you mean to discharge your duty to GOD, or friendship to them ; you will give them, and yourselves too, great ease and advantage by it. Remember, what obligeth you to do it in sickness, obligeth you also in health : you are your brother’s keepers ; you have all the cure of souls. And as Ministers are bound to this work by virtue of their office, so are you bound to it by the law of love : and surely, if every one of you is bound to deliver his neighbour’s ox or ass, when he sees it fallen into a pit ; much more are you obliged to have compassion upon his soul, when it is going down to the pit, from which there is no redemption !

END OF VOL. XXI.

