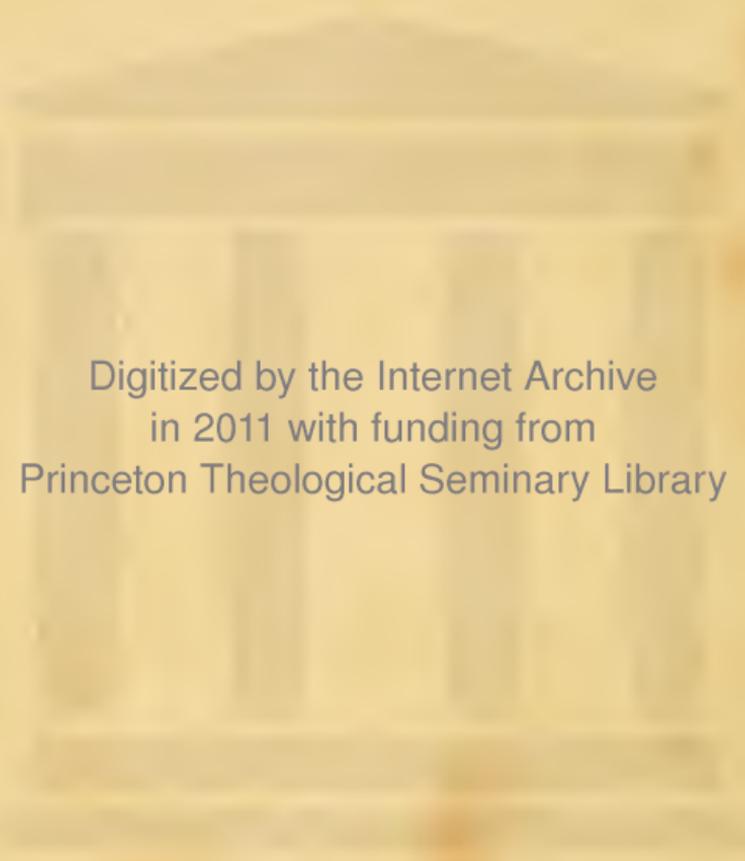




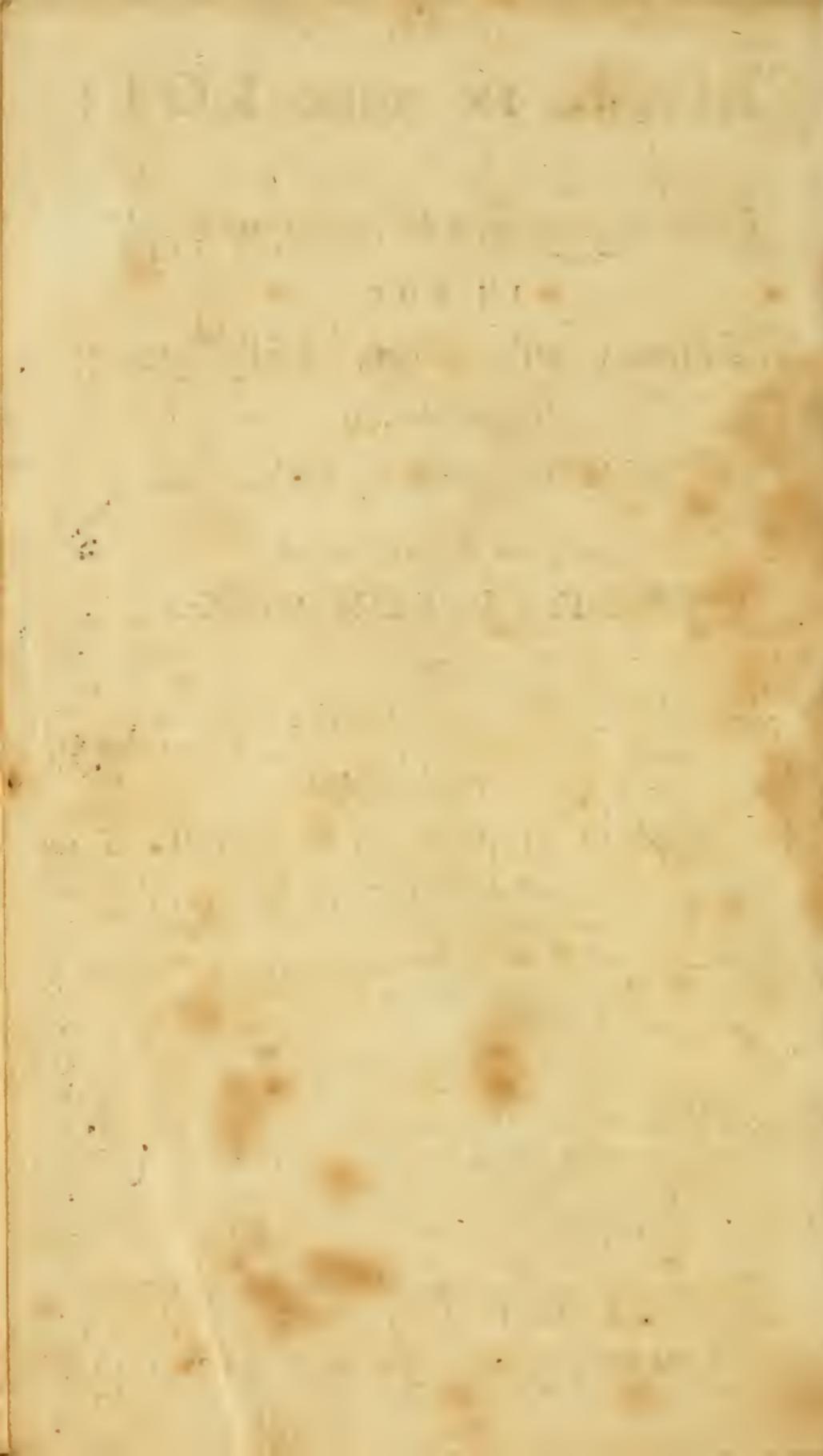
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T. F. Torrance



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reverend Mr THOMAS BOSTON is already so well known in the Christian Church, by his many elaborate, judicious, and useful writings, that to say any thing either in commendation of him, or any of his performances, would be altogether superfluous. Let it suffice to say, that this valuable Treatise, now again offered to the Public, hath already gone through a number of impressions, and deservedly well relished; and has been extremely useful, especially to all those who have laboured under affliction.

We are very certain it was among his last works in composition, when he had fallen into a declining state of health*; and among the last pieces he had begun to revise and prepare for the press, with his own hand, being warmly solicited thereto, as he himself acquaints us, in his *Memoirs*, (p. 506) by a letter he received from his very intimate friend, Mr Hogg, dated Nov. 13th, 1731.

As the Lord had made these subjects useful to his own soul, during the composition of them, for the benefit of his own flock, in his afflicted state; he the more readily complied with the request of publishing them: and when he had any intervals of his trouble, began to look over his notes for publication, and had made some progress in the work; but got it not completely finished, being prevented by his growing indisposition, and was really removed by death, on May 13th, 1732.

What remained was transcribed, after his death by another hand; and both it and the *Sermons on Church Communion*, were first published in the year 1737,

* In the year 1730 and 1731, as we learn from his *Memoirs*, p. 437, 482, and 487.

with the following recommendatory Preface, by three of his dear friends who subscribe it.

Though they acquaint us, that the Crook in the Lot was amongst the last subjects the Author handled, and amongst his last works with the pen; yet they do not tell us how far he himself revised that performance, and where they began. However, the intelligent readers of Mr Boston's different tracts, prepared for the press, and published by himself in his life-time, will be at no loss to perceive how far he proceeded in revising this piece, by his pointing out as usual, the emphatical words and phrases in Italic characters; which, in the first edition of the book, we see has only been done in the first doctrine.

In order to make the whole of this impression as uniform as possible, an attempt has been made to point out the emphasis throughout the whole. The edition now offered to the Public, is carefully corrected by the first original one, and freed of several inaccuracies that had crept into some late impressions.

L O N D O N, }

March 29. 1721. }

T H E
P R E F A C E.

MR THOMAS BOSTON, the youngest of seven children, born 1676, of creditable religious parents, in the town of Dunse, where they had some heritage; he was licensed to preach 1697; ordained minister at Simprin* 1699; married 1700, to Catherine Brown, of good extract, in the parish of Culross; a gentlewoman of singular wisdom, and many rare endowments, (by whom he had a good many children, of whom two sons †, and two daughters survive them); transported to Ettrick ‡ 1707; died 1732, near five years before his spouse §, in the 56th year of his age.

He was of a stature above the middle size, of a venerable amiable aspect, with his own hair originally black, of a strong and fruitful genius, of a lively imagination, (such as affords what is called *ready wit*, which, instead of cultivating, he laid under a severe restraint) of tender affections, a clear and solid judgment; his temper candid, modest, cautious, benevolent, obliging, and courteous; had a natural aversion

* The smallest charge of a country parish perhaps in Scotland, not being quite ninety examinable persons in his time.

† One succeeded his father, in name, office, and charge.

‡ One of the remotest and wildest places in the south of Scotland.

§ Among her other uncommon excellencies, she was eminent for her exemplary bearing of affliction, under which she was bowed down, well nigh as long as that daughter of Abraham, mentioned in Luke xiii. 11.

to any thing rude or uncivil in words or behaviour, and a delicate feeling in case of meeting with ought of that sort; could be heavy with, and severe in his words, when there was just occasion, or he judged the same necessary.

He was early called by divine grace; all along afterwards exercised unto godliness; walked indeed with God in all his ways; daily acknowledging him; frequent in solemn extraordinary applications to heaven (*viz.* upon every new emergent of duty, difficulty, or trial) followed with evident, comfortable, and confirming testimonies of divine acceptance and audience; a diligent judicious observer, recorder, and improver of the dispensations of divine providence, in connection with the word, his own frame and walk, and consequently of great experience in religion: He was accurately and extensively regardsful of the divine law, in all manner of life and conversation, (even in things that escape the notice of the most part of Christians) of a tender conscience, carefully watching against and avoiding the appearance of evil; compassionate and sympathizing with the distressed; charitable to the needy, (to the degree of religiously setting apart the tenth of his worldly substance yearly for their supply) a dutiful husband, an indulgent father, a sincere, a faithful, and an affectionate friend; to which he had a particular cast in his temper, which proved a rich blessing to them who were favoured with his friendship.

He was a considerable scholar in all the parts of theological learning, and excelled in some of them. What he was for a humanist, (even towards the latter end of his days) his translation of his own work, on the Hebrew accentuation, into good Roman Latin, will abundantly testify: He was well seen in the Greek; and for the skill he attained in the Hebrew, he will, we are satisfied, in ages to come, be admired, and had in honour by the learned world; especially

when it is understood under what disadvantages, in what obscurity and seclusion from learned assistances, the work was composed; and when it is considered how far, notwithstanding, he has outstripped all that went before him in that study, namely, of the Hebrew accentuation. He understood the French; and for the sake of comparing translations, could read the Dutch Bible. There were few pieces of learning that he had not some good taste of; but all his knowledge behoved to be otherwise discovered than by his professing of it. He was a hard student, of indefatigable application; so that whatever he was once heartily engaged in, he knew not to quit, till, by help from heaven, and incessant labour, he got through it. He had a great knowledge and understanding of human nature, of the most proper methods of addressing it, and of the most likely handles for catching hold of it.

He had an admirable talent at drawing a paper, which made a statesman*, a very able judge, say, (when Mr Boston was clerk of the synod of Merie and Tiviotdale) that he was the best clerk he had ever known in any court, civil or ecclesiastical. An admirer of other men's parts and gifts, liberally giving them their due praise, even though in some things they differed from him; far from censorious, assuming, or detracting.

As a minister he had on his spirit a deep and high sense of divine things; was mighty in the scriptures, in his acquaintance with the letter, with the spirit, and sense of them, in happily applying and accommodating them, for explaining and illustrating the subject. His knowledge and insight into the mystery of Christ was great, though a humbling sense of his want of it was like to have quite sunk and laid him by, after he began to preach. He had a peculiar talent for going

* Mr Baillie of Jerviswood.

deep into the mysteries of the gospel; and at the same time, making them plain, making intelligible their connection with, and influence upon gospel holiness; notable instances of which may be seen in his most valuable treatise of the Covenant, and in his sermons of Christ in the form of a servant.

His invention was rich, but judiciously bounded; his thoughts were always just, and often new; his expressions proper and pure; his illustrations and similes often surprising; his method natural and clear; his delivery grave and graceful, with an air of earnestness, meekness, assurance, and authority, tempered together. No wonder his ministrations in holy things were all of them dear and precious to the saints.

He was fixed and established, upon solid and rational grounds, in the reformation principles, in opposition to popery, prelacy, superstition, and persecution; he was pleasant and lively in conversation, but always with a decorum to his character; quite free of that sourness of temper, or *ascetical* rigidity, that generally possesses men of a retired life.

He fed and watched with diligence the flock over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer; and notwithstanding his eager pursuit of that study, which was his delight, he abated nothing of his preparation for the Sabbath, nor of his work abroad in the parish; nor did he so much as use the short-hand, whereof he was master, but always wrote out his sermons fair, and generally as full as he preached them; far from serving the Lord with that which cost him nothing. It was his delight to spend and be spent in the service of the gospel, was a faithful, and at the same time a prudent reprovcr of sin; was endued with a rich treasure of Christian wisdom and prudence, without craft or guile, whereby he was exceeding serviceable in judicatories, and excellently fitted for counsel in intricate cases.

Zeal and knowledge were in him united to a pitch rarely to be met with ; had a joint concern for purity and peace in the church ; no man more zealous for the former, and at the same time more studious of the latter, having observed and felt so much of the mischief of division and separation. He was exceeding cautious and scrupulous of any thing new or unprecedented, until he was thoroughly satisfied of its necessity and grounds.

It was his settled mind, that solidly and strongly to establish the truth, was, in many cases, the best, the shortest, and the most effectual way to confute error, without irritating and inflaming the passions of men, to their own and to the truth's prejudice : therefore, in his explication and vindication of the Protestant doctrine, in a paroxysm quarrelled and condemned in a certain book, he answered all and every body, but took notice expressly of no body *. He obeyed the voice, 1 Tim. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things :* Being in an uncommon degree dead to the world ; finding, says he, in the account of his life, the business of it ensnaring to my mind, I had neither heart nor hand for it. On all which accounts he was much respected and regarded, by not only his brethren, that differed from him, but generally by all sorts of men.

To conclude ; he was a scribe singularly instructed unto the kingdom ;—happy in finding out acceptable words ;—a workman that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ;—a burning and a shining light. *The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*

Though a skilful hand might, in fewer words, have drawn his character to much better purpose, there is no partiality by overdoing in what is said, if intimate friendship for many years, and the account of his own life, done by himself, are allowed for compe-

* Alluding to his notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity.

tent evidences: But the hearing him preach one sermon would have said something that cannot be said now.

His removal, in the juncture wherein he was taken away, some are satisfied, had, on several accounts, more of the divine anger in it with respect to this church, than is commonly apprehended.

It might have been more edifying, had there been room for it here, to have heard of him in his own words, from the general account of his life, by him addressed to his children: Out of which we shall, with their leave, subjoin only a few touches towards the close of it, as follows:

“ Thus also I was much addicted to peace, and
 “ averse from controversy; though once engaged
 “ therein, I was set to go through with it *. I had
 “ no great difficulty to retain a due honour and
 “ charity for my brethren, differing from me in opinion
 “ and practice: But then I was in no great hazard
 “ neither of being swayed by them to depart from what
 “ I judged truth or duty. Withal, it was easy to
 “ me to yield to them in things wherein I found not
 “ myself in conscience bound up. Whatever precipitant
 “ steps I have made in the course of my life,
 “ which I desire to be humbled for, rashness in conduct
 “ was not my weak side. But since the Lord,
 “ by his grace, brought me to consider things, it was
 “ much my exercise to discern sin and duty in particular
 “ cases, being afraid to venture on things, until
 “ I should see myself called thereto: but when the
 “ matter was cleared to me, I generally stuck fast by
 “ it, being as much afraid to desert the way which
 “ I took to be pointed out to me. I never had the
 “ art of making rich, nor could I ever heartily apply
 “ myself to the managing of secular affairs: even
 “ the secular way of managing the discipline of

* The Controversy relative to the Marrow Doctrine.

“ the church was so unacceptable to me, that I had
 “ no heart to dip in the public church management.
 “ What appearances I made, at any time, in these
 “ matters, were not readily in that way.” He concludes :

“ And thus have I given some account of the days
 “ of my vanity.—Upon the whole, I bless my God,
 “ in Jesus, that ever he made me a Christian, and
 “ took an early dealing with my soul ; that ever he
 “ made me a minister of the gospel, and gave me some
 “ insight into the doctrine of his grace ; and that ever
 “ he gave me the blest Bible, and brought me ac-
 “ quainted with the originals, and especially with the
 “ Hebrew text. The world hath long been a step-
 “ dame to me ; and whatsoever I would have at-
 “ tempted to nestle in it, there was a thorn of un-
 “ easiness laid for me. Man is born crying, lives
 “ complaining, and dies disappointed from that quar-
 “ ter. *All is vanity and vexation of spirit. I have*
 “ *waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*”

Habitual unreconciledness to the cross, and a pal-
 pable deficiency in many of the duties incumbent on
 us, as members of the body of Christ, mightily mar
 our Christian comfort, our edification, our usefulness:
 And, instead of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our
 holy profession. For remedy in both cases, the Lord
 in his kind providence, is sending us fresh assistance in
 the two following treatises. Both the subjects are set
 in a new and in an engaging light. It is not amiss
 that the reader should know, that the former, namely,
 that of the *Crook in one's Lot*, was among the last
 subjects the blessed author handled ; and that the re-
 vising of it so far, for he got not through his notes, was

amongst his last works with the pen †. We shall leave it to exercise the reader's attention how far he himself revised; and where we have only his notes as he preached them. May the same divine blessing, which the author often and earnestly sought to accompany ought of his that was, or should be called forth for the service of the church, go along with these treatises that here follow.

ALEX. COLDEN.

GAB. WILSON.

H. DAVIDSON.

† The Prefacers of the first edition of this excellent Tract, published along with it, some Sermons on *the Nature of Church-Communion*; but it is only the *Crook in the Lot*, the Author's last genuine work, which has proved so savory to many in distress.—However, at the desire of some, we have annexed the Sermons on *Church-Communion* to this edition of that valuable piece, as they have been generally published together, though we dropt them in the last impression we printed of it.

Sovereignty and Wisdom of God,

I N T H E

Afflictions of Men, Displayed.

ECCLES. vii. 13.

Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

A JUST view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them: And that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense. For, it is the light of the word alone that represents them justly, discovering in them the work of God, and consequently designs becoming the divine perfections. These perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, one has a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view that Solomon, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favour of certain things, that, to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed grievous and shocking. He pronounceth *the day of one's death to be better than the day of his birth*; namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, hath led a life to the honour of God, and service of his generation, and thereby raised to himself the good and favourable name better than precious ointment, ver. 1. In like

manner, he pronounceth *the house of mourning* to be preferable to *the house of feasting*, *sorrow to laughter*, and a *wise man's rebuke to a fool's song*; for that, howbeit the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable, ver. 2---5. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill usage, *oppression making a wise man mad*, but also from its smiles and caresses, *a gift destroyeth the heart*; therefore, since whatever way it goes, there is danger, he pronounceth *the end of every worldly thing better than the beginning thereof*, ver. 7, 8. And from the whole, he justly infers, that it is better to be humble and patient, than proud and impatient, under afflicting dispensations; since, in the former case, one wisely submits to what is really best; in the latter, he fights against it, ver. 8. And he dehorts from being angry with our lot, because of the adversity found therein, ver. 9. cautions against making odious comparisons of former and present times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God, ver. 10. and, against that querulous and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables one to make the best of every thing, and even giveth life in killing circumstances, ver. 11, 12. And then a particular remedy, consisting in a due application of that wisdom, towards the taking a just view of the case, *Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?*

In which words is proposed, 1. The remedy itself.
2. The suitability thereof.

First, The *remedy* itself, is a wise eying of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard upon us: *Consider the work* (or, *see thou the doing*) *of God*, viz. in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of thy lot, the crosses thou findest in it. Thou seest very well the cross itself; yea, thou turnest it over and over in thy mind, and leisurely views it on all sides; thou

lookeſt withal, to this and the other ſecond cauſe of it, and ſo thou art in a foam and a fret: But, wouldſt thou be quieted and ſatiſfied in the matter, liſt up thine eyes towards heaven, *ſee the doing of God* in it, the operation of his hand: Look at that, and conſider it well; eye the firſt cauſe of the crook in thy lot; behold how it is *the work of God, his doing*.

Secondly, As for the *ſuitableneſs* of this remedy, that view of the crook in our lot is very ſuitable to ſtill indecent riſings of heart, and quiet us under it: *For who can* (that is, none can) *make that ſtraight which God hath made crooked?* As to the *crook* in thy lot, God hath *made* it; and it muſt continue while he will have it ſo. Shouldſt thou ply thine utmoſt force to even it, or *make it ſtraight*, thine attempt will be vain: It will not alter for all thou canſt do; only he who made it can mend it, or *make it ſtraight*. This conſideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means, at once, to ſilence and to ſatiſfy men, and ſo to bring them unto a dutiful ſubmiſſion to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now, we take up the purpoſe of the text in theſe three doctrines.

DOCT. I. Whatſoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.

DOCT. II. What God ſees meet to mar, one will not be able to mend in his lot.

DOCT. III. The conſidering of the crook in the lot, as the work of God, or of his making, is a proper means to bring one to a Chriſtian deportment under it.

DOCT. I. *Whatſoever crook there is in one's lot it is of God's making.*

Here two things fall to be conſidered, nameily, the *crook* itſelf, and God's *making* of it.

I. As to the *crook* itſelf, the crook in the lot; for the better underſtanding thereof, theſe few things that follow are premiſed.

1. There is a certain train or course of *events*, by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world: And that is our lot, as being allotted to us by the sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, *in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways*. This train of events is widely different to different persons, according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign manager, who ordereth men's conditions in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere.

2. In that train or course of events, some fall out *cross* to us, and against the grain; and these make the crook in our lot. While we are here, there will be cross events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Sometimes things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but, bye and bye, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and pains us, as when having made a wrong step, we begin to halt.

3. *Every body's lot in this world hath some crook in it*. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons; they look about, and taking a *distant* view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is *straight*, and just to one's wish; so they pronounce their neighbour's lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict; there is no perfection here; no lot out of heaven without a crook. For, as to *all the works that are done under the sun, behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight*. Eccl. i. 14, 15. Who would have thought but Haman's lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honour, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king's favour? Yet there was, at the same time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that *all this availed him nothing*. Esth. v. 13. Every one feels for himself, where he is pinched, though others perceive it not. No body's lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed when men's passions, having

got up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, *all* is wrong with them, *nothing* right; but tho' in hell that tale is, and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world; for *there*, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed, Luke xvi. 25. but *here* it always holds good, that *it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed*, Lam. iii. 22.

4. The crook in the lot came into the world by *sin*: it is owing to the fall, Rom. v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*; under which death, the crook in the lot, is comprehended, as a state of *comfort* or *prosperity*, is, in scripture style, exprest by *living*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. John iv. 50, 51. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, as they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, as it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till, dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

These being premised, *a crook in the lot* speaks, in the general, two things, (1.) *Adversity*. (2.) *Continuance*. Accordingly it makes *a day of adversity*, opposed to the *day of prosperity*, in the verse immediately following the text.

The *crook* in the lot is, *First*, Some one or other piece of *adversity*. The prosperous part of one's lot, which goes forward according to one's wish, is the straight and even part of it; the adverse part, going a contrary way, is the crooked part thereof. God hath intermixed these two in men's condition in this world; that, as there is some prosperity therein, making the straight line, so there is also some adversity, making the crooked. The which mixture hath place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that *in the world they shall have tribulation*, but even in the lot of all, as already observed. *Secondly*, It is adversity of some *continuance*. We do not reckon it a crooked thing, which, tho' forcibly bended and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. These are twinges of the rod of ad-

versity, which passing like a stitch in one's side, all is immediately set to rights again: one's lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud vanish ere he is aware. But under the crook, one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook evened. So *the crook in the lot* is adversity, continued for shorter or longer time.

Now, there is a threefold *crook in the lot* incident to the children of men.

1. One made by a *cross* dispensation, which, howsoever in itself, passing, yet hath lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left *weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not*, Mat. ii. 18. A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go halting all along after. *As the fishes are taken in an evil net,—So are the sons of men snared in an evil time*, Eccl. ix. 12. The thing may fall out in a moment, under which the party shall go halting to the grave.

2. There is a crook made by a *train* of cross dispensations, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard one upon another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus in the case of Job, while one messenger of evil tidings *was yet speaking, another came*, Job i. 16—18. Cross events coming, one upon the neck of another, *deep calling unto deep*, make a fore crook. In that case the party is like unto one, who recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too: or, like unto one, who travelling in an unknown mountaneous tract, after having, with difficulty, made his way over one mountain, is expecting to see the plain country; but instead thereof there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook in Achan's lot had like to have made him give up all his religion, *until he went into the sanctuary*, where this mystery of providence was unmasked to him, Psa. lxxiii. 13—17. See on ch-

serves, *That there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked*, Eccl. viii. 14. Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they be, whose life in no part thereof affords them experience of this, sure Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, nor our Saviour all his days.

3. There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with *lasting effects* thereof coming in the room of another removed. Thus one crook is straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Want of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot, Gen. xxx. 1. That was at length evened to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, hard labour in travailing to bring forth, chap. xxxv. 16. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed: but the remove will be out of one wilderness station to another. When one part of the lot is evened, readily some other part thereof will be crooked.

More particularly, *the crook in the lot* hath in it four things of the nature of that which is crooked.

(1.) *Disagreeableness*. A crooked thing is wayward; and being laid to a rule answers it not, but declines from it. There is not, in any body's lot, any such thing as a crook, in respect of the *will and purpose* of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot, and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depth of infinite wisdom, before the world began, and it will answer it exactly, without the least deviation, *all things being wrought after the counsel of his will*, Eph. i. 11. Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony.—If Paul is to be bound at Jerusalem, and *delivered into the hands of the Gentiles*, it is *the will of the Lord* it should be so, Acts xxi. 11—14. Wherefore, the greatest crook of the lot, on earth, is straight in heaven: there is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every

person's lot there is a crook in respect of their *mind* and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonize with it. When divine providence lays the one to the other there is a manifest disagreeableness: the man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way; the will bends upward, the cross events press down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there lies the crook. It is this disagreeableness which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us, in this our state of probation: in the which, if thou wouldst approve thyself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, thou must quiet thyself, in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it should be according to thy mind, Job xxxiv. 33.

(2.) *Unfightliness.* Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye: and no crook in the lot *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, making up an unsightly appearance, Heb. xii. 11. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts, to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shews a hurtful experience of his, in that kind, Psal. xxxix. 3. *While I was musing the fire burned.* Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son *Benjamin*, the son of the right-hand, whom the dying mother had named *Benoni*, the son of my sorrow; by this means providing, that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view, on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed, a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook of his lot in the light of the holy word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden sightliness in it, under a very unsightly outward appearance; perceiving the suitableness thereof to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interest of the party: by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refined pleasure, in distress, 2 Cor. xii. 10. But whatever the crook in the

lot be to the eye of faith, it is not at all pleasing to the eye of sense.

(3.) *Unfitness for motion.* Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame. Prov. xxvi. 7. *The legs of the lame are not equal.* This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in their lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot, makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access, than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 13. *Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.* They are to be pitied, then, who are labouring under it, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an observe in this case, which holds good unto this day, Job xii. 5. *He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.*

(4.) *Apiness to catch hold and entangle, like hooks, fish-hooks,* Amos iv. 2. The crook in the lot doth so very readily make impression, to the ruffling, and fretting one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it to these dangerous purposes: the which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, ere he is aware, finds himself entangled as in a thicket, out of which he knows not how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick, troubling a standing pool, the which not only raiseth up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and atheism in Asaph's case, Psal. lxxiii. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency:* As if he had said, there is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing that profiteth nothing; I was a fool to have been in care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is this the pious Asaph! How is he turned so quite un-

like himself! but the crook in the lot is the handle, whereby the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption even in the best.

This is the *nature* of the crook in the lot; let us now observe what *part of the lot* it falls in. And, in the general, three conclusions may be established upon this head.

1st, It may fall in *any part* of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case: for, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being *all as an unclean thing, we may all fade as a leaf*, Isa. lxiv. 6. The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels, in the case of different persons. And in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that will prove a sinking weight unto one, which another would go very lightly under.

2^{dy}, It may at once fall in *many parts* of the lot, the Lord calling, as in a solemn day, one's terrors round about, Lam. ii. 22. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot; but its name may be Gad, being but the forerunner of a troop which cometh.—Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand.

3^{dly}, It often falls in the *tender* part; I mean, that part of the lot wherein one is least able to bear it, or, at least thinks he is so. Psalm lv. 12, 13. *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.* If there is any one part of the lot, which of all others, one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God: in that thing wherein he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him; for there is the grand competition with Christ. *I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds*, Ezek. xxiv. 25.

Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which, of all things, doth most rival him.

But more particularly, the *crook* may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

First, In the *natural* part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by the great God that formed all things. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were formed altogether sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body: but in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make the crook in the lot of some: they have something unsightly or grievous about them. Crooks of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary, the best not exempted from them; and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. Tender eyes made the crook in the lot of Leah, Gen. xxix. 17. Rachel's beauty was balanced with barrenness, the crook in her lot, chap. xxx. 1. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was, it should seem, no personable man, but of a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to contemn him, 2 Cor. x. 10. Timothy was of a crazy frame, weakly and sickly, 1 Tim. v. 23. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb. Some are weak to a degree in their intellectuals; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably blemished and darkened, from the crazy bodies they are lodged in; an eminent instance whereof we have in the grave, wise, and patient Job, *going mourning without the sun; yea standing up and crying in the congregation*, Job xxx. 28.

Secondly, It may fall in the *honorary* part. There is an honour due to all men, the small as well as the great, 1 Pet. ii. 17. And that upon the ground of the ori-

ginal constitution of human nature, as it was framed in the image of God. But in the sovereign disposal of holy providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here; they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This some times is the native consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as, in the case of Dinah, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honour, Gen. xxxiv. But where the Lord intends a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world; neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case, Psal. xxxi. 11, 12, 13. *They that did see me without, fled from me: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many.*

Thirdly, It may fall in the *vocational* part. Whatever is men's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place therein. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful, Isa. liii. 1. Jeremiah met with such a strain of discouragements and ill usage, in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was well near giving it up, saying, *I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name,* Jer. xx. 9. The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who *sow the fields*—and at times *God bleffeth them—and suffereth not their cattle to decrease:* But, again, *they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow,* Psal. cvii. 37, 38, 39. Such a crook was made in Job's lot, after he had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence; the husbandman carefully labouring his ground; the sheep-master *diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds;* the tradesman, early and late at his business;

the merchant, diligently plying his watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant, without a word of divine appointment commanding their success. *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* Lam. iii.

37. People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face, Providence crosseth their enterprizes, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavours unsuccessful, and so puts and keeps them still in straitning circumstances. *So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise,* Eccl. ix. 12. Providence interposing crooks the measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, and the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread; while, in the mean time, some one or other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race, and carry the prize; the weak win the battle and enrich themselves with the spoil; and the bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, It may fall in the *relational* part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comfort; yet, they often turn the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relations. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, chap. xvi. 7. *Thou hast made desolate all my company;* meaning his dear children, every one of whom he laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God

lying heavy on them: the which, in virtue of the relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, Mat. xv. 22. *Have mercy on Me, O Lord; my daughter is grievously vexed.* Ephraim felt the smart of a course of afflictions, when he called his son's name *Beriah*, because it went evil with his house, 1 Chron. vii. 23. Since all is not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss, but the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must, at one time or other, find he has but the more sources of sorrow to gush out and spring in upon him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made by their proving uncomfortable thro' the disagreeableness of their temper, disposition, and way. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife, Job xix. 17. In Abigail's, by means of a surly, ill tempered husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 25. In Eli's, through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children, chap. ii. 25. In Jonathan's through the furious temper of his father, chap. xx. 30, 33. So do men oftentimes find their greatest cross, where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin hath unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and seditious; all these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives. And thus far of the crook itself.

II. Having seen the crook itself, we are, in the next place, to consider of God's *making* it. And here is to be shewn, 1. That it is of God's making. 2. How it is of his making. 3. Why he makes it.

FIRST, That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making, appears from these three considerations.

First, It cannot be questioned, but the crook in the lot, considered as the crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter thereof; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, be sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment or affliction. Now, as it may be, as such holily and justly brought on us, by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it, Amos iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil, but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, It is evident, from the scripture doctrine of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever he listeth, *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth, in the seas and all deep places*, Psal. cxxxv. 6. There is not any thing whatsoever befall us, without his over-ruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, bringeth us to, and fixeth us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who *hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation*, Acts xvii. 26. It over-rules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as *hairs of our head falling on the ground*, Mat. x. 29, 30. *A lot cast into the lap*, Prov. xvi. 33. Yea, the free acts of our will, whereby we chuse for ourselves, for even *the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water*, Prov. xxi. 1. And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for *the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, Jer. x. 23. And this, whether these steps, causing the crook, be deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; or whether they be undesigned, such as man-slaughter purely casual, as when one

hewing wood, kills his neighbour with *the head of the ax slipping from the helve*, Deut. xix. 5. For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause; wherefore, in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 7. and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbour's hand, Exod. xxi. 13.

Lastly, God hath, by an eternal decree, immoveable as *mountains of brass*, Zech. vi. 1. appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof, as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, whereby the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and depths, the prosperity and adversity, in the lot of the inhabitants thereof determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness thereto.

The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts thereof, the building reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, *who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11. So that there is never a crook in one's lot, but may be run up to this original. Hereof Job piously sets us an example in his own case, Job xxiii. 13, 14. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.*

SECONDLY, That we may see *how* the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks, and impure sinful ones.

First, There are *pure and sinless* crooks; the which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses, grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such were Lazarus's poverty, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth, John ix. 1. Now, the crooks of this kind are of God's making, by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass,

and causing them to be. He is the Maker of the poor, Prov. xvii. 5. *Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker*, that is, reproacheth God who made him poor, according to that, 1 Sam. ii. 7. *The Lord maketh poor*. It is he that hath the key of the womb, and as he sees meet, shuts it, 1 Sam. i. 5. or opens it, Gen. xxix, 31. And it is *he that formeth the eye*, Psalm xciv. 9. And the man was *born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him*, John ix. 3. Therefore he saith, to Moses, Exod. iv. 11. *Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?* Such crooks in the lot are of God's making, in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth are.

Secondly, There are *impure sinful* crooks, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot, by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, taking away his substance, and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments thereof. Thus one and the same thing may be, to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction, laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former: For, he neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirreth up to it; *He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*, James i. 13. But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise over-ruling of them to some good end.

1st, He holily permits them, suffering men to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv. 16. Though he is not the author of these sinful crooks, causing them to be,

by the efficacy of his power: yet if he did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for *he shutteth and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. But he justly with-holds his grace, which the sinner doth not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to the swing of his lust. Hof. iv. 17. *Ephraim is joined to idols: Let him alone.* Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. *Israel would none of me: So I gave them up to their own heart lusts.* In which unhappy situation, the sinful crook doth, from the sinner's own proper motion, natively and infallibly follow; even as water runs down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, *Israel walked in their own counsels*, ver. 12. And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just Judge, punishing the sufferer by it. The which view of the matter silenced David under Shimei's cursings, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. *Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.*

2dly, He powerfully bounds them, Psal. lxxvi. 10. *The remainder of wrath* (namely, the creature's wrath) *thou shalt restrain.* Did not God bound these crooks, howsoever fore they are in any one's case, they would be yet forer: But he says to the sinful instrument, as he said to the sea, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Hence it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as he by his powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance hereof we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil; but even to that grand sinner, God set a bound in the case; *The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand*, Job. i. 12. Now, Satan went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass thereof untouched, which he saw could make for his pur-

pose, ver. 18, 19. But he could by no means move one step beyond it, to carry his point, which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and the crook forer, nothing remained but that the bound set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he saith, *But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face*, chap. ii. 5. and it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, ver 6. *Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life*; the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; *Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot, unto the crown of his head*, ver. 7. And had it not been for this bound, securing Job's life, he, after finding this attempt successful too, had doubtless dispatched him for good and all.

3dly, He wisely *over-rules* them to some good purpose, becoming the divine perfections. While the sinful instrument hath an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David's family, Amnon's design was to gratify a brutish lust; Absalom's, to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition; but God meant thereby to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans, his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job blaspheme, and their's to gratify their covetousness: but God had another design therein becoming himself, namely, to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightnes. Did not he wisely and powerfully over-rule these crooks made in men's lot, no good could come out of them; but he always over-rules them so, as to fulfil his own holy purposes thereby, howbeit the sinner meaneth not so; for his designs cannot miscarry, his *counsel shall stand*, Isa. xlv. 10. So the sinful crook is, by the over-ruling hand of God, turned about to his own glory, and his people's good in the end; according to the word, Prov. xv. 4. *The Lord*

hath made all things for himself. Rom. viii. 28. *All things work together for good to them that love God.* Thus Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews, *was turned to the contrary,* Esth. ix. 1. And the crook made in Joseph's lot, by his own brethren selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise over-ruling of it, had an issue well becoming the divine wisdom and goodness: both of which Joseph noticeth to them, Gen. 1. 20. *As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

THIRDLY, It remains to enquire, *Why God makes a crook in one's lot?* And this is to be cleared by discovering the *design* of that dispensation; a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The design thereof seems to be, chiefly, seven-fold.

First, The *trial* of one's *state*, Whether one is in the state of grace, or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here I conceive lies the main providential trial a man is brought upon, with reference to his state, forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of a continued course, one has occasion to open and shew himself again and again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision, in that momentous point. It was plainly on this bottom that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God himself testified of him; or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alledged against him? And the trial hereof was put upon the crook to be made in his lot, Job i. 8—12, and ii. 3—6. Accordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu the last speaker, did, in their reasoning with him under his trial aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite: Satan thus making use of these good men for

gaining his point. As God took trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously, were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having *followed the Lord fully*; while others being tired out with them, their carcases fell in the wilderness; so he makes trial of men for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proven to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite: he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know *what he should do that he might inherit eternal life*, Mark x. 17, 21. Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all that he had, and follow him, ver. 21. *Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and come take up the cross and follow me*. Hereby he was, that moment, in the court of conscience, stript of his great possessions; so that thenceforth he could no longer keep them, with a good conscience, as he might have done before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot; *he was sad at that saying*, ver. 22. that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and louring, as the same word is used, Mat. xvi. 3. He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in that point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, according to his own mind. So he *went away grieved, for he had great possessions*. He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it, a violent possessor before the Lord, thwarting the divine order.

And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

Secondly, Excitation to *duty*, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, fettled and turned serious. Going for a time *like a wild ass used to the wilderness*, scorning to be turned, their foot hath slid in due time; and a crook being hereby made in their lot, their mouth hath come, wherein they have been caught, Jer. ii. 24. Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning unto his father, Luke xv. 17. The crook in their lot convinces them at length that here is not their rest. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whensoever they lay down their head where they would fainest take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude, there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way, so it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; forasmuch as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, *Arise ye and depart, this is not your rest*. And it is surely that, which of all means of mortification, of the afflictive kind, doth most dealen a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, Conviction of sin. As when one walking heedlessly, is suddenly taken ill of a lameness; his going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: so God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an

evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook men's sin finds them out to their conviction, *as the thief is ashamed when he is found*, Num. xxxii. 23. Jer. ii. 26. The which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt, Gen. xlii. 21. *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*, chap. xlii. 16. *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants*. The crook in the lot doth usually, in its nature or circumstances, so natively refer to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair dealing, palmed upon him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had seven years, at least, before put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? Gen. xxvii. 19. How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adoni-bezek in another case, Judg. i. 7. *As I have done, so God hath requited me*. In like manner, Rachel dying in child-birth, could hardly evite a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned, Gen. xxx. 1. *Give me children, or else I die*. Even holy Job read in the crook of his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth many years before, Job xiii. 26. *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth*.

Fourthly, Correction, or punishment for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot, is that word verified, Jer. ii. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee*. God may, for a time, wink at one's sin, which afterward he'll set

a brand of his indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and fore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over: but for that cause *the sword never departed from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of fallhood and lying; but as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which clave to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him, 2 Kings v. 27. This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, tho' it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the Beloved, who yet hath a particular badge of the divine displeasure, with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot, Psal. xcix. 8. *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.*

Fifthly, Preventing of sin, Hosea ii. 6. *I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths.* The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party: so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men: but by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former taking appearance: so the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner after *gadding about so*

much to change his way, returning ashamed, Jer. ii. 36, 37. Thus the Lord crooks one's lot, that he may withdraw man from his purpose; and hide pride from man: And so, he keepeth back his soul from the pit, Job xxxiii. 17, 18. Every one knows what is most pleasant to him; but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too: He is the only wise God, Jude, ver. 25. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they go not to those excesses, which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to; and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, Discovery of the latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to cast up: but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top, and run over; so the crook in the lot raiseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherways one would hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses as he discovered at the waters of strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan, Psalm cvi. 32, 33. Numb. xx. 13. So much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with becoming cruel to him, Job xxx. 21. So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father, Jer. xx. 14, 15. Or, such a twang of atheism in Asaph, as to pronounce religion a vain thing, Psalm lxxiii. 13. But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, shewed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked un-

observed. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in no ways inconsistent with the divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart, Deut. 8. 2.

Lastly, The exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces, which, of their own nature, are but occasional in their exercises; as being exercised only upon occasion of certain things which they have a necessary relation to; such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces, overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action, the occasional graces, ministering proper occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of Providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good; and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. *Ye are in heaviness thro' manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise,* 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, longings, and groanings, which otherways would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, howsoever, by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and

will have a surprizing notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long-run, howbeit the persons themselves often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, *Let me see thy countenance; thy countenance is comely*, Song ii. 24. *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes*, chap. iv. 9. The steady acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy, is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope, is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the Psalmist teacheth, Psal. cxlvii. 11, 12. *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* And indeed the exercise of the graces of his spirit in his people, is so very precious in his sight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot, as will be a special trial for it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God's bare word of promise, over the belly of sense: And God giving him a promise, that *he would make of him a great nation*, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared, *That in Isaac only his seed should be called*, Gen. xxi. 12. *Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*, Num. xii. 3. And he was intrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience, and by the

crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some one time or other, he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

Now, the *use* of this doctrine is threefold, (1.) For reproof. (2.) For consolation. And, (3.) For exhortation.

Use 1. Of *reproof*. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reprobable.

First, The *carnal* and *earthly*, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the divine hand upon it to be perceived by just observers; and that challengeth an awful regard, the neglect of which forebodes destruction, Psal. xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, thou shalt destroy them, and not build them up.* And herein they are deeply guilty, who poring upon second causes, and looking no farther than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlooking the first cause, as a dog snarles at the stone, but looks not to the hand that cast it. This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature; so regarding it, as if it could of itself effectuate any thing, while, in the mean time, it is but an instrument in the hand of God, *the rod of his anger*, Isa. x. 5. *Ordnained of him for judgment, established for correction*, Hab. i. 12. O! why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges! The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which, for their gratifying their sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to making nothing of it, and to their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did *the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu*, Hos. i. 4. And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the care of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different; witness Shimei's

curſing David, as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the houſe of Saul, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriaſh, which he could not deny, 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at long run, taken up between God and his people; and then their ſcourgers will find they had but a thankleſs office, Zech. i. 15. *I was but a little diſpleaſed, and they helped forward the affliction*, ſaith God, in reſentment of the heathen crooking the lot of his people. In like manner are they guilty, who impute the crook in their lot to fortune, or their ill-luck, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep men from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the Philiftines doubted, they do more impiouſly determine, ſaying, in effect, *It is not his hand that ſmote us, it was a chance that happened us*, 1 Sam. vi. 9. And, finally, thoſe alſo, who, in the way of giving up themſelves to carnal mirth and ſenſuality, ſet themſelves to deſpiſe the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I queſtion not, but one committing his caſe to the Lord, and looking to him for remedy in the firſt place, may lawfully call in the moderate uſe of the comforts of life, for help in the ſecond place. But as for that courſe ſo frequent and uſual in this caſe among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really be, as indeed it is, of God's making, it muſt needs be a moſt indecent unbecom- ing courſe, to be abhorred of all good men, Prov. iii. 11. *My ſon, deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord.* It is ſurely a very deſperate method of cure, which cannot miſs of iſſuing in ſomething worſe than the diſeaſe, how- ever it may palliate it for a while, Iſa. xxii. 12, 14. *In that day ſaid the Lord God of hoſts call to weeping and to mourning, and behold joy and gladneſs, eating fiſh and drinking wine: And it was revealed in mine ears, by the Lord of hoſts, ſurely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die.*

Secondly, The unſubmiſſive, whoſe hearts, like the troubled ſea, ſwell and boil, fret and murmur, and

cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some, *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, ver. 1. faith of them, ver. 16. *These are murmurers, complainers*; namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word there used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's making, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God; and these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against him, whatever face they put upon them. Thus when the Israelites murmured against Moses, Numb. xiv. 2. God charges them with murmuring against himself: *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmured against me?* ver. 27. Ah! may not he who made and fashioned us, without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too, without asking our mind, but we must rise up against him on account of the crook made in it? What doth this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor digest what he hath done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit? How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* Job ix. 4.

Lastly, The *careless and unfruitful*, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since he makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, Micah. vi. 9. *Hear ye the rod.* And, indeed, if one shut not his own eyes, but be willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design thereof to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his heart's rest in God. And the nature, and the circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard to make a more particular discovery of the design thereof. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in

spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of Providence in the crook; so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him, by the great husbandman, in the dispensation, are lost. *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty*, groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the instrument thereof: *But none saith, Where is God my maker?* they look not, they turn not unto God for all that, Job xxxv. 9, 10.

Use-2. Of consolation. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your Father has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcometh his father's rod, knowing that being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby: and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake his measures to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured by the promise of the Father to Christ's children, Psalm lxxxix. 30, 32. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod.* Furthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot, may take comfort in this, let them know that there is no crook in their lot, but may be made straight; for God made it, surely then he can mend it. He himself can make straight what he hath made crooked, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for him to do: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children," Psalm cxiii. 7—9. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it,

that he may mend it, and wait on him: and if it be for thy good, that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for, *no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Pſal. lxxxiv. 11.

Uſe laſt, Of exhortation. Since the crook in the lot is of God's making, then, eyeing the hand of God in your's, be reconciled to it, and ſubmit under it, whatever it is; I ſay, eyeing the hand of God in it, for otherwiſe your ſubmiſſion under the crook in your lot cannot be a Chriſtian ſubmiſſion, acceptable to God, having no reference to him as your party in the matter.

Object. 1. But ſome will ſay, 'The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and ſuch a one too as I deſerved no ſuch treatment from.'

Ans. From what hath been already ſaid, it appears, that although the crook in thy lot be indeed immediately from the creature's hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; there being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but *the Lord hath done it*. Therefore, without all peradventure, God himſelf is thy principal party whoever be the leſs principal. And albeit thou haſt not deſerved thy crook at the hand of the instrument or instruments which he makes uſe of for thy correction, thou certainly deſerveſt it at his hand; and he may make uſe of what instrument he will in the matter, or may do it immediately by himſelf, even as ſeems good in his ſight.

Object. 2. 'But the crook in my lot might quickly be evened, if the instrument or instruments thereof pleaſed; only there is no dealing with them, ſo as to convince them of their fault in making it.'

Ans. If it is ſo, be ſure God's time is not as yet come, that that crook ſhould be evened; for, if it were come, though they ſtand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a ſandy bank under one's feet; they ſhould *bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the duſt of thy feet*, Iſa. xlix. 23. Mean while, that ſtate of the matter is ſo far from juſtifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot,

that it makes a piece of trial in which his hand very eminently appears, namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries, Jer. l. 7. *All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.* They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they take with no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in their devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, surely; they were not. Did they look upon themselves as ministers of the divine justice against her? No: they did not.

Some indeed would make a question here, How the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the habitation of justice? But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears, that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal the whole matter is set in a clear light. *All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.* These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the prophet, shewing how it came to pass that the adversaries devoured the Lord's sheep, as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong; the matter lay here, the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice; and, as a just punishment hereof from his hand, they could have no justice at the hand of his adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which hath bowed your lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to, and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart, *Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it,* Jer. x. 19. And to move you hereunto, consider.

1. It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign

Lord and Benefactor. His sovereignty challengeth our submission; and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit unto the crook which his hand hath made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that he hath laid on; but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And his beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouths from our complaining of his making a crook in our lot, who had done us no wrong had he made the whole of it crooked; *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Job ii. 10.

2. It is an unalterable statute, for the time of this life, that no body shall want a crook in their lot; for *man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward*, Job v. 7. And those who are designed for heaven, are in a special manner, assured of a crook in their's, that *in the world they shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. for by means thereof the Lord makes them meet for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of mankind? *Shall the rock be removed out of his place for thee?* And since God makes the crooks in men's lot, according to the different exigence of their cases, you may be sure that your's is necessary for you.

3. A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things the likest to that in *hell*. For there a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bear nor shake off, is wreathed about their necks; there the almighty arm draws against them, and they against it; there they are ever suffering and ever sinning; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit under the crook in their lot.

4. Great is the *loss* by not submitting under it. The crook in the lot, rightly improven, hath turned to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist from his own

experience testifies, Psal. cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray: But now have I kept thy word.* There are many now in heaven, who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for Immanuel's land? But if the crook in thy lot do thee no good, be sure it will not miss of doing thee great damage; it will hugely increase guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation, while it shall for ever cut thee to the heart, to think of the pains taken on thee, by means of the crook in the lot, to wean thee from the world, and bring thee to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it, *Lest—thou mourn at the last,—and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?* Prov. v. 10, 11, 12.

DOCT. II. *What God sees meet to mar, we will not be able to mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we will not be able to even.—*
We shall here,

I. Shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

II. We shall consider men's attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot.

III. In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend, or even the crook in our lot.

IV. Render some reasons of the point.

I. As to the first head, namely, Shew God's *marring* and *making* a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

First, God keeps the *choice* of every one's crook to himself; and therein he exerts his sovereignty, Matt. xx. 15. It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden; but as the potter makes of the same clay one vessel for one use, another for another use; so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to his own will and plea-

sure, Psalm cxxxv. 6. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, in heaven and in earth, &c.*

Secondly, He sees and observes the *bias* of every one's will and inclination how it lies, and wherein it especially bends away from himself, and consequently wherein it needs the special bow; so he did in that man's case, Mark x. 21. *One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor, &c.* Observe the bent of his heart to his great possessions. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one's case is most apt to be his rival, that so he may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

Thirdly, By the conduct of his providence, or a touch of his hand, he gives that part of one's lot a bow the contrary way; so that henceforth it lies quite contrary to that bias of the party's will, Ezek. xxiv. 25. And here the trial is made, the bent of the will lying one way, and that part of one's lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts with it.

Lastly, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while he sees meet, for longer or shorter time, just according to his own holy ends he designs it for, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Hol. v. 15. By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider men's attempting to *mend* or *even* that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way; so it imports three things:

First, A certain *uneasiness* under the crook in the lot; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit be tamed and subdued, Jer. xxxi. 18. *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, &c.* And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one's spirit that God lays it on; for which cause it is declared to

be a good thing to bear it, Lam. iii. 27. that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

Secondly, A strong *desire* to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from every thing that is burdensome or cross to it; and if that desire be kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and be not too peremptory, it is not sinful, Matt. xxvi. 39. *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, &c.* Hence so many accepted prayers of the people of God, for the removal of the crook in the lot.

Lastly, An earnest use of *means* for that end. This natively follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross, which is his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used be lawful, and not relied upon, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful either, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III. In what *sense* it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

Negatively, It is not to be understood, as if the case were absolutely *hopeless*, and that there is no remedy for the crook in the lot. For there is no case so desperate but God may right it, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* When the crook has continued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight, as in Job's case. But,

Positively, We will never be able to mend it by *ourselves*; if the Lord himself take it not in hand to remove it, it will stand before us immovable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in itself a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things:

1. It will never do by the mere *force* of our hand,

1 Sam. ii. 9.—*For, by strength shall no man prevail.*—The most vigorous endeavours we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of his hand; so that all endeavours that way, without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but plowing on the rock, Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

2. The use of all allowable means, for it will be *successful* unless the Lord bless them for that end, Lam. iii. 37. *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* As one may eat, and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in his lot, and yet prevail nothing; for nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do, Eccl. ix. 11. *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, &c.*

3. It will never do in *our time*, but in God's time, which seldom is so early as ours, John vii. 6.—*My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.* Hence that crook remains sometimes immoveable, as if it were kept by an invisible hand; and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God's time is come for evening it,

IV. We shall now assign the *reasons* of the point.

1st, Because of the absolute *dependence* we have upon God, Acts xvii. 28. As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without him can do nothing great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependence.

2^{dly}, Because his will is *irresistible*, Isa. xlvi. 10. *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done.—When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature draw, Job ix. 4.—*Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?*

Inference 1. There is a *necessity* of yielding and

submitting under the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot straight which he hath made crooked.

2. The evening the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a *cheat* we put on ourselves, and will not last, but like a stick by main force made straight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

3. The only habile way of getting the crook evened is to *apply* to God for it.

Exhortation 1. Let us then apply to *God* for removing any crook in our lot, that in the settled order of things may be removed. Men cannot cease to desire the removal of a crook, more than that of a thorn in the flesh; but, since we are not able to mend what God sees meet to mar, it is evident we are to apply to him that made it to mend it, and not take the evening of it in our own hand.

Motive 1. All our attempts for its removal will, without him, be *vain* and *fruitless*, Psalm cxxvii. 1. Let us be as resolute as we will to have it evened, if God say it not, we will labour in vain, Lam. iii. 37. Howsoever fair the means we use bid for it, they will be ineffectual if he command not the blessing, Eccl. ix. 11.

2. Such attempts will readily make it *worse*. Nothing is more ordinary, than for a proud spirit, striving with the crook, to make it more crooked, Eccl. x. 8. *Who so breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.*—Ver. 9. *Who so removeth stones shall be hurt therewith,* &c. This is evident in the case of the murmurers in the wilderness. It natively comes to be so; because, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from it, and moreover God is provoked to wretch the yoke the faster about one's neck, that he will by no means let it sit easy on him.

2. There is no crook but what may be *remedied* by him, and made perfectly straight, Psal. cxlvi. 8. *The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down,* &c. He can raise

the oldest fit-fast, concerning which there remains no hope with us, Rom. iv. 17. *Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were.* It is his prerogative to do wonders; to begin a work, where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection, Gen. xviii. 14.

4. He *loves* to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ him that way, Psal. l. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, &c.* He makes them for that very end, that he may bring us to him on that errand, and may manifest his power and goodness in evening of them, Hof. v. 15. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying his glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting, Exod. xv. 11.

5. A crook thus got evened is a double *mercy*. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal; these are sapless mercies, and short lived, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31.—Hof. xiii. 11. Fruits thus too hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to the gracious soul. But, O the sweet of the evening of the crook got by a humble application to, and waiting on the Lord! It has the image and superscription of divine favour upon it, which makes it bulky and valuable, Gen. xxxiii. 10.—*For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, &c.* Chap. xxi. 6.

6. God has signalised his favour to his *dearest children*, in making and mending notable crooks in their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot, Heb. xii. 6. But then they make way for their richest experiences in the removal of them upon their application to him. This is clear from the case of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Which of the patriarchs had so great crooks as they? but which of them, on the other hand, had so signal tokens of the divine favour? The greatest of men, as Samson and the Baptist, have been born of women, naturally bar-

ren; so do the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised thereby.

7. It is the *shortest* and *surest* way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey, Mark v. 36. Our faithless out-of-the-way attempts to even the crook, are our fool's haste, that is no speed; as in the case of Abraham's going in to Hagar. God is the first mover, who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, the which without him will remain immovable, Hof. ii. 21, 22.

Object. 1. 'But it is needless, for I see, that though the crook in my lot may mend, yet I will never mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain, it is not to be removed, it is hopeless.'

Ans. That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct, Psal. cxvi. 11, 12. Abraham had as much to say for the hopelessness of his crook, but yet he applies to God in faith for the mending of it, Rom. iv. 19, 20. Sarah had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked, Gen. xviii. 13, 14. Nothing can make it needless in such a case to apply to God.

Object. 2. 'But I have applied to him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.'

Ans. Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners. And who so will hang on will certainly come speed at long-run, Luke xviii. 7, 8, 31. *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* ver. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.* Sometimes indeed folks grow pettish, in the case of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out in their prayers, in a course of dependency, while yet it continues uneasy to them; but, if God mind to even it in mercy, he will oblige them to take it in again into them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for*

them, &c. If the removal come, while it is dropt, there will be little comfort in it: though it were never to be removed while we live, that should not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many prayers not to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once, Rom. vii. 24.

Directions for right managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.

1. Pray for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And pray in faith, believing that, for the sake of Jesus you shall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the other life, Matt. xxi. 22. They will not be disappointed that get the song of Moses and of the Lamb, Rev. xv. 3. And, in some cases of that nature, extraordinary prayer, with fasting, is very expedient, Matt. xvii. 21.

2. Humble yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you, Micah vii. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, &c.* Justify God, condemn yourselves, kiss the rod, and go quietly under it; this is the most feasible way to get rid of it, James iv. 10.—When the bullock is broken and tamed, as accustomed to the yoke, then it is taken off, the end being obtained, Psal. x. 17. *Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*

3. Wait on patiently till the hand that made it mend it, Psal. xxvii. 14. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, James i. 4.—Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; his time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it, Isaiah lx. 22. *I the Lord will hasten it in his time:* waiting on him, you will not be disappointed. *For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me,* Isaiah xlix. 23.

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, that, in the settled order of things, cannot be got removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of saints, viz. indwelling sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here, he can certainly balance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In both cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things, I would have you to keep in view, and aim at here.

1. To take *God in Christ* for, and instead of that thing, the with-holding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot, Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. There is never a crook God makes in our lot, but it is in effect heaven's offer of a blest exchange to us; such as Mark x. 21. *Sell whatsoever thou hast, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* In managing of which exchange, God first puts out his hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next, and take some heavenly thing from him in the stead of it, and particularly, his Christ.—Wherefore, has God emptied your left-hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch out your right-hand to God in Christ, take him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, Matt. xiii. 45. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: ver. 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.* Do this, and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the *streams* running as full from him as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to hang on for that from God which is denied us from the creature. *When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up,* Psal. xxvii. 10. This is a most

rational expectation: for it is certain, there is no good in the creature but what is from God: therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God, the fountain. And O! but it is a welcome plea, to come to God and say, Now, Lord, thou hast taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from thyself.

3. The *spiritual fruits* of the crook in the lot, Heb. xii. 11. We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we, when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously; see if, by means of the crook, we can reach more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self denial, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 10. So, while we lose at one hand, we will gain at another.

4. *Grace* to carry us up under the crook, 2 Cor. xii. 8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrive. Ver. 9. And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee.* Whether a man be faint, and have a light burden, or be refreshed, and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all a case; the latter can go as easy under his burden, as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook be not evened, we are even hands with it.

5. The keeping in our eye the *eternal rest* and *weight of glory* in the other world, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. *For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen.* This will balance the crook in your lot, be it what it will; while they who have no well-grounded hope of salvation, will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counter-balance it: yet the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and trouble met with here.

Exhortation 3. Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear and carry under the crook in our lot, while God sees meet to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear Christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it,

1. *Patiently*, without firing, and fretting, or murmuring, James v. 7. Psalm xxxvii. 7. Tho' we lose our comfort in the creature, through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves, Luke xxi. 19. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty cold-rife fire to warm at: but impatience under it scatters it, so as to set the house on fire about us, and exposeth us, Prov. xxv. 28. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

2. With *Christian fortitude*, without sinking under discouragement—*nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*, Heb. xii. 5. Satan's work is by the crook, either to bend or break people's spirits, and oftentimes by bending to break them: our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lies not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable, Hab. iii. 17, 18. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way with a holy contempt, and regardlessness of the hardships. Job xvii. 9. *The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

Quest. 'When is one to be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot?'

Ans. When it prevails so far as to unfit for the duties, either of our particular or Christian calling. We may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It is recorded to the commendation of Abraham, Gen. xxiii. 3, 4. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, 1 Pet. iii. 7.—*That your prayers be not hindered, (Greek, cut off, or up, like a tree from the*

roots) or making one quite hopeless in them, Mal. ii. 13.

3. Profitably, so as we may gain some advantage thereby, Psa. cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.* There is an advantage to be made thereby, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And it is certainly an ill-managed crook in our lot when we get not some spiritual good of it, Heb. xi. 21. The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine; and as it is left physick that purges away no ill humours, but in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste, and its gripings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it wared, that we are not bettered by, Isa. xxvii. 9. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.*

Motives to press this exhortation. Consider,

1. There will be no evening of it while God sees meet to continue it. Let us carry under it as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immoveable, as fixed with bands of iron and brails, Job xxii. 13, 14. *But he is of one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. Verse 14. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.* Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should with a Christian resignation.

2. An awkward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our necks, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us, Jer. xxxi. 18. How often are we in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it? The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an over-weight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear it.

3. The crook in thy lot is the special trial God has

chosen out for thee to take thy measure by, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. It is God's fire, whereby he tries what metal men are of; heaven's touch-stone for discovering of true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear, and go thro' several trials, which the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can bear that, Mark x. 21, 22. Think then with thyself under it, Now here the trial of my state turns, I must by this be proven either sincere or a hypocrite; for, can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ, put a blank in his hand? Acts ix. 6. Psal. xlvii. 4. And does he not tell us, that without that disposition we are not his disciples, Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* Perhaps you find you submit to any thing but that; but will not that but mar all? Mark x. 21. Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ, with a reserve or exception of one thing, wherein they behoved to be their own lords?

Quest. 'Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily pre-required to our believing: And if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers?'

Ans. No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, whereby the soul is brought to believe on him. Hereby the soul sees him an able Saviour, so trusts on him for salvation; the rightful Lord, and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to him, Matt. xiii. 45, 46. The soul taking him for a Saviour, takes him also for a Head and Ruler. It is Christ's giving himself to us, and our receiving him, that causes us quit other things to and for him, as it is the light dispels the darkness.

Case. 'Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to him in that point.'

Ans. 1. That *submission* will not be carried on in any

without a *struggle*; the old man will never submit it, and when the new man of grace is submitting it, the old man will still be reclaiming, Gal. v. 17. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would, but are sincerely desirous and habitually aiming to submit it.* Do ye, from the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourselves, that ye cannot submit it? This is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel, Rom. vii. 17—20. 2 Cor. viii. 12. If ye had your choice, would ye rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart's desire? Rom. vii. 22, 23. And, do ye not sincerely endeavour to submit it over the belly of the reluctancy of flesh? Gal. v. 17.

2. Where is the Christian *self denial*, and taking up of the *cross*, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of his disciples, Matt. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross: but while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees meet especially to be denied in, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favour of self.

3. Where is our *conformity* to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians without conformity to Christ. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walke even as he walked,* 1 John ii. 6. There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but he submitted to it, Phil. ii. 8. *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* Rom. xv. 3. *For even Christ pleased not himself, &c.* And so

must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed, Matt. xi. 29. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

4. How will we *prove* ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, *Our Father,—Thy will be done on earth,* &c. Matt. vi. Nay, the language of that practice is, we must have our own will, and God's will cannot satisfy us.

Motive 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long, 1 Cor. viii. 31. What though the work be sore, it may be the better comported with, that it will not be longsome; a few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I will never be eased of it; for if ye be not eased before, ye will be eased of it at death, come in the room of it after what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us to set ourselves to carry rightly under our crook while it lasteth.

5. If ye would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, ye would find it easier than ye imagine, Matt. xi. 29, 30. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls.* Ver. 30. *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose, than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should ply with the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable; as long as you believe that, be sure ye will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be so born of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly, Matt. xi. 30. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. iv. 13. and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come, Psal. xxviii. 7.

6. If ye carry Christianly under your crook here, ye will not lose your labour, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 58. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endureth on this very ground, James i. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath pro-*

mised to them that love him. Heaven is the place into which the approved, upon the trial of the crook, are received, Rev. vii. 14. *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* When we come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will ye have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and screw up your joy.

7. If you do not carry Christianly under it, ye will lose your souls in the other world, Jude, ver. 15, 16. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them for ever. If they will not submit to his yoke here, and go quietly under it, he will wreathe his yoke about their neck for ever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed, Job ix. 4.

Lastly, Whatever crook is in the lot of any, it is very likely there is a public crook abiding the generation, that will be more trying. This is a day of sinning, beyond the days of our fathers; a day wherein God is making great crooks in the lot of the dearest to himself; but these seem to presage such a general public crook to be abiding the generation, as will make our now private ones of very little weight, 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Therefore, set yourselves to carry rightly under the crook in your lot.

If you ask what way one may reach that; for direction we propose,

DOCT. III. *The considering the crook in the lot, as the work of God, is a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under it.*

I. What it is to consider the crook as the *work* of God, we take it up in these five things.

First, An enquiry into the *spring* whence it riseth, Gen. xxv. 22. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and enquire into the spring of it. Surely, it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves; and to ascribe it to fortune is to ascribe it to

nothing; it is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or another for us, Job v. 6. And we are to notice the hand from whence it comes.

Secondly, A perceiving of the *hand* of God in it. Whatever hand any creature hath therein, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager's agency therein, Job i. 21. Without this we make a God of the creature instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, Rom. xi. 36. and bring ourselves under that doom, Psalm xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up.*

Thirdly, A representing it to *ourselves* as a work of God, which he hath wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from whence a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature, ascribing it unto God, as if no other hand were in it, his being always the principal therein. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one would the ax, fixing his eye on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into consideration.

1st, The *decree* of God purposing that crook for us from eternity: *for he worketh all things by the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11. the sealed book in which are written all the black lines that make the crook. Whatever valley of darkness, grief, and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immoveable divine purposes, Zech. vi. 1. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no further than the event goes in our sight and feeling; for so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2dly, The *providence* of God bringing to pass that

crook for us in time, Amos iii. 6. There is nothing can befall us without him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, he is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing they would all stop; though he is still infinitely pure in his agency, however impure they be in theirs. Job considered both these, chap. xxiii. 14.

Fourthly, A continuing in the *thought* of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating and leisurely viewing of it as his work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

1st, Habitually impressed with this consideration: as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations besides this that we must entertain, so that we cannot always have it expressly in our mind: but we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, whereby it may slip into our minds, as occasion calls expressly.

2^{dly}, Occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy; when the yoke begins to gall the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes in on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as the proper remedy; the oftener it is used, it will more easily come on hand, and also be the more effectual.

3^{dly}, A considering it for the *end* for which it is proposed to us, *viz.* to bring to a dutiful carriage under it. Men's corruptions will cause them to enter on this consideration: and as is the principle, so will the end and effect of it be corrupt, 2 Kings vi. 33. But we must enter on, and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How it is to be understood to be a proper *means* to bring one to carry rightly under the crook.

1. *Negatively*; Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But,

2. *Positively*; As it is used in faith, in the faith of the gospel; that is to say, A sinner's bare considering the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to him, will never be a way to carry rightly under it; but having believed in Jesus Christ, and so the crook as the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behaviour. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such law considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine, that, by the mere force of them, they may gain the point. And many preachers too, who, forgetting Christ and the gospel, pretend by the force of reason to make men Christians: the eyes of both being held, that they do not see the corruption of men's nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason; all that they are sensible of, being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,

First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam? That is to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with them that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, whereby he might have, by the force of moral considerations, brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? 2 Cor. iii. 5. Whatever force be in them to a soul endued with spiritual life, what force is in them to raise the dead, such as we are? Eph. ii. 1.

Secondly, The scripture is very plain on this head, shewing the indispensable necessity of faith, Heb. xi.—And that such as unites to Christ, John xv. 5. *Without me*, that is, separate from me, *ye can do nothing*; no, not with all the moral considerations ye can use. How were the ten commandments given on Mount Sinai? not bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the gospel, to be believed in the first place. *I am the Lord thy God, &c*

And so Solomon, whom many do regard rather as a moral philosopher, than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And we must have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes, and take these precepts without it; that is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved him more, we would see him more in every page, and in every command, receiving the law at his mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to carry rightly under the crook in the lot, what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the will of God, must be in it? what love to God it must proceed from; how regard to his glory must influence it as the chief end thereof; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith afore-mentioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance: but still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. O what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, that think they can for a moment empty them of the creature, farther than they can fill them with a God, as their God, in its room and stead! No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behaviour under the crook, externally right, such as many Pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached, without that faith in God.

Object. 'Then it is faints only that are capable of improvement of that consideration.'

Ans. Yea, indeed it is so; as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends: and that amounts to no more, than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living, that have the use of their limbs; and therefore, that ye may improve it, set yourselves to believe in the first place.

¶ I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring

one to carry rightly under it. This will appear, if we consider these four things.

1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on these things about the crook, which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the baulking of our will and wishes, the satisfaction we would have in the matter's going according to our mind, the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, &c. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God, would be a cure by way of diversion, 2 Sam. vi. 9, 10. And such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing the good effect. Tho' our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason; yet it is carried on, not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way, Eph. v. 14. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for it, moving to carry Christianly under our crook.

3. It hath a divine appointment on it for that end, which is to be believed, Prov. iii. 6. So the text. The creature in itself is an efficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity, Acts xvii. 28. What makes any thing a means fit for the end, is a word of divine appointment, Matt. iv. 4. To use any thing then for an end, without the faith of this, is to make a God of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God, according to that word of appointment, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. And every thing is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

4. The Spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it in them that believe, and look to him for it, forasmuch as it is a mean of his own appointment. Papists, Legalists, and all superstitious persons, devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or real-

ly having a moral fitness for the same; but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana and Pharpar, they want a word of divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are none of his own tools, but devised of their hearts. And since the means of divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

Use. Then take this *direction* for your carrying right under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices.

1. Consider it as the *work* of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable, Psalm xxii. 1, 2, 3. The discerning of a Father's hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God under your crook, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe, and claim your interest in him. 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the divine *relations* to you, and the divine *attributes*. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your Father, elder Brother, Head, Husband, &c. who therefore surely consults your good. Consider his holiness and justice, shewing he wrongs you not; his mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; his sovereignty, that may silence you; his infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a *work* of his it is, how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance; a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies; a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin, ye would otherwise be apt to run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruptions; a weaning work, to wean you from the world, and fit you for heaven.

4. In all our considerations of it, in this manner look upward for his Spirit, to render them effectual, 1 Cor. iii. 6.—Thus may ye carry Christianly under it, till God even it either here or in heaven.

PROV. xvi. 19.

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

COULD men once be brought to believe, that it is better to have their minds brought to ply with the crook in their lot, than to force even the crook to their mind, they would then be in a fair way to bring their matters, in that case, to a good account. Hear then the divine decision in that case, *Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.* In which words,

First, There is a comparison instituted, and that between two parties, and two points wherein they vastly differ.

1st, The parties are the *lowly* and the *proud*, who differ like heaven and the centre of the earth: the proud are a climbing up and soaring aloft; the lowly are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God. Let us view them more particularly as the text represents them.

(1.) On the one hand is the *lowly*. Here there is a line-reading, and a marginal, both from the Holy Spirit, and they differ only in a letter: the former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction laid on them, whereby their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones, who are low in their spirit, as well as their condition, and so have their minds brought down to their lot. Both together making the character of this lowly party.

(2.) On the other hand is the *proud*, the gay, and high-minded ones. It is supposed here that they are crook too, and have crooks in their lot; for, dividing the spoil is the consequent of a victory, and a victory presupposes a battle.

2dly, The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, *viz.* being of a humble spirit, and dividing the spoil.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometime get their condition changed, may be raised up on high, and divide the spoil, as Hanna, Job, &c. The proud may sometimes be thrown down and crushed, as Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. But that is not the question, Whether it is better to be raised up with the lowly, or thrown down with the proud? There would be no difficulty in determining that. But the question is, Whether it is better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted humble ones, or to divide the spoil, and get one's will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts; that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared, and set against another are these,

(1.) On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones, (Heb.) to be *low* of spirit, for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state; so the point here proposed is to be with or in the state of afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot; the lowness of the spirit, balancing the lowness of one's condition.

(2.) On the other hand, to divide the spoil with the proud. The point here proposed is, to be with or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those who, taking themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

Secondly, The decision made, wherein the former is preferred to the latter; *Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the*

proud, &c. If these two parties were set before us, it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those, who, being of a proud and high-bended spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

DOCT. *There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit lowered and brought down to their lot, whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind.*

I. We shall consider the generation of the *lowly afflicted ones*, having their *spirit* brought down to their lot. And we shall,

First, Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, as bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the scripture elsewhere makes mention of them; as Psal. ix. 12. and x. 12. Matt. v. 3. with Luke vi. 20. Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there; nor in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In this world they must then be, where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as he was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the head of that generation whom they all copy after; *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And for his honour, and the honour of his cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands, Rom. viii. 29. *Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* His image lies in these two, suffering and holiness, whereof lowliness is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, that there is another generation, (Prov xxx. 13. *Their eyes are lofty, and their eye-lids lifted up*) quite opposite to them, and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is

not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high bended spirit keeps on the bend in spite of the lowering circumstance.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of divine grace can bring down men's minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Men may put on a face of submission to a low and crook lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it is in vain to strive: but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all, Acts xiv. 22. and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding, Luke xiv. 26. yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit however is thereby humbled, and brought down to their lot, Psal. cxxxii. 2. *Surely I have behaved and acquitted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child.* Phil. iv. 11, 12. *For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and 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.*

6. A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favourable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we would find none in this world: but those who are sincerely aiming and endeavouring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes they are blown aside, and returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation, 2 Cor. vii. 12. James v. 11.

Secondly, We shall enter into the particulars of their character. There are three things which together make up their character.

1st, Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, are a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two:

1. There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or other oftentimes upon them, Psalm. lxxiii. 14. If there be *silence in heaven*, it is but for *half an hour*, Rev. viii. 1. God is frequently visiting them, as a master doth his scholars, and a physician his patients; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by him, Rev. iii. 19. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, Psal. cxxix. 1, 2, 3. God sees it good for them, Lam. iii. 27, 28.

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction, which God has chosen for them, that hangs about them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them, Luke ix. 23. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be exchanged, but that is a weight that still hangs about them, bowing them down.

2^{dly}, Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has, by his grace, brought down from their natural height. And thus,

1. They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are, 2 Cor. xii. 11. what they can do, 2 Cor. iii. 5. what they are worth, Gen. xxxii. 10. and what they deserve, Lam. iii. 22. Viewing themselves in the glass of the divine law and perfection, they see themselves as a mass of imperfection and sinfulness, Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. They think highly and honourably of God, Psal. cxliv. 3. They are taught by the Spirit what God is; and so entertain elevated thoughts of him. They consider him as the Sovereign of the world, his perfections as infinite, his work as perfect. They look on him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well; trusting his wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see, Heb. xi. 8.

3. They think favourably of others, as far as in justice they may, Phil. ii. 3. Though they cannot hinder themselves to see their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving thereof, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4. They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and his will, Psal. cxxx. 1, 2. Pride sets a man up against God, lowliness brings him back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, *Thy will be done on earth,* &c.—They seek no more the command, but are content that God himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them, Psalm xlvi. 4.

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things, Psalm cxxx. 1. Lowliness levels the towering imaginations, which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord, and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping stones to the throne of his glory, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

6. They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them, Gen. xxvii. 10. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possess of, and fixeth the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark on the good things they have possess, or yet do, Job ii. 10.

3dly, A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being, through grace, brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things.

1. They submit to it as *just*, Mic. vii. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned a-*

gainst him. There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, they have their complaints on themselves; their hearts rise not up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouths against the heavens. They justify God and condemn themselves, reverencing his holiness and spotless righteousness in his proceedings against them.

2. They go quietly under it as tolerable, Lam. iii. 26—29. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him; he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there maybe hope.* While the unsubdued spirit rageth under the yoke as a bullock unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord's mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without these overweights upon it that turbulent passions add thereunto; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

3. They are *satisfied* in it, as drawing their comfort from another air than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean upon. *Although the fig tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord,* Hab. iii. 17, 18. 'Thus did David in the day of his distress, *he encouraged himself in the Lord his God,* 1 Sam. xxx. 6. It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the lot, when one is damped and sunk under the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point whereon their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men's comforts to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a *complacency* in it, as that which is

fit and good for them, Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them fore; they rationally think with themselves that it is good and best for them: so these lowly souls consider their afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them; yea best for them for the time, since it is ministred by their heavenly Father: and so they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot.

The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness in his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul's love may run towards himself; how he pulls off and holds off the man's burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditiously the way to heaven.

5. They *rest* in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it, see it meet to bring them out with his good will, Isa. xxviii. 16. Though an unsubdued spirit's time for deliverance is always ready, a humble soul will be afraid of being taken out of its afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for a moving for a change, till the heavens moving bring it about: so this hinders not prayer, and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord; but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

II. We shall consider the *generation* of the *proud* getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

First, there are crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by over-ruling providence, and let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For consider,

1. The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, have made it impossible to get through the world, but men must meet with what will ruffle them, Eccl. i. 14. Sin has turned the world from a

paradise to a thicket; there is no getting through without being scraucht. As the midges in the summer will fly about those walking abroad in a goodly attire, as well as about those in fordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2. The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none, Esth. v. 13. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn-hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things; so none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them; as appears from,

Secondly, Reigning *pride* in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation, they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature sets them; hence they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humours of pride and passion; hence, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they cannot have any more ease. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things:

1. They have an over-value for themselves; and so the proud mind says, 'The man should not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a twelling vanity is in that, Exod. v. 2. *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* Hence a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of Christ's precepts or providence. The first error is in the understanding; whence Solomon ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble. Men are bigger in their own conceit, than they are indeed; therefore God suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2. They have an unmortified self-will, arising from that over-value for themselves, and it says he will not stoop, Exod. v. 2. The question betwixt heaven and

us, is, Whether God's will or our own must carry it? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says in his providence, our will must yield to his; but that it will not do, till the iron sinew in it be broken, Rom. vi. 7. Isa. xlviii. 4.

3. They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with the self-will; and they say, He shall not stoop, Rom. vii. 8, 9. And so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without the man, James iv. 1.

(1.) A holy God crosses the self-will of the proud creatures by his providence, over-ruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by his own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, Gen. iv. 4, 5. sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 4.

(2.) The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controuled, rises up against it, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind; this is the cause of this unholy war, in which,

1. There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack on heaven itself, viz. discontent, impatience, murmuring, fretting, and the like. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord*, Prov. xix. 3. These fire the breast, fall the countenance, Gen. iv. 6. let off sometimes a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, Jude ver. 16. and sometimes of blasphemies, 2 Kings vi. 33.

2. There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, viz. anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. Prov. xxvii. 4. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, Luke xxi. 19. fill the heart with a boiling heat, Mal. xxxix. 3. the mouth with clamour and evil-speaking, Eph. iv. 31. and threatenings are breathed out, As

ix. 1. and sometimes set the hands on work, which has a most heavy event, Matt. v. 21, 22. as in the case of Ahab against Naboth.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oftentimes they lose the day, and the cross remains immovable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin, Exod. xv. 9, 10. But that is not the case in the text. We are to consider them as,

Thirdly, Getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks,

1. Holy Providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind, Gen. vi. 3. God sees it meet to let the struggle with him fall, for it prevails not to his good, Isa. i. 5. So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at; *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*, Hof. iv. 17.

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigour, Psal. lxxviii. 30. *They were not estranged from their lust*. God, in the method of his covenant, sometimes gives his people their will, and sets them where they would be; but then, in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children, Psalm x. 17. But here the lust remains rampant; the proud seek meat for it, and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off, Psalm lxxviii. 29. They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it, wrestled and fought against it, till it is brought up to their mind: So the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

4. The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one is when he is dividing the spoil, 1 Kings xxi. 18, 19.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation, and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to *confirm* the doctrine, or the decision of

the text, That the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters go to will and wish, according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

1st, Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatsoever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in a world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better; as gold in a dunghill is more excellent than so much lead in a cabinet. For,

1. Humility is a piece of the image of God. Pride is the master-piece of the image of the devil. Let us view him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold him *meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. None more afflicted, yet his spirit perfectly brought down to his lot. Isa. liii. 7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.* That is a shining piece of the divine image: for though God cannot be low in respect of his state and condition, yet he is of infinite condescension, Isa. lvii. 15. None bears as he, Rom. ii. 4. nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to his will, which is proposed to us for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ. *For consider him that endureth so much contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds*, Heb. xii. 3.

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Will we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point; for, though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell: and as it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit; so his spirit will never come down to his lot: and therefore he will be e-

ternally in a state of war with his lot. Hence, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now, is it not better to be like God, than like the devil? Like him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can any thing possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? *Then better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, &c.*

2. Humility and lowliness of spirit qualifies us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy, 1 Pet. v. 5. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss, Psalm xxx. 5. If we have that, nothing can make us miserable, Rom. viii. 31. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Now, who are they whom God is for but the humble and lowly? they who being in Christ are so made like him. He blesses them, and declares them the heirs of the crown of glory: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,* Matt. v. 3. He will look to them be their condition never so low, while he overlooks others, Isa. lxvi. 2. He will have respect to them, however they be despised: *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off,* Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell, Isa. lvii. 15. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they lie now, Isa. xl. 4.

Whom is he against? Whom does he resist? The proud. Them he curseth, Jer. xvii. 5 and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God's rival; he makes himself his own God, and would have those about him make him theirs too; he rages, he blusters, if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down, Isa. xl. 4. Psal. xviii. 27.

Now, is it not better to be qualified for communion with God, than to have him engaged against us at any rate?

3. Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil, Isa. lvii. 15. 1 Tim. iii. 6. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction, *and be clothed with humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5, 6. That is our becoming garment. The humble Publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud, as 1 Thess. ii. 16.—*Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost*. They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now, duty is ay better than sin at any rate.

2dly, They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot, have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble, and vexation.—Consider here, that, on the one hand,

1. Quiet of mind, and ease within, is a great blessing, upon which the comfort of life depends. Nothing without this can make one's life happy, Dan. v. 6.—And where this is maintained nothing can make it miserable, John xvi. 33. This being secured in God, there is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, 1 John xvi. 2, 3, 4. Like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves.

2. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquility. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world riseth from the disagreement of our mind therewith: let the mind be brought to the lot and the whole tumult is instantly hushed; let it be kept in that disposition, and the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it, Col. iii. 15. *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called*.

On the other hand, consider,

1. What disquiet of mind the proud do suffer ere they can get their lot brought up to their mind. *They have taught their tongues to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity*, Jer. ix. 5. James iv. 2. *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot ob-*

tain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not.—What arrows of grief go thro' their heart? what torture of anxiety, fretting, and vexation must they endure? what contrary passions do fight within them? and what fallies of passions do they make? what uneasiness was Haman in, before he could carry the point of the revenge against Mordecai obtaining the king's decree?

2. When the thing is got to their mind, it will not quite the cost. The enjoyment thereof brings not so much satisfaction and pleasure, as the want of it gave pain. This was evident in Rachel's case, as to the having of children; and in that case, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the favour they expected to find in it. Fruit pluckt off the tree of providence, ere it is ripe, will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night, Exod. xvi. 20.

3. They have but an unsure gripe of it; it doth not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again: *I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath,* Hos. xiii. 11. Having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So Haman obtained the decree; but ere the day of the execution came he was gone.

3dly, They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot, do gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind, Prov. xvi. 32. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* This will appear, if ye consider,

1. The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. *The life is more than meat.*—The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniences that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what betters only his condition. Who doubts, but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a coarse bed to fine one, but the sickness still remaining; the o-

ther lies still in the coarse bed, but the sickness is removed, that the case of the latter is preferable? So here, &c.

2. The subduing of our own passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: for then we are masters of ourselves, according to that, Luke xxi. 19. Whereas, in the other case we are still slaves to the worst of masters, Rom. vi. 16. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will; in the other we lie exposed to thousands of dangers, Prov. xxv. 28. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

3. When both shall come to be judged, it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works, in bringing their spirit to their lot; the other, the tale of their ill works in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, in whose eyes every internal action is a work, good or bad, to be reckoned for, Rom. ii. 16.

An afflicted lot is painful, but where it is well managed, it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the Spirit in a Christian, which otherwise would lie dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in him for his help, but they will be recorded in heaven's register as good works, Mal. iii. 16. And these are occasioned by affliction.

On the other hand, there is never a rising of the proud heart against the lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of such be multiplied by the war in which the spoil is divided!

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folk to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance, Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12. *Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own heart's lust; and they walked*

in their own counsels. It may be pleasanter and gratefulest for the time, but it is not the safest. Let not people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by strong hand; let them not triumph on such victory; the after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party, whose lot is kept low, is so far from being a loser, that he is a gainer thereby, if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see his case in the light of God's unerring word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, *Psal. lxxviii. 29, 30, 31.* In the other, the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines his own, *Lam. iii. 27.*

3. It is better to yield to Providence than to fight it out though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honourably; for what honour can there be in a creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? and we act most wisely; for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on Heaven's side in the war, *1 Sam. ii. 9. For, by strength shall no man prevail.*

Lastly, It is of far greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to minister drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, whereby their thirst may be carried off.

Use 2. Of exhortation. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your bent be rather to have your spirit humbled and brought down, than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that ye may use all lawful means for the removal of your crosses, in dependence on God: but only that you be more concerned

to get your spirit to *bow* and *ply*, than to get the crook in your lot *evened*.

Motive 1. It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross, than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling for the profit of our souls, to purify them and bring them into a state of health and cure.

2. The humbling of the spirit will have a mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbléd spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, Matt. xi. 30, and in due time carry it cleanly off, 1 Pet. v. 6. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbléd; though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

3. Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed ere the spirit is humbled; that is, to have the means of cure pulled away, and blocked up from us, while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials ere we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our physician as hopeless, Isa. i. 5. Hof. iv. 17.

Use 3. For *direction*; believing the gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness; so will ye be *humbled under the mighty hand of God*; and, in due time, *he will lift you up*.

I PETER V. 6.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

IN the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle presseth the duties of church-officers towards the people; and then the duty of the people both towards their officers and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, *submission*. For which causes he recommends humility as the great means to bring all to their respective duties. This is enforced with an argument taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble; his opposing himself to the one and shewing favour to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration: And in it we have,

1st, The *duty* we are therefore to study: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* And therein we may notice,

1. The *state* of those whom it is proposed to, those *under the mighty hand of God*, whom his hand has humbled, or stated some way low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these are, I think, meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those, who, by the providence of God, are any manner of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others. God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause he has, by his mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters; and these, again, to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depends on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme

magistrate being *major singulis, minor universis*. This state of the world God has made for taking trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others; and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. *Then cometh the end—when he shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power,* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Mean time, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God's mighty hand has subjected them.

2. The *duty* itself, viz. Humiliation of our spirits under the humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Whether it is we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometimes in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations; or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must therein eye the mighty hand of God, as that which placed us there, and is over us there to hold us down in it: and so, with an awful regard thereto, crouch down under it, in the temper and disposition of our spirits, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

3. A particular *spring* of this duty; therefore we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the place assigned them of God in their afflictions or relations, but still press upward against the mighty hand that is over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before; whereas it treats them with grace and favour that compose themselves under it, to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so that eying this we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2dly, The infallible *issue* of that course; *that he may exalt you in due time.* The particle *that*, is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action,

John ix. 2. 1 John ii. 19. So here, the meaning is not, *Humble yourselves*, on design *he may exalt you*; but, and it shall issue in his exalting you. Compare James iv. 10.

(1.) Here is a happy *event* of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation or lifting up on high, by the power of God, *that he may exalt you*. Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun riseth after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objection that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

Object. 1. If we let our spirit fall, we will lie always among folks feet, and they will trample on us.

Ans. No; pride of spirit unsubdued, will bring men to lie among the feet of others for ever, Isa. lxvi. 24. But humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from among their feet, Mal. iv. 2, 3. They that humble themselves now will be exalted for ever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast ye yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves ye shall not lie there.

Object. 2. If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us; and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right.

Ans. That is wrong. Humble ye yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot, or low condition; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down of the spirit is our duty, raising us up is God's work: let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up, by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of his hand.

Object. 3. But sure we will never rise high, if we let our spirits fall.

Ans. That is wrong too: God will not only raise the humble ones, but he will lift them up *on high*; for so

the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low: nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the *date* of that happy event, when it will fall out. In *due time*, or in the season, the proper season for it, Gal. vi. 9. *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* We are apt to weary in humbling trying circumstances, and ay we would have up our head, John vii. 6. But Solomon observes, there is a time for every thing when it does best, and the wise will wait it, Eccl. iii. 1—8. There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the due time for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it would come too soon should it come before that time.

DOCT. I. *The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should lie towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.* We have here,

I. Some things *supposed* in this. It supposeth and bears in it, that,

1. God *brings* men into humbling circumstances, Ezek. xvii. 24. *And all the trees of the field shall know, that I the Lord have brought down the high tree.* There is a root of pride, in the hearts of all men on earth; that must be mortified ere they can be meet for heaven: and therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof whether he can stoop or no. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that very end, Deut. viii. 2. *The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart.*

2. These circumstances prove *pressing* as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down, Psalm cvii. 12.

Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.—

They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial natively ariseth, whether, when God lays on his mighty hand, the man can yield under it, or not; and consequently, whether he is meet for heaven or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to rise up against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God, Job xxxv. 9, 10. *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: But none saith, Where is God my maker?* This is the first gate the heart runs to in humbling circumstances; and in this way the unsubdued spirit holds on.

4. But what God requires, is, rather to labour to bring down the heart, than to get up the head, James iv. 10. Here lies the proof of one's meekness for heaven; and then is one in the way heaven-ward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart than up his head, to go calmly under his burden than to get it off, to crouch under the mighty hand than to put it off him.

5. There must be a noticing of God as our party, in humbling circumstances; *Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it*, Mic. vi. 9. There is an abjectness of spirit, whereby some give up themselves to the will of others, in the hardest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, whereby one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight; and none so readily fall into it as the proud, at sometimes, to serve their own turn, Acts xii. 22. These are men pleasers, Eph. vi. 6. with Gal. i. 10.

II. What are these humbling circumstances the mighty hand of God brings them into. Supposing here what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot's being of God's making, these are circumstances,

1. Of *imperfection*. God has placed all men in such circumstances under a variety of wants and imperfections, Phil. iii. 12. We can look no where, where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us: our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained; and it is a shame for us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us; it is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of *inferiority* in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others, 2 Cor. vii. 24. God has, for a trial of men's submission to himself, subjected them to others whom he has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to his authority and commands at second hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the divine image shining in them, 1 Cor. xi. 7. And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the divine image shining in them, is necessarily required, Eph. v. 33. Heb. xii. 9. compare Psal. cxi. 9. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, viz. that they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, Psal. lxxxii. 6. And though the parties be worthless in themselves, that he looeth not one from the debt to them, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. Rom. xiii. 7. The reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection; and the trial God takes of us in that matter turns not on the point of the former but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness in all things, not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against his mighty hand, Rom. xiii. 2. because it is mediately upon us for that effect, though it is man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of *contradiction*, tending directly to baulk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too,

Heb. xii. 3. There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there; for they are in their state of retribution and exaltation: but we are here in our state of trial and humiliation, and therefore cannot miss contradiction, be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God trusts men with them to humble them, break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us, as the breaking of a horse or a bullock is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of *affliction*, Prov. xvi. 19. *Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride*; and, O! but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God, by affliction, calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their jay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears more in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction, some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under the affliction, is to pretend to rise up when God is casting and holding down, with a witness; and cannot miss, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces, Ezek. xxiv. 13. For the afflicting hand is mighty.

5. Of *sin*, as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that, Job xxx. 19. All the sin in the world is a punishment of Adam's first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left weltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is overruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humbled under our sinfulness, is to rise

up against the mighty hand of God, and to justify all our sinful departings from him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

III. What it is in humbling circumstances, to *humble* ourselves under the mighty hand of God. This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances. And we may take it up in these eight things.

1. Noticing the *mighty hand*, as employed in bringing about every thing that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission, 1 Sam. iii. 18. *And he said, It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.* 2 Sam. xvi. 10. *And the king said, The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?* He is the fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to his sovereign will. It is he that has posted every one in their relations by his providence; without him we could not meet with such contradictions; for, *the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth*, Prov. xxi. 1. He sends on afflictions, and he justly punishes one sin with another, Isa. vi. 10.

2. A sense of our own *worthlessness* and *nothingness* before him, Psal. cxliv. 3. Looking to the infinite Majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say, with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. *Behold I am but dust and ashes*; and say Amen to the cry, Isa. xl. 6. *All flesh is grass, &c.* The keeping up of thoughts of our own excellency, under the pressures of the mighty hand, is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of his glory, that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our *guilt* and *filthiness*, Rom. iii. 10. Isa. lxiv. 6. The mighty hand doth not press us down, but as sinners; it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness; our guilt, whereby we will appear criminals justly caused to suffer; our filthiness, whereupon we may

be brought to lothe ourselves; and then we'll think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart to swell.

4. A silent *submission* under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us, Rom. ix. 20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*—And nothing but unsubdued height and pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under the sovereign hand. A view of the sovereign hand humbled and awed the Psalmist into a submission, with a profound silence, Psalm xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*—Job i. 21. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*—And xl. 4, 5. *What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther.* And Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. *It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.*

5. A *magnifying* of his mercies towards us in the midst of all his proceedings against us, Psal. cxliv. 3. Has he laid us low? If we be duly humbled we will wonder he has laid us no lower, Ezra ix. 13. For, however low the humble are laid, they will see they are not yet so low as their sins deserve, Lam. iii. 22.

6. A holy and silent *admiration* of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33. Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the divine proceedings, pretends to see thro' them, censures freely and condemns; but humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honourably of the mysteries of Providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our *dignity*, whereby we excel others, Rev. iv. 10. Pride feeds itself on the man's real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God. Luke xviii. 11. *God I thank thee, I am not as other men.* But humiliation of spirit makes it all to vanish before him as doth

the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man in his own eyes, lower than any. *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man*, Prov. xxx. 2.

8. A submitting readily to the *meanest offices* requisite in, or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Hereof our Saviour gave us an example, (Phil. ii. 8. *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,*) to be imitated, John xiii. 14. *If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.*

Use. Of exhortation. Let the bent of your heart then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice *all* your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections; inferiority in relations; contradictions you meet with; your afflictions; uncertainty of all things about you; and your sinfulness.—Look through them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of Providence towards you in these, that ye may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and case.

2. Observing what these circumstances do *require* of you, as suitable to them; bend your endeavours towards it, to bring your spirits into the temper of humiliation, that, as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, and your exercise every day.

Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high any are lifted up in this world, Providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them or not,

Isa. xl. 6. Now, it is our duty to fall in with the design of Providence, that while God is humbling us, we may be humbling ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirit will not take effect without our own agency therein; while God is working on us that way, we must work together with him, for he works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves, Phil. ii. 12, 13. God by his providence may force down our lot and condition without us, but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all; therefore, strike in with humbling providences in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow, that they may go away before it.

3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God, Acts vii. 51. Ye resist in so far as ye do not yield, but stand as a rock keeping your ground against your Maker in humbling providences, Jer. v. 3. *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.* Much more when ye work against him to force up your condition, which we may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider,

(1.) *The sinfulness*; what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him, Isa. xlv. 9.

(2.) *The folly* of it. How unequal is the match? How can the struggle end well? Job ix. 4. What else can possibly be the issue of the potsherd's of the earth dashing against the rock of ages, but that they be broken to pieces? We may say, as Job xli. 8. All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand.

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life. *Every thing is beautiful in its season*; and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the

time thereof, even as the plowing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1) Humiliation of spirit *is in the sight of God of great price*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility, chap. v. 5. The humbling of sinners and bringing them down from their heights, wherein the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of his word, and of his providences.

(2.) It is no easy thing to humble men's spirits; it is not little that will do it; it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion, Luke vi. 48. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart ere it fall; oftentimes it seems to be fallen, and yet it arises again. And, even when the root-stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 2. It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men, Heb. xii. 2. And in that time they must either be formed according to his image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means, Rom. viii. 29. So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4) There is no humbling after this, Rev. xxii. 11. If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be; no kindly humiliation is to be expected in the other life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the unhumbleness of their spirits will still remain, whence they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition betwixt their spirits and lot, Rev. xvi. 21.

Wherefore, beware lest ye sit your time of humilia-

tion: humbled we must be, or we are gone for ever; and this is the time, the only time of it; therefore, make your hay while the sun shines; strike in with humbling providences, and fight not against them while ye have them, Acts xiii. 41. The season of grace will not last; if ye sleep in seed-time, ye will beg in harvest.

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account; so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them, Psalm cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* Would ye gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is a most *valuable* thing in itself, Prov. xvi. 32. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is thereby duly brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for, 1 Pet. iii. 4.

(2.) Humility of spirit brings many *advantages* along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well loaden, wherever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross, Matt. xi. 30. Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God, Psal. li. 17. The eye of God is particularly on such for good, Isa. lxvi. 2. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* Yea, he dwells with them, Isa. lvii. 15. And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct, Prov. xi. 2. *With the lowly is wisdom.*

Lastly, Consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us; the hand of the mighty God; let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall *under* it. Since the design of it is to bring us down, we cannot stand before it; for it cannot miscarry in its designs, Isa. xlvi. 10. *My counsel shall stand.* So, fall before it we must, either in the way of duty or judgment, Psal. xlv. 5. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.*

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they never so low, the same hand will *raise* them up again, Jam. iv. 10. In a word, be the proud never so high, God will bring them down: Be the humble never so low, God will raise them up.

Directions for reaching this humiliation.

I. General Directions.

Direct. 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of Providence towards you, Micah vi. 9. Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected. Hosea xiv. 9. But nothing is more reasonable, if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at turning what is so grievous to the flesh unto the profit of the spirit; that, if we are losers at one hand, we may be gainers at another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the first place, by betaking yourself to Christ, and taking God for your God in him, according to the gospel-offer, Hos. ii. 19. Heb. viii. 10. Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the Fountain: for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under the mighty hand, without faith in him as your God and friend, Heb. xi. 6. 1 John iv. 19.

3. Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise, Psalm xxviii. 7. Moses smiting the rock in faith of the promise, made water gush out, which otherwise would not at all appeared. Let us do likewise in dealing with our rocky hearts. They must be laid on the soft bed of the gospel, and struck there, as Joel ii. 13. *Turn to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful:* Or they will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

II. Particular Directions.

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances to humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart

acceptably brought down to them, 1 Cor. x. 13. *But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* This is truth, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* And you would be persuaded of it, with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end. Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task. *For your sakes this is written, That he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresbeth in hope, should be partaker of his hope,* 1 Cor. ix. 10. And the belief thereof is a piece of the life of faith, 2 Tim. ii. 1. If you have no hope of success, your endeavours, as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. *Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,* Heb. xii. 12.

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take *God* for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under his mighty hand, Mic. vi. 9. Men in their humbling circumstances overlook God; so they find not themselves called to humility under them; they fix their eyes on the creature instrument, and, instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take him for your party, that ye may remember the battle, and do no more, Job xli. 8.

3. Be much in the thoughts of God's infinite greatness: consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, Isa. vi. 3, 4, 5. Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord made a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder, Job xxxvii. 1, 2. Then followed God's voice out of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1. whereon Job is brought

down, chap. xl. 4, 5. It is renewed till he is farther humbled, chapter xlii. 5, 6. *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

4. Inure yourselves silently to admit *mysteries* in the conduct of Providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore, Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* That was the first word God said to Job, chap. xxxviii. 2. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* It took him by the heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, chap. xlii. 3. as that which particularly brought him to his knees, to the dust. Even in those steps of Providence, which we seem to see far into, we may well allow there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And, in those which are perplexing and puzzling, sovereignty should silence us; his infinite wisdom should satisfy, though we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own *sinfulness*, Job xl. 4. *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.* It is overlooking of that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held that they cannot see sin, the heart riseth against them; but when they are opened, it falls. Wherefore, whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes, upon that occasion, on the sinfulness of our nature, heart, and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart, that there is *need* of all the humbling circumstances you are put in. This is truth, 1 Pet. i. 6. *Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* God brings no needless trials upon us, afflicts none but as their need requires, Lam. iii. 33. *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* That is an observable difference betwixt our earthly and heavenly Father's correction, Heb. xii. 10. *They—after—their own pleasure; but HE for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* Look to the temper of your own hearts

and nature, how apt to be lift up, forget God, carried away with the vanities of the world; what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for ballast, and of the rod for the fool's back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe it on the ground of God's infinite wisdom that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind *design* of Providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them, Rev. iii. 19. Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut, 2 Kings vi. 33. *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* As long as the suspicions of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man's feet, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow; but the faith of a kind design will cause it open out itself in humility before him.

Case. 'O! If I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of Providence against me therein.'

Ans. Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven, have you to ground these fears upon? None at all, but from hell, 1 Cor. x. 13. What think you the design towards you in the gospel is? Can you believe no kind design towards you in all the words of grace there heaped up neither? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, Isa. lv. 1. flying in the face of the truth of God, and making him a liar, 1 John v. 10, 11. The gospel is a breathing of love and good will to the world of mankind sinners, Tit. ii. 11. iii. 4. 1 John iv. 14. John iii. 17. But ye believe it not, in that case, more than devils believe it. But if ye can believe a kind design there, ye must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of Providence cannot be contrary to the design of the gospel; but contrary-wise the latter is to help forward to the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time

of trial for heaven, James i. 12 *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances on that view, ver. 2. *Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.* If there is an honourable office, or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trials for it, in hope they may be thereupon legally admitted to it. Now, God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teacheth; and shall men be so very loth to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to you to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trials for heaven? Is there not an honour in it, an honour which all the saints have had? Jam. v. 11. *Behold we count them happy that endure,* &c. And a fair prospect in it, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Do but put the case, God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that he should order your portion in this life with full ease, as one that is to get no more of him; what would that be?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between your trials and the glory? Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it? The longest continued of them are but for a moment, compared with the eternal weight. Alas! there is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under our humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world, we would not make so much of either the smiles or frowns of this.

(3.) What think ye of coming foul off the trial of your humbling circumstances? Jer. vi 29, 30. *The lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.* That the issue of it be only, that your heart appear of

such a temper as by no means to be humbled; and that therefore you must and shall be taken off them, while yet no humbling appears. I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such, as might set us to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, ere our hearts are humbled, Isa. i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13.

9. Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord *prepares* us for heaven, Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, with 2 Cor. v. 5. The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, ere they be set up in the building; and not just set up as they come out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how think ye to be made meet for heaven, by the warm sunshine of this world's ease, and getting all your will here? Nay, Sirs; that would put your mouth out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honour for glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

(1.) Will nothing please you but *two* heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place where they shall get all their will, wish, and desire; where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down; and that is in the other world. But ye must have it both here and there, or ye cannot digest it. Why do ye not quarrel too that there are not two summers in one year; two days in twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days; and ye will not reverse it: therefore, chuse ye whether you will take your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

(2.) Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life, ye are not *capable* of heaven, 2 Cor.

v. 5. *Now, he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* Ye may indeed lie at ease here in a bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom; but without ye be humbled ye are not capable,

(1.) Of the *Bible*-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testament. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But, how shall ye be lifted up that are never well gotten down? Where will your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph, that will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you, who cannot away with labour?

(2.) Of the *saints'* heaven, Rev. vii. 14. *And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* This answers the question anent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints with them there: they were brought down to the dust with humbling circumstances, and out of these they came to before the throne. How can ye ever think to be lifted up with them, with whom ye cannot think to be brought down?

(3.) Of *Christ's* heaven, Heb. xii. 2. *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.* O! consider how the Forerunner made his way, Luke xxiv. 26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* And lay your accounts with it, that if ye get where he is, ye must go thither as he went, Luke ix. 23. *And he said, If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

10. Give up at length with your towering *hopes* from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till ye come there. There is a prevailing evil, Isa. lvii. 10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness*

of thy way: yet aidst thou not, *There is no hope.* So the Babel-building is still continued, though it has fallen down again and again: For men say, *The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewen stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars,* Isa. ix. 10. This makes humbling work very longsome; we are so hard to quite the grip of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned.— But fasten your grips on the other world, and let your grip of this go; so shall ye *be humbled indeed under the mighty hand.* The faster you grip the happiness of that world, the easier will it be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

11. Make use of *Christ* in all his offices, for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in that way, Zech. xii. 10. *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn, &c.* That you must do by trusting on him for that effect,

(1.) As a *Priest* for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances, and far more in humbling circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of *Christ* will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, Isaiah xxxiii. 24. and fit for service, doing or suffering, Heb. ix. 14. *How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

(2.) As your *Prophet* to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances; for, often we mistake them so far, that they prove an oppressing load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need *Christ*, and the light of his word and spirit, to let us see our cross and trial, as well as our duty, Psal. xxv. 9, 10.

(3.) As your *King*. You have a stiff heart, loth to bow even in humbling circumstances; take a lesson from *Moses* what to do in such a case, Exod. xxxiv. 9. *And*

he said,—Let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff necked people) and pardon our iniquity, and our sin. Put it in his hands that is strong and mighty, Psalm xxiv. 8. He is able to cause it to melt, and like wax, before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these *directions*, in order to put them in practice, remembering, that if ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them. Remember, humbling work is a work that will fill your hand, while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you, while you are in this lower world. A change of them ye may get; but a freedom from them ye cannot, till ye come to heaven. So the humbling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties, and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here.—What remains of the purpose of this text, I shall comprise in,

DOCT. II. *There is a due time, wherein those that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will certainly be lifted up.* We shall take,

I. A *general view* of this point. And consider,
 1st, Some things *supposed* and *implied* in it. It bears
 1. That those who shall share of this lifting up, must lay their accounts, in the first place, with a *casting down*. Rev. vii. 14. John xvi. 33.—*In the world ye shall have tribulation.* There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness; nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with casting down, we will not taste of the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the mighty hand of God, we must learn to *lie still* and *quiet* under it, till the same hand that cast us down raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up, Lam. iii. 27. It is not the being cast down into humbling circumstances, by the

providence of God, but the coming down of our spirits under them, by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Never humbled, in humbling circumstances, *never lifted up* in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up. Prov. xvi. 19. But note this, what they get will be a lifting up, to the end they may get the more grievous fall. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down in a moment*, Psal. lxxiii. 18. But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances, will find their obstinacy a need nail, that will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit, in humbling circumstances, ascertains a *lifting up out of them* some time, with the good will and favour of heaven, Luke xviii. 14. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. Solomon observes, Prov. xv. 1. that *a soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger*. And so it is, that while the proud, through their obstinacy, do but wreathe the yoke faster about their own necks, the yielding humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure, 1 Sam. ii. 8, 9, 10. *He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces. So the cannon-ball breaks down a stone wall, while the yielding packs of wool take away its force.*

5. There is an *appointed time* for the lifting up of those that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances, Hab. ii. 3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not*

tarry. To every thing there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up, Eccl. iii. 3. We know it not, but God knows it, who hath appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I will never be lifted up; there is a time fixt for it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun, after the long and dark night, or the return of the spring after the long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected, that immediately upon *one's humbling himself*, the *lifting up* is to follow. No; one is not to lie down under the mighty hand, but lie still waiting the due time; humbling work is longsome work; the Israelites had forty years of it in the wilderness. God's people must be brought to put a blank in his hand, as to the time; and while they have a long night of walking in darkness, must trust, Isa. 1. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

7. The appointed time for the lifting up is the *due time*, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come most seasonably. *And let us not be weary in well doing; for, in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*, Gal. vi. 9. For that is the time God has chosen for it; and be sure his choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best; and therefore faith sets to wait it, Isa. xxviii. 16. *He that believeth shall not make haste.* There is much of the beauty of a thing depends on the timing of it, and he has fixed that in all that he does, Eccl. iii. 11. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

8. The lifting up of the humble will not *miss* to come in the appointed and due time, Hab. ii. 3. Time makes no halting, in its running day and night; so the due time is fast coming, and, when it comes, it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeless, it is impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time.

II. A word, in the general, to the *lifting up*, abiding those that *humble* themselves. There is a two-fold lifting up.

1. A *partial* lifting up, competent to the humbled in time, during this life, Psal. xxx. 1. *I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.* This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect, while in this world, but no more.— These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease. So Israel, in the wilderness, in midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones, Exod. xv. 1. Num. xxi. 17.

2. A *total* lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death, Luke xvi. 22. ‘It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried, by the angels, into Abraham’s bosom.’ Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but carries them relief to perfection, Heb. xii. 23. Then he takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on for ever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before; no, not even at their highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and therein fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now, there is a due time for both these.

(1.) For the *partial* lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort, an ease or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times wherein it is needful for his people to be *in heaviness*, 1 Pet. i. 6. to have their *hearts brought down with grief*, Psal. cvii. 12. But then there is a time really appointed for it in the divine wisdom, when he will think it as needful to comfort them, as before to bring down, 2. Cor. ii. 7. ‘So that contraryways, ye ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow.’ We are, in that case, in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaster shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

(2.) For the *total* lifting up. When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all, Job vii. 2, 3. ‘As a

‘servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hire-
 ‘ling looketh for the reward of his work; so am I made
 ‘to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are
 ‘appointed to me.’ But it may be fitter, for all that,
 that we stay a while, and wrestle with our burdens, Phil.
 i. 24, 25. ‘Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more
 ‘needful for you. And having this confidence, I know
 ‘that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your
 ‘furtherance and joy of faith.’ A few days might have
 taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would
 have been oversoon there, if they had made all that speed;
 so they behoved to spend forty years, in the wilder-
 ness, till their due time of entering Canaan should come.
 And be sure the saints, entering heaven, will be con-
 vinced, that the time of it is best chosen, and there
 will be a beauty in that it was not sooner. And thus a
 lifting up is secured for the humble.

III. The *certainty* of the lifting up of those that
 humble themselves under humbling circumstances. If
 one would assure you, when reduced to poverty, that
 the time should certainly come yet, that ye should be
 rich; when sore sick, that ye should not die of that dis-
 ease, but certainly recover, that would help you to
 bear your poverty and sickness the better, and you
 would comfort yourselves with that prospect. How-
 ever, one may continue poor, and never be rich, may
 be sick, and die of his disease; but, whoever humble
 themselves under their humbling circumstances, we
 can assure them from the Lord’s word they shall cer-
 tainly, without all peradventure, be lifted up out of, and
 relieved from, their humbling circumstances: they shall
 certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they
 shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And
 ye may be assured thereof from the following considera-
 tions.

I. The *nature* of God, duly considered, ensures it,
 Psalm ciii. 8, 9. *The Lord is merciful and gracious,
 slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy. He will not al-
 ways chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever.*

The humbled soul, looking to God in Christ, may see three things in his nature jointly securing it.

(1.) Infinite *power*, that can do all things. No circumstances are so low, but he can raise them; so intangling and perplexing, but he can unravel them; so hopeless, but he can remede them, Gen. xviii. 14. *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with him to help it; but then is the most proper season for him to take it in hand, when all others have given it over, Deut. xxxii. 36. *For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.*

(2.) Infinite *goodness* inclining to help. He is good and gracious in his nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6—9. And therefore his power is a spirit of comfort to them, Rom. xiv. 4. Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness, joining infinite power in God, may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness, 1 John iv. 16. *And we know and believe the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* He has the bowels of a father towards the humble, Psalm ciii. 13. *Like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* Yea, bowels of mercy more tender than a mother to her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. Wherefore, howbeit his wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them in them for a time, it is not possible he can leave them in them for altogether.

(3.) Infinite *wisdom*, that doth nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances, Lam. iii. 32, 33. 'But though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.' God sends them on for humbling as the end and design to be brought about by them; when that is obtained, and

there is no more use for them that way, we may assure ourselves they will be taken off.

2. The *providence* of God, viewed in its stated method of procedure with its objects, ensures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the divine providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

(1.) Observe the providence of God, in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's humbled ones be idle spectators of these things; they are for our learning, Jer. xxxii. 35, 36, 37. 'Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea, when the waters thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.' Will the Lord's hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea, and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in them after a casting down, and only forget his humbled ones? No, by no means.

(2.) Observe the providence of God, in the dispensations thereof, about the man CHRIST, the most noble and august object thereof, more valuable than a thousand worlds, Col. ii. 9. Did not Providence keep this course with him, first humbling him, then exalting him, and lifting him up? first bringing him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three years, then exalt him to the Father's right-hand in eternity of glory? Heb. xii. 2.—'Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Phil. ii. 8, 9. 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him.' The exaltation.

could not fail to follow his humiliation, Luke xxiv. 26. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' And he saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed doth the sowing it, John xii. 24. There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have herein.

(1.) This is the pattern Providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The Father was so well pleased with this method, in the case of his own Son, that it was determined to be followed, and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 29. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren.' And who would not be pleased to walk through the dark valley treading his steps?

(2.) This is a sure pledge of your lifting up. Christ, in his state of humiliation, was considered as a public Person and Representative, and so is he in his exaltation. So Christ's exaltation ensures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances, Isa. xxvi. 19. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.' Hos. vi. 1, 2. 'Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.' Eph. ii. 6. 'And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' Yea, he is gone into the state of glory for us as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. 'Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever.'

(3) His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and his exaltation a full testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances ye are in, but ye would have perished in them, had not he purchased your lifting up out of them by his own humiliation, Isa. xxvi. 19.—

Now, his humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of his humiliation for your lifting up.

3. Observe the *providence* of God towards the *church* in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her, Psa. cxxix. 1—4. Abel was slain by the wicked Cain, to the great grief of Adam and Eve, and the rest of their pious children: but then there was another seed raised up in Abel's room after, Gen. iv. 25. Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark more than a year; but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed. Abraham for many years went childless; but at length Isaac was born. Israel was long in miserable bondage in Egypt; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock; and if in humiliation, we will surely follow them in exaltation too.

4. Observe the providence of God in the dispensation of his *grace* towards his children. The general rule is, 1 Pet. v. 5. *For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before? Luke vi. 48. And ordinarily the greater measure of grace is designed for one, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a back-slidden case, the same method is followed: so that deepest humiliation ordinarily makes way for the greatest comforts, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon them, Isa. lxvi. 5—13.

5. Observe the providence of God at length throwing down *wicked* men, however long they stand and prosper, Psa. xxxvii. 35, 36. 'I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him but he could not be found.' They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east wind, and wither away; their lamp goes out with a stink, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the be-

nignity of the divine nature, to forget the humble to raise them, while he minds the proud to abase them.

The *word* of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saint's security for lifting up, Psal. cxix. 49, 50. *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me.* His word is the great letter of his name, which he will certainly see to cause to shine, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. *For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;* and in all generations has been safely lipped to, Psal. xii. 6. Consider,

(1.) The *doctrines* of the word, which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue the exercise of these graces will have. The whole current of scripture, to those in humbling circumstances is, *Not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end;* and that for this good reason, that *it shall not be in vain.* See Psal. xxvii. 14. *Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord.*— And compare, Rom. ix. 33. Isa. xlix. 23. *For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

(2.) The *promises* of the word, whereby heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances, James iv. 10. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* Matt. xxiii. 12. *And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done, it is secured, Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* They have his word for deliverance, Psal. 1. 15. And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come, Psal. ix. 18. *For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.* Psal. cii. 17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*

(3.) The *examples* of the word sufficiently confirm-

ing the truth of the doctrines and promises, Rom. xv. 4. *For whatsoever things were written afore time, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* In the doctrines and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith, to be reckoned on the credit of God's word; but, in the examples it is, in the case of others, set before our eyes to be seen, Jam. v. 11. *Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* There we see it in the case of Abraham, Job, David, Paul, and other saints; but above all, in the case of the man Christ.

(4.) The *intercession* of Christ, joining the prayers and cries of his humbled people, in their humbling circumstances, ensures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when he bindeth them; yet his own humbled ones will not do so, they will cry. Psal. xlii. 7, 8. *Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* And though unbelievers may soon be out-wearied, and give it over for altogether, sure believers will not do so; but though they may, in a fit of temptation, lay it by as hopeless, they will find themselves obliged to take it up again. Jer. xx. 9. *Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay;* and continue to cry on night and day, Luke xviii. 7. *knowing no time for giving it over till they be lifted up.* Lam. iii. 49, 50. *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* Now, Christ's intercession being joined with these cries, there cannot miss to be a lifting up.—
Consider,

(1.) Christ's intercession is certainly joined with the

eries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling circumstances. Rev. viii. 3. *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.* They are by the Spirit helped to groan for relief, Rom. viii. 26. and the prayers and groans, which are through the Spirit, are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of the Son, Jam. v. 16. And ye may know they are by the Spirit, if so be ye are helped to continue praying, hoping for your suit at last on the ground of God's word of promise; for nature's praying is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. It is the Spirit of prayer is the lasting spring, John iv. 14 Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* Truly there is an intercession in heaven, on account of the humbling circumstances of the humble ones. 'Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?' Zech. i. 12. How then can they miss of a lifting up in due time?

(2) He is in deepest earnest in his intercession for his people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good word in favour of the helpless, that will be little concerned whether they come speed or not; but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of his humbled ones: for he is touched with sympathy in their case, Isa. lxiii. 9. *In all their afflictions he was afflicted.*—A most tender sympathy, Zech. ii 8. *For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* He has their case upon his heart, where he is, in the holy place in the highest heavens, Exod. xxviii. 29. and he keeps exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, be it as long as it will, Zech. i. 12. Moreover, it is his own business; the lifting up they are to have is a thing that is secured to him, in the promises made

to him on the account of his blood shed for them, Psalm lxxxix. 33, 36. So not only are they looking on earth, but the Man Christ is in heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, Heb. x. 12, 13. 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.' How is it possible, then, that looking should be balked? Moreover, these humbling circumstances are his own sufferings still, though not in his Person, yet in his members, Col. i. 24. 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you. and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church.' Wherefore there is all ground to conclude he is in deep earnest.

(3.) His intercession is always *effectual*, John xi. 42. *And I know that thou hearest me always.* It cannot miss to be so, because he is the Father's well-beloved Son; his intercession has a plea of justice for the ground of it, 1 John ii. 1. *We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Moreover, he has all power in heaven and earth lodged in him, 1 John v. 22. And, finally, he and his Father are one, and their will one. So, for the present time, both Christ and his Father do will the lifting up of the humble ones, but yet only in due time.

Secondly, I proceed to a more *particular view* of the point. And,

1st, We will consider the lifting up as brought about in *time* which is the partial lifting up. And,

[1.] Some considerations for clearing the *nature* thereof.

1. This lifting up does not take place in *every case* of a child of God. One may be humbled in humbling circumstances, from which he is to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude, that we being humbled under our humbling circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them, and freed from them ere we get to the end of our journey.

For it is certain, there are some, such as our imperfections, and sinfulness, and mortality, we can by no means be rid of while in this world. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may hang about one, and keep about them, till they go down to the grave, while in the mean time, he may lift up another from the same. Heman was pressed down all along from his youth. Pſal. lxxxviii. 15. others all their life time, Heb. ii. 15.

Object. 'If that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may get to the grave under the weight?'

Anſw. Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but since there is another life, there is none in it at all. In the other life the promise will be accomplishing to the humbled, as it was, Luke xvi. 22. Consider that the great term for accomplishing the promises, is the other life not this. 'These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,' Heb. xi. 13. And that whatever accomplishment of the promise is here, it is not the nature of the stock, but of a sample or a pledge.

Quest. 'But then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up, in that case?'

Anſw. We do not know when that is our case; for a case may be past all hope in our eyes, and the eyes of others, in which God designs a lifting up in time, as in Job's, chap. vi. 11. 'What is my strength that I should hope? And what is mine end that I should prolong my life?' But, be it as it will, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray in faith for it; if not here, yet hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment; so such praying cannot miss of a happy issue at length, Pſal. l. 15. 'And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' The whole life of a Christian is such a praying-waiting life, to encourage whereunto all

temporal deliverances are given as pledges, Rom. viii. 23. 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of our body.' And whoſo obſerves that full liſting up at death to be at hand, muſt certainly riſe, if he has given over his caſe as hopeleſs.

2. However, there are ſome caſes wherein this liſting up does take place. God gives his people ſome notable liſtings up, even in time raiſing them out of remarkable humbling-circumſtances. The ſtorm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail, Pſal. xl. 1—4. Two things may be obſerved on this:

(1.) One may be in humbling circumſtances very long, and ſore, and hopeleſs, and yet a liſting up may be abiding them, of a much longer continuance. This is ſometimes the caſe of the children of God, who are ſet to bear the yoke in their youth, as it was with Joſeph and David; and of them that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not be leſs than forty at his trouble's coming, but after it lived one hundred and forty, Job xlii. 16. God by ſuch methods prepares men for peculiar uſefulneſs.

(2.) One may be in humbling circumſtances long and ſore, and quite hopeleſs, in the ordinary courſe of providence, yet they may get a clear and warm blink of a liſting-up, ere they come to their journey's end. The life of ſome of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, wherein, in the evening the ſun breaks out from under the clouds, ſhines fair and clear a little and then ſets. 'And it ſhall come to paſs in that day, that the light ſhall not be clear, nor dark. But it ſhall come to paſs, that at evening-time it ſhall be light,' Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Such was the caſe of Jacob in his old age, brought in honour and comfort into Egypt unto his ſon, and then died.

(3.) Yet whatever liſtings up they get in this life, they will never want ſome weights hanging about them for their humbling. They may have their ſinging

times, but their songs while in this world, will be mixed with groanings, 2 Cor. v. 4. *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.* The unmixt dispensation is reserved for the other world; but this will be a wilderness unto the end, where there will be howlings with the most joyful notes.

Lastly, All the liftings up the humbled meet with now are pledges, and but pledges, samples, and arleppennies, [*earnest*] of the great lifting up, abiding them on the other side; and they should look on them so.

(1.) They are really so, Hof. ii. 15. *And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt.* Our Lord Jesus is leading his people now through the wilderness, and the manna and water of the rock are earnest for the time of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land. They are not yet come home to their Father's house; but they are travelling on the road, and Christ their elder Brother with them, Song iv. 8. who bears their expences, takes them into inns by the way, as it were, and refreshes them with partial liftings up; after which, they must get to the road again. But that entertainment by the way is a pledge of the full entertainment he will afford them when come home.

Object. 'But people may get a lifting up in time, 'that yet is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side: 'How shall I know it then to be a pledge?'

Answer. That lifting up, which comes by the promises, is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world; for, as the other life is the proper time of the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure, that when God once begins to clear his bond, he will certainly hold on till it is fully cleared. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me,* Psal. cxxxviii. 8. So we may say as Naomi to Ruth, upon her receiving the six measures of barley from Boaz, Ruth iii. 18. *He will not be in rest until he have finished the thing*

this day. There are liftings up that come by common providence, and these indeed are single, and not pledges of more; but the promise chains mercies together, so that one got is a pledge of another to come, yea, of the whole chain to the end, 2 Sam. v. 12.

Quest. 'But how shall I know the lifting up to come by the way of the promise?'

Ans. That which comes by the way of the promise, does at once come the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope, and patient continuance, James v. 7. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain.* Humility qualifies for the accomplishment of the promise, faith sucks the breasts of it, and patient-waiting hangs by the breast till the milk come abundantly.

(2.) But no lifting up of God's children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but his children get nothing but a sample of theirs here, Psal. xvii. 14. Even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending money. The truth is, the same spending money is more valuable than the world's stock, Psal. iv. 7.—
'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' But though it is better than that, and their services too, and more worth than all their on-waiting, yet it is below the honour of their God to put them off with it, Heb. xi. 16. 'But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.'

II. The *partial* lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why, they will get,

1. A *removal* of their humbling circumstances. God

having tried them a while, and humbled them, and brought down their hearts, will at length take off their burden, remove the weight so long hung at them, and so take them off that part of their trial joyfully, and let them get up their back long bowed down; and this one of two ways.

(1.) Either in *kind*, removing the burden for good and all. Such a lifting Job got, when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolated. David, when Saul his persecutor fell in battle, and he was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day, expecting one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

(2.) Or in *equivalent*, or as good, removing the weight of the burden, that though it remains, it presses them no more, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in mine infirmities.' Tho' they are not got to the shore, yet their head is no more under the water, but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, Pſal. xxvii. 5, 6. 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.' Such had the three children in the fiery furnace; the fire burnt, but it could burn nothing of them but their bonds; they had the warmth and light of it, but nothing of the scorching heat. Sometimes God lifts up his people this way in their humbling circumstances.

2. A comfortable *sight* of the acceptance of their prayers, put up in their humbling circumstances: While prayers are not answered but trouble continued, the

hangers on about the Lord's hand are apt to think they are not accepted or regarded in heaven, because there is no alteration in their case, Job ix. 16, 17. *If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice, for he breaketh me with a tempest.* But that is a mistake; they are accepted immediately, though not answered, 1 John v. 14. *And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* The Lord does with them as a Father, with the letters coming thick from his son abroad, reads them one by one with pleasure, and carefully lays them up to be answered at his convenience. And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father, Matt. xv. 28. So here, &c.

3. A heart-satisfying *answer* of these prayers, *ibid.* so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put a double value on the mercy, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Accepted prayers may be very long of answering, many years, as in Abraham and David's case, but they cannot miscarry of an answer at length, Psal. ix. 18. The time will come when God will tell out to them, according to the promise, that they shall change their note, and say, Psal. cxvi. 1. *I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.* Looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God.

4. Full *satisfaction*, as to the conduct of Providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before, Rev. xv. 3. Standing on the shore, and looking back to what they have past through, they will be made to say, *He hath done all things well.* These things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through, are very sweet in the reflection on them; so is Samson's riddle verified in their experiences.

5. They get the lifting up, together with the *interest* for the time they lay out of it. When God pays his bonds of promises, he pays both stock and interest.

together; the mercy is increased according to the time man waited on, and the expences and hardships sustained, during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providences are soon ripe, soon rotten; but the fruit of the promise is readily long a ripening, but then it is durable; and the longer it is a ripening, it is the more valuable when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, at length they thought on a way to hasten it, Gen. xvi. 1—6. That soon took in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age ere the promise brought forth, Gen. xviii. 11. But when it came, they got it with an addition of the renewing of their ages, Gen. xxi. 7. and xxv. 1. The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in fulfilling, *viz.* the promise of Christ, that was four thousand years.

6. The spiritual enemies, that flew thick and throng about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, will be *scattered* at this lifting up in the promise, 1 Sam. ii. 1, 5. *And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased.* Formidable was Pharaoh's host behind the Israelites, while they had the Red Sea before them: but, when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies, when the time comes for the lifting up.

III. The *due time* of this lifting up. That is a very natural question of those in humbling circumstances, *Watchmen, What of the night?* And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul, but in general, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. So take these general observations on it.

1. The lifting up the humbled will not be *long some*, considering the weight of the matter; that is to say,

considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble; when it comes it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When you sow your corn in the fields, though it does not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so, yet do not think the harvest long a coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, 2 Cor. iv. 17. 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' So that a believer, looking on the promise, with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the worth of it when accomplished, may wonder it is come in so short on-coming. Therefore it is determined to be a time that comes soon, Luke xviii. 7. soon in respect of its weight and worth.

2. When the time comes, it and only it will appear the *due time*. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in the season thereof. And we may be sure infinite wisdom cannot miss the season by mistaking it, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'He is a rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment.' But whatever God doth will abide the strictest examination in that, as all other points, Eccl. iii. 14. 'I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: And God doth it, that men may fear before him.' It is true, many times cast up to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there are some circumstances hid to us, which renders that season unfit for the thing.—Hence, John vii. 6. 'My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.' But when all the circumstances, always foreknown of God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we will then see the lifting up is come in the nick of time, most for the honour of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner.

3. When the time comes that is really the due time,

the proper time for the lifting up a child of God from his humbling circumstances, it will not be *put off* one moment longer, Hab. ii. 3. 'At the end it shall speak, 'it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Though it tarry, it will not linger nor put off to another time. O what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! there is not a child of God but would, with the utmost carefulness, protest against the lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit casten to him by an angry father, that would set his teeth on edge. Sith it is so then, could we firmly believe this point, that it would undoubtedly come in the due time, without losing of a minute, it would afford a sound rest. It must be so, because God has said it; were the case never so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will *blow*, (Heb.) Hab. ii. 3. A metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm.

4. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of *hopelessness* before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac's throat before the voice was heard. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.* Things soon seem to us arrived at that point; such is the hastiness of our spirits. But things may have far to go down, after we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we are almost as little competent judges of the point of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up. But readily God carries his people's humbling circumstances downward, still downward, till they come to that point. Two reasons are to be noticed.

(1.) One from the *explanatory* cause of it. Herein God is holding the same course which he held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved pattern copied after in all the dispensations of Providence towards the

church, and every particular believer, Rom. viii. 29. He was all along a man of sorrows; as his time went on, the waters swelled more, till he was brought to the dust of death; then he was buried, and the grave-stone sealed, which done, the world thought they were freely quit of him, and he would trouble them no more. But they quite mistook it; then, and not till then, was the due time for lifting him up. And the liftings up that his people get most remarkably, are only little pieces fashioned after this grand pattern.

(2.) Another from the *final* cause, the end and design Providence aims at in it, and that is to carry the believer cleanly off his own, and all created bottoms, to bottom his trust and hope in the Lord alone, 2 Cor. 1. 9. *That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.* The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life of faith; and though faith may act more easily that it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly, when it acts over the belly of sense. Then it is pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God, Rom. iv. 19, 20. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead—neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God.* And thus it must do, when matters are carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

5. Due *preparation* of the heart, for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances, goes before the due time of that lifting up, according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up; the lifting up of the common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will want them no longer, and God flings them to them in anger, ere they are prepared for them, Hof. xiii. 11. *I gave thee a king in mine anger.* They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it, Jer. vi. 29, 30.

This due preparation consists in a due humiliation,

Pfal. x. 17. And it often takes much work to bring about this, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We would have thought Job was brought very low in his spirit, by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other, for a long time: Yet, after all he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to him himself, for his humiliation, chap. xxxviii. 1. By that speech of God himself he was brought to his knees, chap. xl. 4, 5. And we would have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so himself too. But God saw a further degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore just begins a-new again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust, chap. xlii. 5, 6. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

There are six things, I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of *sinfulness* and *unworthiness* of being lifted up at all, Job xl. 4. *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.* People may be long in humbling circumstances, ere they be brought this length; even good men are much prejudiced in their own favours, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals his favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marketh this wrong in Job, under his humbling circumstances, Job xxxiii. 10—12. And I believe it will be found, there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our honour from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay upon it, than to vindicate the honour of God in the justice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill-natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, Luke xiii. 4. gives a handle for this bias of the corrupt nature.—But God is a jealous God, and when he appears sufficiently to humble, he will cause the matter of our honour to give way, like a sandy brae under our feet,

while we shall be obliged to *clever* [*grip hastily*] to the vindication of his.

2. A *resignation* to the divine pleasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready, and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Hence we are ready to think his word fails; whereas it is but our own harsh conclusion from it that fails, Psal. cxvi. 11. *I said in my haste, All men are liars.* Several of the saints have gotten on the finger ends by this means, and thereby learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve, Gen. iv. 1. Another promise was so by believing Abraham, after about ten years on-waiting, Gen. xvi. another by David, forecited, Psal. cxvi. 11.

If this be the case of any child of God, let them not be discouraged upon it, thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves; they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a snapper that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord.

3. An entire *resignation* as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working of it; and if that be not kept, the proud heart is stumbled, 2 Kings v. 11. *But Naaman was wroth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place.* But the Lord will have his people broke off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to him, but leave that to him entirely, as in that same case, ver. 14.—*He went down and dipped himself, seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God,—and he was clean.* The compass of our knowledge of

ways and means is very narrow, as if one is blockt up, oft-times we cannot see another; but our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one or none at all; and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up of his people in a way they had no view to, after repeated disappointments from those airths whence they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the *degree* of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have his people weaned so, that however hasty they have sometimes been, that they behoved to be so soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord's eyes; and in that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. *If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again.—But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me, as seemeth good unto him.*

5. The continuing of *praying* and *waiting* on the Lord in the case, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.* It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit, that makes people give over praying and waiting because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time, 2 Kings vi. 33. But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men into that temper, to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over, till the lifting up come, whether in time or eternity, Lam. iii. 49, 50.

6. Mourning under *mismanagements* in the trial, Job xlii. 3. *Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.* The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out all the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again and again. But when the Spirit of God comes duly to humble, in

order to lifting up, he will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransom it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself; so that his mouth will be stopt. This is that humility that goeth before the lifting up in time, in the way of the promise.

II. We proceed to consider the lifting up as brought about at the *end of time*, in the other world. And,

1st, A word as to the *nature* of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these five things:

1. There is a *certainty* of this lifting up, in all cases of the humbled under humbling circumstances.—Tho' one cannot, in every case, make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it will, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side, 2 Cor. v. 1. *For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Though God's humble children may both breakfast and dine on bread of adversity, and water of affliction, they will be sure to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter might serve to qualify the former, and make easy under it.

2. It will be a *perfect* lifting up, Heb. xii. 23. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials, and special furnace, be what it will, that made them many a weary day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores and lying at the rich man's gate, Luke xvi. 22. and fully delivered. Yea, they will get a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All the imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long a coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get all together.

3. They will not only be raised out of their low condition, but they will be set up *on high*, as Joseph: not

only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of Egypt. And they will be lifted up,

(1.) Into a high *place*, Luke xvi. 22. *The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.* Now they are at best in a low place, but upon this earth; there they will be seated in the highest heavens, Phil. i. 23. with Eph. iv. 10. Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.* Though their belly now cleaves to the earth, and men say, Bow down that we may pass over you, they will then be settled in the heavenly mansions, above the sun, moon, and stars.

(2.) Into a high *state and condition*, a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasinesses, they will be set into a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory; their weighted and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fulness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honour.

4. It will be a *final* lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down for ever, Rev. vii. 16. When we get a lifting up in time, we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials; but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns, Psal. xxx. 6, 7. *In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end; and then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

5. There will not be the least remaining *uneasiness* from the humbling circumstances, but on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of their humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his hav-

ing five brethren on the earth, how sumptuously he fared, how Lazarus sat at his gate, and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? Rev. vi. 10. But then they will remember them as waters that fail; as the man recovered to health, remembers his tossings on the sick-bed; and that is a way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what otherwise it would be. Certainly the shore of the Red Sea was the place, that of all places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key, Rev. xv. 3. And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

2dly, A word to the *due time* of this lifting up.— There is a particular definite time for it in every faint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in the general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our *work* we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed every one their task, fight, trial, and work; and, till that is done we are in a sort immortal, John ix. 4. and xi. 9. That work is,

(1.) *Doing* work; work set to us, by the great Master, to be done for the honour of God and the good of our fellow-creatures, Eccl. ix. 10. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that be done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation.

(2.) *Suffering* work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body; and the head has divided to the several members their proportions thereof; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share thereof allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that, Col. i. 24.

2. When that lifting up comes, we will see it is come *exactly* in the due time; that it was well it was neither sooner or latter; for though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us,

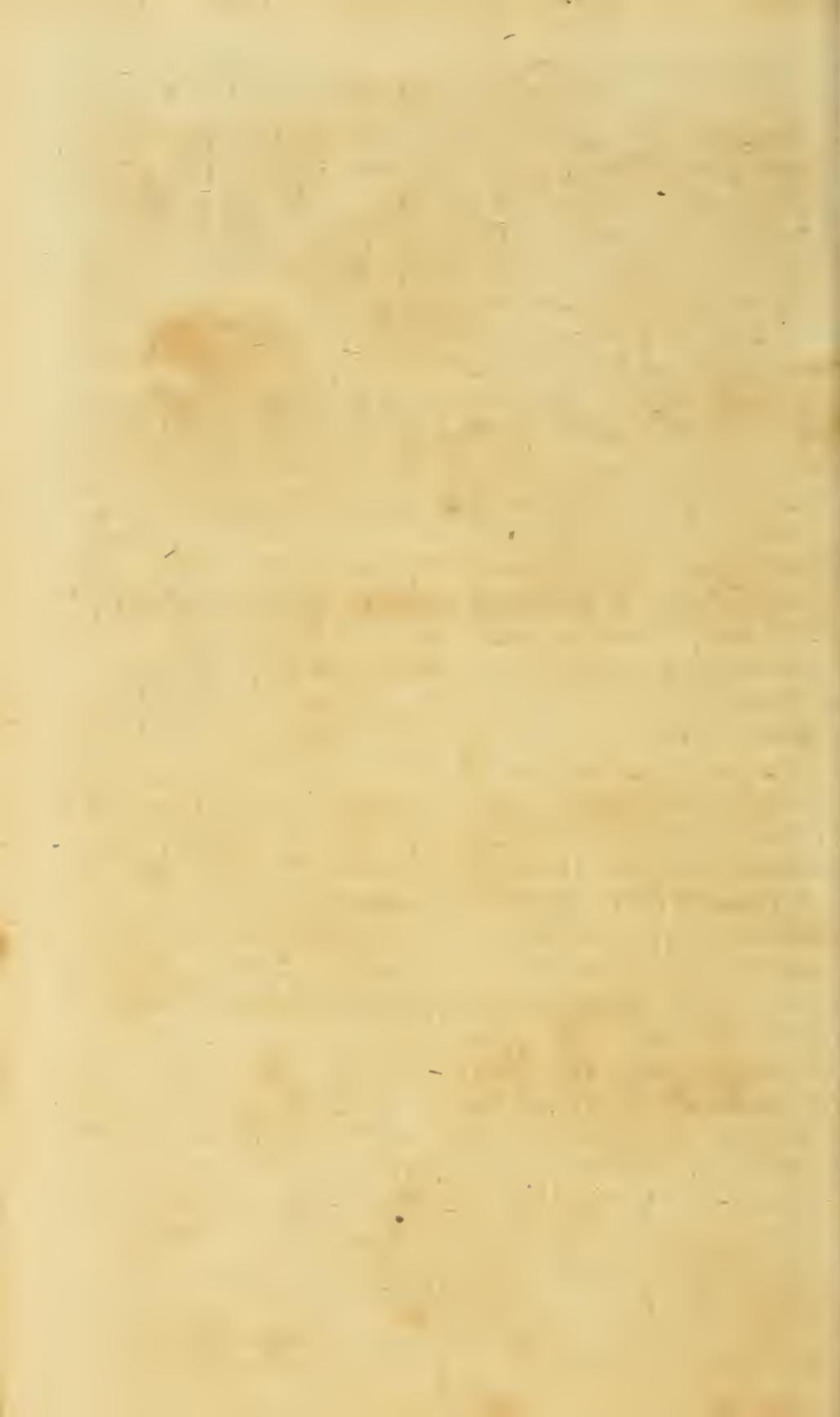
absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth; yet certainly there is a time wherein it is better for the honour of God, and his service, that we be on the earth than in heaven, Phil. i. 34. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* And it will be no grief of heart to them when there, that they were so long in their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

Use 1. Let not then the humble cast away their *confidence*, whatever their humbling circumstances be; let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length; if not here, yet to be sure hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it, Psalm ix. 18. *The needy shall not always be forgotten.* If the night were never so long, the morning will come at length.

2. Let *patience* have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the sea-merchant for the return of his ships, the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience, and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait for the time appointed for his lifting up?

Ye have heard much of the *Crook* in the *Lot*; the excellency of humbledness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one:—Ye have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude: We may assure ourselves, *God will at length break in pieces the proud, be they never so high; and he will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they never so low.*

The End of the Crook in the Lot.



THE
N A T U R E

OF

Church Communion Illustrated;

OR,

The UNITY of the Body of CHRIST, and
the DUTY the Members owe to one
another opened.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

SEVERAL SERMONS,

ON 1 COR. X. 17.



ADVERTISEMENT.

By consulting the Author's Memoirs, p. 363. he informs us, that after handling the occasional subjects relative to and after the sacrament, June 12th, 1720, 'I entered, says he, July 10th, on the Communion of 'Saints as one Bread, from 1 Cor. x. 17. The which 'subject, he there says, I studied with particular care, 'and considerable earnestness, as a very important 'point; and dwelt thereon till Oct. 30th.' So that the following Sermons were composed before our Author fell into his declining state of health.

The Nature of Church-Communion opened, in sundry Discourses.

I COR. X. 17.

For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.

ONE great reason why communions do so little good, is that communicants are so little concerned in one another for their spiritual welfare. And this hath its rise from their not discerning, and seriously laying to heart, the spiritual relation there is among them, by them avouched, and publicly testified by their partaking of *one bread* at the communion table. People readily have some notion, that it is a *communion with CHRIST*; but few consider it as a *communion of Saints*, and what *duties* flow from it as such. I would therefore lay this matter before you, in order to pursue the *benefit* of our late solemn occasion.

The scope of these words is to shew, that those who partaked of idolatrous feasts were, by that action, declared one body with idolaters. This is proven by a parity of reasons, *viz.* that those who partake of the Lord's table, declare themselves one body with the saints. In the preceding verse, he shews the nature of the sacrament of the supper; it is the *communion of the body and blood of Christ*: a sign, seal, and appointed means of our joint feeding on a slain Saviour, like so many eagles on the slain body. Here he shews the nature of the *society* of the saints, for whom it is appointed, *viz.* that they are ONE BODY, to wit, the body of Christ; and therefore, being united to him, they have certainly communion in his body and blood: *For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.* In the words are two things;

1. The *spiritual conjunction and communion* of saints among themselves asserted: *We, being many, are one bread, and one body.* He speaks of the whole multitude of believers: they being many particular saints, some men, some women, teachers, taught, weak, strong, are yet so joined, and have such intimate union and communion one with another, that they are one bread, that is, one body, represented by one sacramental bread. If ye ask, whose is that body? or, who is the head of it? It is Christ's: *Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,* 1 Cor. xii. 27.—Not his *natural* body, but his *mystical* body; and therefore, the *many* are not such as meet at one communion-table in one congregation; but *all* the members of Christ's mystical body through the world; for Christ has but *one body*; and as many grains do make up but one sacramental bread, so they being many do make up but one body.

2. This spiritual conjunction and communion of saints, among themselves, *inferred* from their all *partaking* of that one bread: *For we, being many, are one bread; all partakers of that one bread.* By that *one bread* is meant, that bread which is exhibited in the sacrament, *viz.* both the *invisible* bread, which is CHRIST himself, and the *visible* bread, which WE take in our mouths, the latter the sign of the former. Believing communicants partake of both; they partake of that—bread, which is the Lord. So, are all united to, and hold communion with the head as members; and therefore are one body among themselves. They partake of the sacramental bread, which is an instituted sign of the other, and thereby profess their communion with Christ the Head, and consequently their communion with the saints, as members of the same body with them. And, in this last, hypocritical communicants join with them, by their partaking, declaring, and avouching themselves to be of the communion of saints, of the mystical body of Christ, and binding themselves to the duty of that communion; although in reality they are not so, as not partaking of the in-

visible bread, which is Christ the Lord. The case is the same as to baptism. *For, by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,* 1 Cor. xii. 13. The point to be handled is this doctrine.

DOCT. "There is a communion of saints amongst themselves, as being conjoined into one mystical body of Christ, declared and avouched by partakers of the sacraments; especially that of the Lord's Supper, every one for themselves."

There are two parts of this doctrine. One is, *That there is such a strict and intimate communion and conjunction among the saints, that they are really and truly one body mystically, however many they be.*—The other is, *That one's partaking of the sacrament, is declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion.* By a communion, I mean, a society having a common interest in things.

I. I shall enquire into the nature of the communion of saints as one body. And,

I. Who are the members of this communion, of this happy society, the body of Christ? There are two sorts of members of it, some in *shew* only, some in *reality*. As to the former, I offer two things,

(1.) The openly *wicked* and *profane*, amongst whom must be reckoned the *grossly ignorant*, and all such as have no form of godliness, are not so much as visible or apparent members of the communion of saints.—They are excluded from the communion of the saints *above*, Gal. v. 19—21. 'Now, the works of the flesh are manifest—adultery, fornication, &c. Of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'—From the communion of saints *below*, Acts xxvi. 18. 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, that they may receive inheritance among them that are sanctified,'—and visibly belong to the devil's family, John viii. 44. What though they have been baptised, and are yet in

the visible church, 'they have in effect renounced it; Rom. ii. 25. 'But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy 'circumcision is made uncircumcision.' For, though they were baptised into this one body, 2 Cor. xii. 15. yet they will have no communion with that body, nor the head of it. Though they got on Christ's mark of baptism in their infancy, they have now got the devil's mark on above it. So, Rom. ii. 25. therefore not to be admitted to the Lord's table: *Give not that which is holy unto dogs*, Matt. vii. 6.

(2.) Masked *hypocrites* are seemingly visible members of this communion, but not real members of it. They are brethren of the saints, but only half-brothers, Cant. i. 6. false brethren, Gal. ii. 4. They are among them, and communicate among them; but they are not *of them*, 1 John ii. 19. because they want the *wedding garment*; and though the servants cannot but admit them as visible saints, the Master will throw them out, as none of that communion, in his sight, Matt. xxii. 12.

Hypocrites belong to the mystical body, as a branch bound up, but not knitting with the stock, belongs to the tree, or as a tree-leg belongs to the body; but not otherwise. See the case of these members in these three things.

1. They are *useful* for the mystical body of Christ with their gifts, as the tree-leg with its strength to the natural body. So was Judas and Demas, &c. Graceless well-gifted ministers and professors, they may have a mouth to speak for truth, ay and hands to act for it too, and the profit redound to the saints, not to themselves, who have no heart to embrace it in reality, and to adorn the communion as long as they keep green, as such branches do the tree, by which God is honoured before the world, Psal. lxxxix. 15.

2. They are under the particular *care* of the body, as the tree-leg, and the branch under the gardener's inspection. Hence they get their gifts increased for the good of the body, are preserved from many snares they would otherwise fall into, if they had nothing at all to do with the communion of saints, as may appear from

the way they go when they turn apostates. They fare the better they are in good company. But,

3. They are laid *aside* at length as the branch, John xv. 2. and the tree-leg, if not before, yet at the time when the body goes to rest, Psal. cxxv. 5. Though the living leg be broken, so crazed that, for the time, it can be of no discernible use for the head, nor for the other members of the body; yet it is not cast by, nor separate from the body, but its weakness born with, and it healed at length. But the tree-leg goes for altogether.

As to the latter, there are three sorts of these real members.

1. Real members in God's *design*, but not yet formed. These are all the elect, who are yet to be born, or yet to be born again: and we cannot have a full view of the body without eyeing them, Eph. i. 10. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together together in one all things in Christ.* They shall all of them be formed at length, all conjoined unto the body, and they all belong to the perfection of the body, for carrying on of which the ministry is appointed, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. For the body of Christ is all the elect knit to him as the head, Eph. v. 23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church.*

2. Real members *already perfected*, at least, as to their souls. These are the saints triumphant, who are with us members, fellow-members of the body of Christ, tho' glorified ones. Therefore, Heb. xii. 22, 23. *But ye are come—to the general assembly and church of the first-born—and to the spirits of just men made perfect.* Even they, as high as they are, are of this communion of saints, of the same family of heaven, with us militant on earth, though they are in the upper rooms, and we in the lower, Eph. iii. 15.

3. Real members *formed*, but not *perfected* yet.—These are the saints on earth, even all of them upon

the face of the earth, whatever particular visible church they belong to; at whatever distance they are from one another, though they never saw, nor never will see one another's face, till they come to meet in glory, they are all one body, all members of that one body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12. *For, as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members—being many, are one body, so also is Christ.*

These last are they whom our text speaks of, as one body, partaking of the sacramental bread, *viz.* the body of Christ, as to that part of it which is on earth; and of which we speak. So there is a communion of saints on earth, and all the saints are members of it; wherever they dwell, whatever lesser points of doctrine, worship, &c. they differ in, they have communion with one another, as being all conjoined into one body.

II. *Wherein* this communion of saints *consists*; or, *how* they are one body.

I. They have all *one head*, to wit, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of all the saints, Eph. i. 22, 23.—‘and gave him to be the head over all things to ‘the church, which is his body’.—They are all united to him by his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17. ‘He that is ‘joined to the Lord is one Spirit.’ And from him as their head, they derive vital influences, Col. ii. 19.—‘from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.’ There may be a great difference betwixt members, in respect of growth, liveness, and usefulness; but the meanest have communion with the highest in one head, which is common to them all. So they are all under the direction, government, and influence of Jesus Christ, as their common head.

2. They are all animated, enlivened, and actuated by *one Spirit*, to wit, the Holy Spirit of Christ. This Spirit dwells in Christ as the Head, and in all the

faints as his members, Rom. viii. 9. and unites them to the Head, and among themselves too, so that they are one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. A tree-leg, though bound close to the body, is no member of it, because it is not animated by the soul and life of that body; but, if there were a body of a man, whose head did reach the clouds, any toe of that man's foot, tho' defiled by the ground it toucheth, is as really a member of that body as the shoulders are, having communion with them in the same soul or spirit, which actuates the one as well as the other.

Great is the difference of the faints souls or spirits, as men and women; some are bold, some fearful. It is as easy for some to draw the sword in Christ's quarrel, as for others to speak a word for him. Some are of clear, chearful, easy, active spirits; some under a spirit of heaviness and indisposition for action; but, as faints, they have all one spirit; who so could discern, how unanimously they vote Christ to be the King of the heart, of the church, of the world, against the torrent of solicitations from the devil, the world, and the flesh; how, as with one eye, they look up to God in Christ as their only happiness, and away from the world, which the rest of mankind fix their eye on; how with one heart and with one soul they all groan under the remains of sin, and for perfection in holiness, though some louder than others; he behoved to say, these have all one spirit of faith, holiness, and contempt of the world, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Num. xiv. 24.

3. They have all *one grace of faith* wrought by the self-same Spirit in them all, Col. ii. 12. terminates in and knits them to one head, the Lord Jesus, Eph. iii. 17. As all the lines drawn from the circumference meet in the centre, and there have communion, so the faith of all God's elect meet in Jesus Christ, and thus they have communion among themselves, Tit. i. 1—4. Thus are they one body, as being all knit to the Head, by one and the same spiritual band for kind. The strong faith grips here, the weak faith reacheth

to him: tho' the weak hand of faith is not so steady, nor grips so hard as the other, yet both knit, Cant. iv. 9. v. 1.

4. They have all *one heart and mind* in respect of fundamentals, Eph. iv. 5. One faith, *viz.* of doctrine, the substance of which was and ever will be the same, Heb. xiii. 8. Whatever be their different sentiments, as to inferior truths, they all agree in the main, Acts iv. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.* Thus, according to the promise, Jer. xxxii. 39. have they *one heart and one way*; for they are all partakers of that *one unction* which teacheth all things necessary to salvation, 1 John ii. 20. *But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.* For they are all taught of God; and that doctrine which contradicts the experience of the saints, and relishes not with discerning souls exercised to godliness, is justly to be suspected; *Wisdom is justified of her children*, Matt. xi. 19.

5. They are united to *one another in love*, Col. iii. 14. Eph. iv. 16. This is a powerful cement. Love cements hearts and souls, and so knits fast. They love one another, though they never saw other's faces, if they do but know there are such persons in the world. They love them for the common image of God which they bear; and in all the company of saints this love will break over all the differences in lesser matters among them; so that it is made a mark of a member of that communion, 1 John iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

6. They have a communion in one another's *gifts and graces*, as the case stands in the natural body, Eph. iv. 16. There is a diversity of gifts and offices in the common body of saints. Some are teachers, some taught; some rulers, others ruled. Some excel in one gift of grace, some in another; some, perhaps,

cannot be said to excel their fellow-saints in any thing; but all these are for the common advantage of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 27. and the glory of the Head. And, wherever they are, they belong to the whole body, as the light that is in the eye, the strength in the arms, the swiftness in the legs, belongs to, and is for the good of the whole body, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's, and ye are Christ's.* And every the meanest member and gift has its own use and necessity. See 1 Cor. xii. 13. and downwards.

Use. Here is a *fellowship* you may all partake of, and I invite you all to the communion of saints, 1 John i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.*—Many are ruined with their love of that which they call good-fellowship. What is the fellowship deserves that name? Not the communion of sinners, ruining one another, under the influence of Satan and their lusts; not the fellowship of drunkards and revellers, whose common profit and pleasure goes away *like the crackling of thorns*, only that it leaves a stink behind; not the fellowship of the men of the world, in advancing some temporal gain, but the communion of saints, the pleasanest, richest, best fellowship in all the world. O! leave the communion of sinners for this; *come out from among them and be separate*, joining yourselves to this communion.

III. We proceed to the *properties* of this communion.

1. It is a most *honourable* communion; for it is a communion with the holy Trinity, 1 John i. 3. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

(1.) The *Father* is the Head and Father of the communion, Eph. iv. 6. 1 Cor. xi. 3. He is Father Creator of all men, Acts xvii. 29. but of the communion of saints he is Father by a special, gracious, saving relation. So that they are all his children, John

i. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And they have communion with him, and union through the Lord Jesus Christ, since he and the Father are one.

(2.) The centre of this communion is the *Son*, the blessed Mediator. In him all meet, 1 Cor. xi. 3. The saints meet in Christ as their Head, and in him the Father meets with them, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* Christ presents all believers through the world unto his Father, saying, *Behold I, and the children which God hath given me,* Heb. ii. 13. So, being the Mediator's, they became his, John xx. 17. In this respect Christ is called the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. *I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

(3.) The *Holy Spirit* is the internal original bond of this communion, knitting all the members to Christ, and among themselves, Eph. iv. 4. He brings them together into Christ, and to his Father, fixes and holds them there by his infinite power, that they can never be broken off again. So believers, members of this communion, have communion with the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3. and the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

2. It is a most *rich* communion. There are societies and companies this day joining flocks together, to advance worldly wealth; but the richest of them have nothing but trifles in comparison with the company or communion of saints. The communion of saints is the company trading to heaven, and their wealth is past reckoning. For a view of it consider only these two things.

(1.) They have communion with *Christ*, a common interest with him who is the heir of all these things, so that they may set their name under his, on all that is his. They have communion with him in his *perfect righteousness*, Isa. xlv. 24. Hence they are *all fair*, Cant. iv. 7. *Clear as the sun*, Cant. vi. 10. In his *active obedience*, so that they have obeyed in Christ, as

they sinned in Adam, Rom. viii. 3, 4. In his *sufferings* and *death*, Gal. ii. 20. In his *resurrection* and *ascension*, Eph. ii. 6. and *glory*. Compare, Heb. vi. 20.— They have a common interest in all his *purchase*; and, as poor as some of them sit, they want nothing, but are complete, Col. ii. 10. *And ye are complete in him.*

They have a real participation of Christ himself, Heb. iii. 14. Of his death and his-resurrection, Rom. vi. 4, 5. Of his Spirit, Phil. ii. 1. Of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Of his offices; they are prophets, Psal. cv. 15. priests and kings, Rev. i. 6. And of his fulness, John i. 16.

(2.) They have communion with *God*, for so runs the covenant, *I will be your God.* And Psal. cxliv. 15. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is their's. All his attributes are their's; the power of God to protect them, the wisdom of God to guide them, &c. and with him all things, since all is his, and he is their's, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

Behold the riches of this company. And, (1.) None of the saints bring any thing with them to put in the stock; but they are admitted freely. (2.) Not only is a part for every one, but each one has all; and so it may be, since the stock is infinite.

3 It is a most *extensive* communion. And it extends, (1.) Over the *earth*, and so is called the catholic or universal church, 1 Cor. i. 2. Though vast tracts of land, and huge seas interpose betwixt them; tho' they have different languages, so that some of them cannot understand what others say; and their customs are very different, yet none of all these hinder their being members of one and the same body.

(2.) To the *heavens*. The saints above belong to the communion of saints, Heb. xii. 23. ay, and the holy angels too, in the same sense, ver. 22. for the Head of the saints is the Head of angels too, Colos. ii. 10.

(3.) It is a *holy* communion. It is a fellowship of saints, Eph. ii. 19. *Ye are no more strangers and so-*

reigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. The Head, centre, and bond, and members of this communion, are all holy. They are a society set apart for God, drawn out of the world lying in wickedness, walking in the way of holiness, with displayed banners towards the holy land.

II. That one's *partaking* of the *sacrament* is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By partaking of baptism, we have all done it once; and by the Lord's Supper, it is done as oft as we communicate in it. By the former, in our infancy, it is done with our virtual consent; by the latter, with our exprefs consent. This point will be clear, if we consider the relation the sacrament has to the communion of saints.

1. It is a *sign* and *badge* of the communion of saints: *We are one bread*, says the text. The one bread signifying that we are one body; and by receiving the sign, and wearing the badge of the society, we declare two things, according to the nature of a distinguishing sign.

(2.) That we are no more of the communion of the *world* lying in wickedness, which is the opposite society, 1 Cor. x. 21. *Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils.* That we have left our father's house and people, and are no more to share with them in their way and manner of life. It is the putting on the sign of Zion's King, that we may be distinguished from those that belong to the enemy.

(1.) That we are henceforth of the communion of *saints*, and not neutrals, Rev. xiv. 1. That we have joined ourselves to that blessed society of saints, the Head of which is Jesus Christ, to take part with them for better and worse. We have said to them as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. *Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.*

2. It is a *seal* of the communion of saints, and seals it effectually to all those that do sincerely take hold of

the covenant, Rom. iv. 11. The righteousness of faith is the possession of the society of saints; and the sacrament sealing that to a man, seals his being of that communion. A believer may be fore pressed with that question, *How shall I put thee among the children?* But the sacrament, to put it out of doubt, seals and confirms his being put among them. Their being *one body* is sealed by their partaking of *one bread*. So 1 Cor. xii. 13.

3. The sacraments are the external *bonds* of this communion, whereby they are visibly embodied into *one select society*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. And hence it is that the uncircumcised under the Old Testament were to be cut off from their people. The church of God makes a visible society in the world; and it is not the hearing of the word that is the bond of it, for that is left common to any who will; but the sacraments, which are not to be given, but to visible believers.

4. It is an engagement to the *duties* of this communion of saints; *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love: endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit; even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, Eph. iv. 1—5. Whosoever is embodied into a regular society, by his entering into it, is obliged to walk by the rules of it. And so the sacrament is an engagement or oath to walk by the rules of holiness, which are the rules of the communion of saints.

Now, whosoever does receive the public sign, seal, bond, and engagement of a society, does thereby publicly declare and avouch himself to be of that society: but by partaking of the sacrament, the partakers do take on the public sign—of the communion of saints; therefore, &c.

USE. I draw some *practical inferences* from this doctrine.

Inf. I. There is a very near, special, and particular relation amongst the partakers of the sacraments, visibly constituted by their joint partaking of them; they do thereby declare themselves to be of one body, the Head whereof is Jesus Christ; even baptism alone constitutes this special relation, 1 Cor. xii. 13. for, by that holy sign the baptized are distinguished from those without the visible church, and have all given up their names to Christ. Much more does the receiving of the Lord's Supper also, as saith the text.

As for the invisible real members of the communion of saints, *i. e.* the real members of the invisible church, God alone certainly knows them in particular. But the visible members of it are saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their habitual practice; Rom. i. 7. 1 Thess. v. 5. *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness.* Amongst these there is a special relation, as one visible body of Christ; those who are only baptized, though they may be complete members of the invisible body, being only incomplete members of the visible: and such as partake of the sacrament of the supper, complete ones, as admitted unto all external privileges of the communion of saints, even to the highest of them, which is that of the Lord's table. And therefore there is a more full relation among communicants than others. Hence I would say,

1. Ye who are baptized, yet openly *wicked* and *profane*, or grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, being come to years, are apostates in effect, having, by your way, visibly cut off yourselves from the communion of saints: For, in your infancy, you were baptized into that body, but now, by your unholy lives ye openly declare yourselves to be none of it, and have taken on the devil's mark, and declare yourselves to be of the world lying in wickedness, Rom. ii. 25. To you I say,

(1.) Have ye not thus openly *rejected* communion

with God, that you may maintain communion with the world? If you will have nothing ado with the family of heaven, do ye not renounce the Father of it for your Father? If you will be none of Christ's mystical body, do ye not refuse him for a head? Yea, sure; 1 John i. 3.

(2.) Had it not been better for you, if ye repent not, to have lived and died among Pagans, where the name of Christ was never heard, than to have been baptized into one body with the saints, and yet cast off all by your openly profane life? 2 Pet. ii. 21. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

2. Ye who are saints by profession, yet only baptized, not partakers of the Lord's table; why do ye continue so? Who is there that values a communion or society, and does not endeavour to partake of all the privileges thereof, that may be of use to them? And if ye have any value for the communion of saints, why do ye not lay out yourselves to be one bread with them? Sift your consciences before the Lord, and it will not be excused from contempt of communion with Christ, with his mystical body, and the means thereof.

3. Ye who are saints by profession, and both baptized and partakers of the Lord's table, your external privilege is great; ye stand visibly related to the communion of saints, as visible members thereof. What a sad misfortune will it be if you fail of real membership, and all your interest in it be but shew and pretence, as it will be, if ye be not real saints? It will be a poor plea at the great day, Luke xiii. 26. *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.* For,

(1.) The society ye are visible apparent members of, is the mystical body of Christ, enriched with the highest special privileges of communion with the holy Trinity, to their eternal happiness. It will be a sad matter for yeu to cheat yourselves with a shew and semblance only of partaking with them, with the empty

name, while you have nothing of the thing, Gal. vi. 3. *For, if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

(2.) Ye are not far from the kingdom of God; will ye lose it for not going forward the other step, the main step? Ye have gone through the several gates of the outer court of religion, the door of the inner court stands open to you. Will you not enter in there where the great glory of the house lies? 2 Tim. iii. 17. The form of godliness will carry you all the length ye have gone in these externals; but the power of it is necessary to evidence you a real member of that body.

(3.) Ye will lose your good company ere long, if you get not a surer holding than mere visible membership; if ye be not bound up with them by the Spirit of holiness dwelling in you, as in them, the external bands of sacraments will not do. John xv. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.* (1.) Ye may fall, 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. out from among them, while you live by apostasy, losing your fair leaves of a profession, as well as fruit, 1 John ii. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.* (2.) Ye will certainly be separated from among them at death, Psal. cxxv. 5. and at judgment, Matt. xxv. 32.

4. Ye who are real saints, baptized with the Holy Ghost, partakers of the invisible bread, as well as of the visible bread in the Lord's-Supper, and the outward baptism, *happy* are ye in the thorough relation ye have with the communion of the saints. Ye are members of it to all intents and purposes, true and real members of the mystical body of Christ; who can express the happiness of this privilege! I name only these.

(1.) Ye have past the *gulf* as to condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Ye are set beyond the reach of the condemning law; the curse is removed, and ye have got your Father's blessing; and ye shall be blest for time and eternity.

(2.) Ye are most honourably *related*, of the blood royal of heaven, since ye are of the mystical body of Christ. Christ's Father is your Father, John xx. 17. *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* God himself is your Head, Eph. i. 22, 23. His Spirit is the bond of your mystical union with him, Eph. iv. 4. The church is your mother, and ye are her true and genuine children, Gal. iv. 26. The glorified saints are your grown brethren, come to their full stature; and ye are the little ones of the same family, Eph. iii. 15. Ay, and the angels too are so, Rev. xix. 10. All these fall to you by that membership.

(3.) Ye are infinitely *enriched*; for, on that society, whereof ye are members, all things are settled by the God of all, 1 Cor. iii. 21. *All things are yours.* The purchase of the Head belongs to the members; and they have a title to all, and possess all, in their Head, Col. ii. 10. So ye are heirs of the world to come, heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 17. The covenant is your charter, the sacraments the seals of it.

(4.) Ye are perfectly *secured*; ye shall never perish, come what will come, John iii. 16.—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Christ's natural body saw no corruption, even in a grave; and Christ's mystical body cannot perish, nor any member of it, John xiv. 19.—*Because I live, ye shall live also.* Ye are secured against,

1. Falling off. The tree-leg may fall off from the body, but the live-leg cannot; so hypocrites may fall away totally and finally, but the believer cannot, because a living member of Christ's body, John x. 28.—*I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* A saint may fall down into a mire; he may fall back, but never fall off, nor fall away.

2. Cutting off. It is true, a child of God, as to

his spiritual state, may be sick and sore; he may be bruised, wounded, and broken at such a rate, that he is of little or no use for the head or for the body, but paining and bringing grief to both; and so think he is cut off, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.* But no man will ever yield to the cutting off a member of his body, while it is in his power to cure it; and therefore, forasmuch as no case of a saint is beyond the reach of the great Physician's skill, be their case what it will, they shall be cured at length, but never cut off.

3. Dying off. Spiritual death can never overtake them again; the infinite Spirit, the bond of the union, will always preserve the communication betwixt the Head and the members, John xiv. 19. And temporal death cannot dissolve the union; though it separate betwixt soul and body, each of them still remains united to Christ, 1 Thess. iv. 14. All these things are sealed by the sacrament.

Infer. II. The sacramental *declaration* is a matter of such weight, as deserves the deepest impression in one's spirit, and the tenderest regard in one's life, for all time thereafter. What that is ye have already heard, *viz.* a solemn declaration made by one's partaking, that he is of the communion of the saints, joined with them into one mystical body of Christ. This is the declaration you have made by your act of partaking, and this is what, I say, deserves the deepest impression, &c. This will be clear, if ye consider,

1. The *subject matter* of that declaration, which is most important. It concerns the mystical body of Christ, and their joining themselves unto it. Is it possible that one can have a weightier matter than that in hand? Does not eternity depend upon it? heaven or hell hang upon it to thy soul? Can any rational man think that to be a matter for one to play with, not to be in deepest earnest about it?

2. The *parties* to whom it is made, God and all the saints. The Lord has created the saints into a

society, under Christ the alone Head; they have their patent in heaven, and God has endowed them with the richest privileges. He sends out the gospel-proclamation, inviting all to join them, and offering them admission into it freely, without making the partaking of the sacraments to be their declaration of entering into it, 1 Cor. xii. 13. So, it is evident the partaker, by his action, says unto God, Isa. xlv. 5. *I am the Lord's*; and to all the saints, *We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you*, Zech. viii. 23. If ye think light of making that declaration to them, do but consider the day when the Lord, and all his saints, shall judge the world, and call you to an account of the declaration made to themselves.

3. The *nature* of that declaration. It is not indeed verbal, but real; not by words, but by an action, even that instituted by Christ, and so interpreted by him as importing what it was designed to signify. As it is sacramental, it is of the nature of an oath, wherein God is invocated as Judge and Witness of the sincerity of your declaration: So that you have, in effect, sworn yourselves of the communion of saints. And that is weighty.

4. The *solemnity* of it. It was not a business huddled up in secret, but done openly. The sacraments are public actions of their own nature; and therefore our church has wrestled against private baptism and private communion. Ye were, I suppose, baptized in presence of the church, a lesser or a greater number present. Ye did communicate in the Lord's supper in the face of the sun, and before many witnesses, in a most solemn manner. It was a very solemn covenanting betwixt God and Abram, Gen. xv. 9—18. And your covenant-declaration was over the broken body and shed blood of Christ, represented in the sacrament; what greater solemnity could there be?

5. The *amount* of it. If ye do not sincerely cleave to it, but in your practice cast it behind your back, it will amount to a lie made to God himself, and to all

his saints, in a matter of the utmost weight, with the greatest solemnity, yea, to the guilt of perjury in effect. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for a lie made in the matter of the price of their land; what will be the punishment of a lie made with such solemnity to God, over the broken body of his Son? Matt. xxiv. 46. *He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites:* compared with Jer. xxxiv. 18—20. *I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant,—which they had made before me, when they cut the calf intwain, and passed between the parts thereof. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life.* Wherefore,

1. Reflect on, and seriously consider what ye have avouched solemnly in partaking of the sacraments.—Think on the action deeply, and the import of it, and impress it on your spirits. Look back all of you to your baptism.

Consider, that, in your baptism, ye were given up to Christ, to lay hold on him by faith, Acts xix. 4.—That therein ye declared and avouched your putting on Christ, Gal. iii. 27. *For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.* Your dying to sin and living to righteousness, Rom. vi. 3, 4. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Your being of the mystical body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 13. *For by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body.* If people would seriously consider the import of their baptism, they who think themselves loose by their not being communicants, would see they are bound already; and that they do but cheat themselves in thinking, by their neglect of the supper, to keep off these bands, which they are already firmly under; the which, if they regard not, they will hear of it afterward to their cost.

Look back, Communicants, to your partaking:

consider what ye have done. Ye have declared yourselves well pleased with the device of salvation through a crucified Christ, your taking of him to be your Head and Ruler, your joining yourselves to him by faith as lively members of his mystical body; that you are no more, henceforth, to be of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, but for the Lord only, wholly, and for ever; to take your part with the saints in the world, whatever your lot be, Psal. xlv. 10. Ye have said all this, and in effect sworn it over the broken body and shed blood of Christ, before angels and men.

Ye would do well to take some time alone to reflect on this, and to revive the impressions. We find the saints making such reflections, and putting themselves in mind of what they have done in such a case, Psalm xvi. 2. *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.* And Psal. cxix. 57, 106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.*

2. Never forget it. Jer. i. 5. People used not to forget their marriage-day, and the transactions of it. But alas! the declared marriage consent to Christ is often forgotten, notwithstanding of the solemnity at it, Jer. ii. 32. *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.* They are men of prostituted consciences, who forget their oaths, and have wrought themselves clean of the impressions of them. But alas! there are many, who sometimes made this solemn declaration, who seem to have quite forgot it, and the impressions are razed. But, have ye forgot it? God hath sworn he will never forget it, Amos. viii. 7. *The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.* See Jer. ii. 2.

3. Remember it *afresh* on particular occasions, and awe your spirits with it, when temptations offer to cause you to go against it. Remember it as Jephthah did his vow, Judges xi. 35. *I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.*

(1.) When your old *lusts* come back, and fawn on you. No doubt they will come, but deny them, 1 Pet. i. 14. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.* Remember ye have solemnly declared against them, of your own accord, and to go back to them must be to go over the belly of God's bands on you.

(2.) When your old *companions* in sin would draw you aside with them, then say, as Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Remember ye are not of their communion, but have solemnly renounced it, and have embodied with the faints. Is it not a very good reason not to serve the devil with men, because ye are not of the communion of his servants and society?

4. Do not *retract* it. It is too solemn and weighty a business to eat in again, Prov. xx. 25. *It is a snare to the man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.* Eccl. v. 5. *Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.* Some poor wretches expressly retract and renounce their sacramental vows, giving themselves to Satan. Many practically retract their sacramental declaration; particularly,

(1.) By slighting the *renewing* of it, when the Lord puts an occasion of it in their hands. Thus many baptised persons never set themselves to partake of the Lord's table; some that have partaked of it sometime, leave it off again. Does not this plainly say, that, if they had that to do which is done in that matter, it should not be done for them now? And is not that retracting practically, Luke ix. 62. *No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* Lot's wife's rueful looking back was dear to her.

(2.) By living a loose and *licentious life*, as if one had never come under bonds to be the Lord's, Tit. i. 16. The language of the conversation of many is, *Let us break their bands, &c.* O that such would consider,

Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

5. Beware of every thing *unsuitable* to it. Ye have declared yourselves of the communion of saints, do nothing *unsuitable* to that communion, and your own solemn declaration. Let not the way of God be evil spoken of through your *unsuitable* walk, Rom. ii. 24. Always remember your character as professed members of the communion of saints, and walk accordingly.

Inf. III. Separation from the men of the world *lying in wickedness*, and fixed standing off from the *communion of sinners*, is the necessary duty of all saints by profession, and particularly of communicants, Num. xxiii. 9. *The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.* 2. Cor. vi. 14, 15—17.

‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for, what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And, what communion hath light with darkness? And, what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or, what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.’

1st, Whereto this holy separation *extends* itself.

1. *Negatively*. It doth not extend,

(1.) To the casting off the duties of *natural affections* and *relations* to them, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. ‘If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away,’ &c. Religion doth not weaken, but purify and strengthen natural affection, Rom. ix. 3. And the nearer that sinners stand related unto saints, they will have, and ought to have the greater concern for them, both for their spiritual and temporal good.

(2.) Not to the casting off *civil converse* with the men of the world, according as one has the call of Providence thereto, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. ‘I wrote unto you—not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for

'then must ye needs go out of the world.' The saints are not shut up in a corner of the world by themselves, and therefore must needs have civil society with the men of this world. Neither doth religion divest Christians of humanity, or give them a liberty to be rude and indiscreet to others; but obliges them to *live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. to *honour them*, 1 Pet. ii. 17. to be *courteous*, chap. iii. 8, 9.

(3.) Nor to the hindering of us to do them all the good we can. Nay, religion obligeth us to seek their good, 1 Tim. ii. 1. *I exhort, therefore, that—supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: and to do good to their souls and bodies, as we have opportunity, Gal. vi. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men.*

(4.) Nor to the refusing to *serve God*, and *worship him* with them, according to his own institution. This our Saviour himself did, Luke iv. 16. *And he came to Nazareth; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.* Thus did the apostles also with the Jews. Thus, in all congregations of saints in the world, there are readily found some who have no appearance of saintship, whom yet they do not so shun as to refuse to worship God with them, in his own way.

2. *Positively.* It extends to, and consists in,

(1.) Shunning all *unnecessary society and familiarity* with them, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. *I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.* They are not to be chosen for our companions of converse, or friendship, far less for companions of life, where we can have a choice; but we are to be *companions of those that fear the Lord.* The company of sinners has been fatal to many, Prov. xiii. 20. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* Men of the same employment, or that are going to one place, draw together, and should not Christians draw to Christians? It is sad to make Christian con-

gregations and families, like Noah's ark, a receptacle for clean and unclean; 1 Cor. xv. 33. *Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.*

(2.) *Non-conformity to the world, Rom. xii. 2 — And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Ye must have another manner of life and conversation than they, if ye be of the communion of saints. It is a disgrace to religion, for men of the world to have it to say of a saint by profession, *Behold the man is as one of us.* Make them not your rule, your example, nor do you think to stamp an offensive way into a lawful one, by the authority of the multitude. For the multitude is in the way to destruction, Matt. vii. 13. *Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;* and their principles are lax, and their practice licentious; they look on tenderness as niceness and preciseness, and wonder that you cannot take the same liberty they do, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.* — But, look you to God's word for your way, and see yourselves obliged to separate from them in your manner of life. See the general rule, Phil. iv. 8. 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

(3.) Refusing communion with them in *sin*, Prov. i. 10. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.* — Every man is for his own master's interest, and therefore they are for bringing you over into the service of the devil their master, as you will be for bringing them to Christ, if you be real Christians. Beware of fellowship with them in sin, Eph. v. 11. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* Do not homologate their sinful courses by approving or consenting any manner of

way thereto, far less by actual joining with them in their sin, Psal. l. 18. It is an affront to heaven, but a pleasure to hell, to see Christ's sheep and the devil's goats yoked together in one sinful course. Nay, communicant, thou shouldst be like the ermine, that will by no means pass over the mud, that would stain its precious fur.

(4.) Refusing communion with them in the worship of God, in a *false way*, or even in a right way, upon *sinful terms*. The saints must separate from all false worship, that is, worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixed with human inventions and ordinances, Rev. xviii. 4. Nay, where the worship is pure, but some sinful thing is imposed upon you as a term of communion with the worshippers, you must refuse communion with them in worship on these terms, Rom. iii. 8. In these cases, separation is not only lawful, but a necessary duty. And could I perceive either of these this day, in our case, in the communion of this church, I should not only think it my duty to separate, but also to press you to it. But tho' our mother has gone far back, she has not gone that length yet. We have,

2dly, The *Reasons* of this separation. Because,

1. The communion of saints and the communion of sinners are *opposite* societies, 1 John v. 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* So that joining to the one particularly infers separation from the other. You may as well imagine to bring east and west together, to make fire and water agree, as to make God's family and the devil's to agree; the seed of the woman and serpent. Wherefore, having joined to the communion of saints, ye must needs separate from the communion of sinners, Matt. vi. 24. *No man can serve two masters; for, either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

2. The communion of saints is gathered *out* of the

world lying in wickedness; so that separation from the world is wrapt up in the very constitution of the society of saints, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. *Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.* The mystical body of Christ is made up of those that were sometime limbs of the devil; the branches ingrafted into the true vine were all broken off from our natural stock, the old Adam, that degenerate, dead, and killing stock: Christ's family of mankind is wholly made up of run-aways from the devil's family, Psalm xlv. 10. So that if ye be saints at all, ye are separatists.

3. The design of erecting the communion of saints is, that they may be a *separate* society by themselves, under Christ their Head, to his honour, Num. xxiii. 9. Eph. v. 25—27. They are a *peculiar people*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. How will they answer the design of their erection, and the honour of their Head, if they be not thus a separate people? Our Lord Christ has appointed badges of this communion, *viz.* the sacraments, to be external signs of distinction betwixt his and the world; and can it be thought but they will distinguish themselves by their practice?

4. The *profession* of saintship is the profession of this separation, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Let baptised persons and communicants be ashamed to say they do not pretend to be saints. If ye pretend not to be saints, renounce your pretensions to heaven, for none other come there. Heb. xii. 14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* If ye pretend not to be saints, ye must own yourselves apostates, that have renounced and cast of the communion of saints. And, communicants, if ye pretend not to be saints, how durst ye adventure to sit down at the Lord's table? Well, in so far as ye were baptised, and communicated, ye professed yourselves members of Christ's body, saints, and so separate from the world; therefore, ye must live separate from them.

Wherefore, I say unto all saints by profession, and

particularly communicants,—*Save yourselves from this untoward generation*, Acts ii. 40. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Shun all unnecessary society with those of the world lying in wickedness: conform not to their ways, have no communion with them in sin, nor in the service of God on sinful terms. Remember ye have solemnly declared yourselves of another communion than with them.

Motive 1. Consider the *authority* of God that binds this upon you, Eph. v. 7, 8, 11. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them: For ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord; walk as the children of light,—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* The men and women of the world are separate from God, Eph. ii. 12. They are walking contrary to him; and therefore he will have you to walk separate from them, and be as a *people dwelling alone*, in the midst of the world's throng, because they are not of your communion.

2. The *proof* of the sincerity of your pretensions to saintship depends very much on it, Psal. xvi. 2, 3. *My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth; and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* See also Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. and xv. 4. It is evident, men will choose such company as is most agreeable, in their opinion, to their own temper and disposition. And so one may very well guess at the disposition of a person by the company he chooses and delights in. And, if thou art inclined to be a companion of the graceless, rather than of the gracious, it is a shrewd sign of a graceless heart.

3. The *honour* of God lies at stake here, Rom. ii. 24. If thou dost wear Christ's badge, and yet will not separate from the communion of sinners, but go with them in their way, religion will be wounded through thy sides, and exposed to the mockery of profane men. And there are particularly three communions of sinners I would warn you against, as ye would not stab religion to the heart.

(1.) The communion of *drunkards*. O! how unlike is that to the communion of saints at the Lord's table! For the Lord's sake, communicants, when ye have the temptation, remember that word, 1 Cor. x. 21, 22. *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*

(2.) The communion of *harlots*. That is a communion of sinners, in an eminent manner, most inconsistent with the communion of saints, from which the apostle argues against it, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17, *Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid. What! know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body?—But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit?*

(3.) The communion of *unjust men*, in sinful dishonest ways of getting gain. Solomon speaks of this, Prov. i. 14, 15. It is dear bought that is got at the rate of God's displeasure.

(4.) If ye separate not from them, ye will *perish* with them, Rev. xviii. 4. if ye partake of their sins, ye must partake of their plagues.

Inf. IV. There are certain *duties* of the communion of saints lying on all the members of it, by virtue of their membership: the which duties, all saints by profession, and especially communicants, are solemnly *engaged* unto by their partaking of the sacraments.

To clear the *first* part of this inference, consider,
 1. Every relation wherein one stands brings along with it a *train* of duties with respect to one's relatives. Relations are the joints of society, whereby persons are joined together for mutual usefulness; and their union is the ground of this debt they owe to one another. This holds in all relations, natural relations, and voluntary ones too made by consent. If one be a father of

children, there are paternal duties lying on him by virtue of that relation: if he be a child of such parents, he owes a duty to them. If one become a member of a family, a kingdom, or any corporation, his membership lays him under such and such duties: wherefore, it is not to be doubted, but in as much as one is a member of the communion of saints, he is under obligations to the duties of that society.

2. There is a certain *connection* between privilege bestowed on a man, and duty required of him. If one be admitted to the privilege of any society, he must, with the honour, receive the burden of duty belonging to it. If we receive the privilege of sons of God, we must be obedient children;—*not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance*, 1 Pet. i. 14. If we are members of the holy society, whereof Christ is the Head, we must be holy as he is, ver. 15, 16. *But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.* If we be advanced to be of the communion of saints, we must carry as becomes saints.

3. The principle of *self-preservation*, natural to all men, evidences this. If one be taken with a pain in his foot, all the members of the body will do their best to recover it: for, if one member suffer, all suffer by reason of the union among them; and the evil, if not removed, creeps from one to another. So the apostle will have the saints at Corinth to take heed of a corrupt member, and use the means to recover him, from this principle of self-preservation, 1 Cor. v. 6. They who dwell together find themselves obliged to take heed every one to his neighbour's house, lest when the neighbour's house is on fire, the flames also catch hold of their own: wherefore, whosoever is a member of the communion of saints, must see a duty lying on him as such.

To clear the *second* part of the inference, consider,

1. By partaking of the sacrament one declares himself to be *one* of the communion of saints, and confe-

quently declares his being engaged to the duties of that communion, 1 John ii. 6. He voluntarily takes on the yoke, while he yokes himself with those who bear it. If one pretends to the privilege, he cannot in reason shake himself loose of the duty. *And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luke vi. 46.

2. The sacraments are the external *bands* of our union with Christ the Head, and the members, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Thereby we are sacramentally joined with the saints into one body, one bread. What is the partaking of them then, less than solemnly, as it were by oath, engaging ourselves to the duties of the communion of saints?

Wherefore, all ye who are saints by profession, particularly communicants, as ye are one visible body of Christ, a visible communion of saints, I would press on you the duties which lie upon you as such. And they are of three sorts.

1st, These are duties ye owe to the *Head*. Christ is the Head of this body, the communion of saints, Eph. i. 22, 23. Ye are the profest members of Christ, and of his body; consider and conscientiously practise your duty to your Head.

1. *Acknowledge not, nor own any other* for Head of the church, or communion of saints, but Jesus Christ, Eph. v. 23. Men may distinguish as they will; but, as a body with more heads than one, is a monster in nature; the scripture is plain, the communion of saints, which is the church, is no such monster, Eph. iv. 4, 5. *One body, one Lord*. The Roman Antichrist has long blasphemously arrogate to himself this headship and supremacy; and, at the lame reformation of England, it was taken from the Pope there, but not restored to the royal Mediator, but made a part of their king's royal dignity. And, in the days of Scotland's apostacy from their covenanted God, it was sacrilegiously usurped over this church by the powers then reigning, but contended against by the sus-

ferings of many of this church; the Lord having made the Mediator's alone headship and supremacy a peculiar piece of this church's testimony, for which, alas! the present generation has not been duly jealous; the which has helped to bring this church into the miserable pass she is at this day.—But why should any pretend to be head of the body of Christ? to be her head, while they cannot communicate life or spirit to her? This is Christ's peculiar prerogative, communicable to no mortal.

2. *Depend by faith* on Jesus Christ, as your head for all. He is constitute the head of that society whereof ye are members; and, by virtue of his headship, their life lies in him, the direction and care of them lies on him.

(1.) Depend on him for *vital* influences, Col. ii. 19. —*from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.* The believer's life lies in him, Col. iii. 3, 4.—*your life is hid with Christ in God.* Therefore it cannot be lost, John xiv. 19. *Because I live ye shall live also.* The church is liable to great decays; she may be under a spiritual consumption, her pulse may be very low; yet the sickness cannot be unto death, because there is still life in the Head, which will be communicated more abundantly to the members. It is our business to live by faith, and draw virtue from him, and not live on our inherent stock of life and grace, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Two things are here to be observed.

1. That there is a *fulness* lodged in Christ as the Head of the body, to be communicated to all the members, Col. i. 19. A fulness of a fountain, which has not only enough for itself, but those that come to draw. There is a fulness of merit in him, for the life of pure pardon and comfort, and refreshment for the soul slain with a sense of guilt; a fulness of Spirit for the life of sanctification; and ready access to it for all the members, John i. 16. *And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.*

2. The *promises* are the conduit-pipes by which influences of grace run into us, and faith is the drawing grace by which they are brought into the soul, Gal. ii. 28. The settled method of the dispensation of grace is that, *According to thy faith, so be it unto thee.*—Faith believes and applies the promises, and so life more abundantly is conveyed, Hosea xiv. 7.

(2.) Depend upon him for *direction*, Prov. iii. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps.* The direction of the whole body belongs to the head, and the direction and guidance of all the members of Christ to him by virtue of his headship. Therefore,

1. Take not the *guiding* of yourselves upon yourselves; trust not to your own wit and skill. If ye do, it is an usurping of Christ's prerogative, Isa. lv. 5. and ye will not prosper in it, but stumble at noon-day. Where are the eyes but in the head? and therefore since Christ is the Head of all the saints, he is appointed of the Father to be eyes to them in the wilderness. And the way of carnal wit has ay been ruining to churches, and particular members. The end of the way, pointed out by it, is always misery.

2. Look to him, and trust him for *direction* in all *cases*, Prov. iii. 6. God brings his people into a thicket of perplexities, and they are at their wits end, that faith may begin, and wait for a way, when they can see none, Isa. xlii. 16. Then he leads them by his word, providence, and Spirit. He is the pilot of the ship bound to Emmanuel's land, with all the heirs of glory as passengers; their guide through the way-lets wilderness, and they must keep their eye on him.

(3.) Depend on his *care*, 1 Pet. v. 7. *Castling all your care upon him, for he careth for you.* The care of the whole communion of saints lies on Christ as their Head, 1 Pet. ii. 25. The Father has given them to him, devolved the care of them upon him, in such sort that he is to be answerable for them, that none

of them be lost, John vi. 39. *And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he has given me, I should lose nothing.*—Thus the hearts of his people may safely trust in him.

1. For *provision*. He, as their Head, sees to the provision of their souls, *providing them green pastures, and still waters*, Psal. xxiii. 2. He provides for their bodies, Isa. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.* The faith of Christ's headship might still all anxious thoughts about one's thorough-bearing, in any case whatsoever; for, come what will come, surely the Head will ay see to the provision of the members.

2. For *protection*, Eph. v. 23. The saints have many enemies without and within; but, being settled under such a Head, they may be sure of protection in all dangers. They will be ay safe, if not from trouble, yet in it, John xvi. 33. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'—From the sting of it that it shall do them no real harm, 1 Pet. iii. 13. 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.'

The saints are oft-times in a mighty stir, having great cares on their heads; but O how happy would they be, if they would lay all their cares on their mystical Head, and be at their duty, and leave them all on him? *Be careful for nothing; but, in every thing by prayer and supplications,—let your requests be made known unto God*, Phil. iv. 6.

3. *Subjeet* yourselves wholly to his government, as to your Head, Eph. v. 22, 23, 24. The Head must rule the body; and Christ must rule you, if you be his members. Coming into the communion of saints, ye resign yourselves to the Head of that society, for good and all, for ever.

(1.) Be obedient to his *commands*, Luke, vi. 46.—Our Lord Jesus has freed the members of his mystical

body from the law, as a covenant of works, but with his own hands he binds on them the yoke of obedience to the commands thereof, as his own commands, 1 Cor. ix. 21. *Be not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.* What confusion would there be in the natural body, for the head to be directing and pointing out one way, and the members going another? If Christ be your Head, be ruled by him, renouncing your own will, and making his your law.

(2.) Resign yourselves to the disposals of his *providence*, 2 Sam. iii. 18. and xv. 25, 26. The members of Christ have good reason for an absolute resignation of themselves and all their concerns to the Lord. The sovereignty of their Head may silence them; the wisdom and love of their Head to his own members may satisfy them, that whatever he does with them is best done. Their interest is his own, as that of the members is the interest of the head.

5. Let the *interests* of Jesus Christ, as your Head, be your interest, his honour and glory be dear unto you, Psal. lxxix. 9. 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.' All the members of the body are concerned for the head, as the head is for all the members; and who so are not touched with the care of Christ's honour in the world, gives shrewd evidences they are none of his members. Then,

(1.) Act for the *honour* of your Head, in every capacity, seeking to advance his glory, Psal. xlv. 17. 'I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.' There is a party in the world opposite to Christ, and they act against him.—He has been going among us, saying, Who is on my side? and ye, by professing your submission to him, and declaring yourselves sacramentally to be of the communion of saints, have solemnly gone over to his side. Then act for him, his truths, and his ways; act for him in your families, in your neighbourhoods, wherever you have access, whoever they are that act against him.

(2.) Be ready to *suffer* for him, as he may call you. Remember the communion of which ye have declared yourselves members, is, in this world, like a lily among thorns, which will be uneasy to them; and ye were warned of what is expected of all the members, Luke xiv. 26. In such a long time of peace, it is no wonder many limbs of the devil have got in among Christ's members, and many a hollow-hearted sinner is externally got into the communion of saints, and the saints, by this time, are much the worse of their company; and between foolish virgins, and sleeping wise ones, the interest of Christ and religion is going to decay. So that the case of the church, in the common course of providence, seems to presage such a trying stroke, as will awaken living members, and make many dead lifeless members fly off. But if Christ be your Head, ye will be so minded as to suffer for him in his strength; ye know, nothing is more natural, than when a stroke is directed against one's head, to lift up one's arm to ward off the blow from the head. The rage of enemies is against Christ himself, and to quit Christ, and go over to their side, is the way many take in such a day. But the real members of Christ's body take not that way, more than a man will put out his head to keep off a stroke designed against his arms, the head being that which all the members will take special care of. In the mean time,

(3.) Suffer *with him*, Psal. lxxix. 9. If the members suffer, the head suffers with them; and if the head be pained, all the body suffers with it; such is the sympathy. If Christ's members suffer, he sympathiseth with them, Acts ix. 4. And it is reasonable that they who think to reign with Christ after, suffer with him now. This is a day wherein the glorious Head of the mystical body is suffering egregiously among us, and wherewith all his members are called to mourn as suffering with him, Psalm cxix. 136. *Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.* Our Head suffers from his open enemies, is

wounded in the house of his friends, is suffering from professors, and profane ministers and people of all ranks. Happy they who shall be found mourning for the dishonours done to his name, truths, interest, ways, &c. they are like to be hid in the day he rises up to resent the affronts.

(4.) Take care of *yourselves* for the sake of your Head. The follies of a wife reflect dishonour on her husband. Men will take care of their feet, for that, if they catch cold in them, it will fly up to their head. O saints, by profession, yea, communicants, remember that from the day you give up your names to Christ, and declare yourselves of the communion of saints, the honour of Christ is concerned in your walk at another rate than ever before. Your sins have a peculiar aggravation in them of dishonour to your Head, Rom. ii. 24. *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.* Therefore, if ye have any respect to the honour of Christ, take heed that your conversation be as becometh the gospel.

2dly, There are duties ye owe to the *body* in general, the mystical body of Christ, which is the church, or communion of saints, Eph. i. 22, 23. Ye are professed members of this body, whereof Christ is the Head; and this body is not confined to one particular church, but is made up of all the churches of Christ, and particular saints through the world, united to Christ by his Spirit dwelling in them. Consider and practise the duties to this body, lying on you by virtue of your membership.

I. *Sympathize* with the body, as being yourselves of it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.* The concerns of the church of Christ, through the world, should be the concern of every member. Distance of place, and differences in lesser things, among those of the mystical body of Christ, should not take away this concern.—Whosoever are allowed a place in Christ's mystical body, should have room allowed them in our hearts.

(1.) *Mourn* with the body under its afflictions and evils. Such a kindly member was Nehemiah, c. ii. 3. The distresses of foreign churches, as well as of our own, require our cordial sympathy; and the saints are naturally led to it, as knit with them to one common Head.

(2.) *Rejoice* with it in its prosperity, 1 Cor. xii. 26. *And whether—one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* The thriving of the kingdom of Christ, in any place through the world, should be refreshful to all the members of Christ, and fill their mouths with praises. To bear a part in the joys and moans of the church of Christ every where, is the natural duty of all the members.

2. *Pray* continually for the welfare of the body, Psa. cxxii. 6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.* Isa. lxii. 6, 7. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* The apostle is express for all saints, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* Confine not your prayers to your own private case, but in all earnestness extend them to the church of Christ, in the land where you live, and thro' the world. Prayer is a duty wherein all the members of Christ on earth can have actual communion; they meet at the throne of grace who never saw one another's face. It is the joint petition of all the saints, *Thy kingdom come.* Pray for the building up, increase, peace, and purity of the church universal.

3. Take your *lot* with the body in foul or fair weather. Ye have said in effect, to this happy society, as Ruth i. 16. Sometimes there is a storm on the church of Christ, when the world lying in wickedness enjoys a calm. This occasions many naughty members to change sides, to desert the communion of saints, and fall in with the communion of sinners, 2 Tim. iv. 10. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present*

world. Ye know not how soon ye may be tried in this point; but do ye resolutely adhere to the mystical body. To move you to which, consider these three things.

(1.) It is *safer* to be with the saints in their lowest condition, than with the sinners in the highest pinnacle of prosperity; for the darkest night with the former will have a joyful morning, Psal. xlvii. 11. while the fairest day with the latter will issue in a black and fearful night, Eccl. vii. 5, 6.

(2.) The trial of sincerity of members is one of the great *ends* of the Lord's bringing trouble on the body, to try who are wise and foolish builders. It is true, when the natural body being sick is laid a-bed, the tree-leg is laid by, but all the living members of the body go with it. So here, &c.

(3.) *Backsliding* is dangerous, and speaks one not fit for the kingdom of God, Luke ix. 62. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;' it exposes one to the fearful displeasure of God, Heb. x. 38. 'But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;' and makes their case worse than if they had never set heaven-ward.

4. Strive in all lawful ways to *maintain* and *advance* the *interests* of the body; for the interest of the church is the interest of Christ, and dear therefore to every member. The truths of God are a sacred trust committed to the church, the pillar of truth; and they require our deep concern for the defence thereof, against the assaults of error, Jude, ver. 3. *Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* Christ's ordinances and institutions, and the several privileges thereof, which Satan and the world seek to deprive her of and corrupt, they are Christ's purchase for his mystical body; and therefore they are to be held fast, and the purity of them contended for, refusing to subject them or ourselves to the lusts of men, Gal. v. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 23. This will always require doing of us, holding hand to the maintenance of the precious inte-

rests of the mystical body, Psal. xlv. 17. and sometimes suffering, Heb. xii. 3, 4. It is a debt we owe to Christ, to the church, to posterity, and to our own souls.

5. Be *tender* of the unity of the body, Eph. iv. 3, 4. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, 1 Cor. xii. 25. Schisms, rents, and divisions in the church, are like wounds, cuts, and breaking of bones in the natural body, which exceedingly weaken it, and marr its beauty. They are the sin and judgment of a church, bringing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, marring the success of the gospel, and ruining the church at length; they bring much grief to the tender souls, and expose religion to the mockery of enemies. The renting of the body of Christ has so much of horror about it as may make it frightful to serious members. We must separate from none farther than they separate from Christ. We must not go into sin with members of the mystical body, more than with the world, under the pain of the displeasure of the Head; but we may lawfully serve the Lord in his own ordinances with sinful members; even as though when one foot is in a mire, the other must not go into the mire with it, yet there is no necessity of renting the one leg from the other, but the one may still walk with the other on clean ground.

3dly, There are duties ye owe to the members in particular, as ye are *fellow-members* with them of the same body, 1 Cor. xii. 25. *That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.* It is not in your power to know certainly and infallibly who are real members of this body, as others cannot know the same concerning you; but the visible body of Christ is made up of saints by profession, not openly contradicted by their habitual practice, 1 Cor. i. 2. and as such they are admitted to the Lord's table, upon their desire.

So there is a particular visible relation among all saints by profession, and particularly among communicants, as visible members of the same mystical body of

Christ. And, therefore, though they owe a duty to all men, of love, good will, and beneficence, yet they are in a particular manner engaged to dutifulness one to another, as members of the visible communion of saints, separate from the world.

Of this visible body or communion there are two sorts of members, official and simple ones; the former bearing office in the body, the other not so, but private persons: both members of the one body.

First, The *official* members are the office-bearers in the church, which is the body; and these are pastors, teachers, ruling-elders, and deacons. These are in the mystical body, as in man's natural body are the stomach, bearing the office of provisor for the whole body, the legs of supporters, the eyes of lights to the whole body. And,

I. The *duty* of the official members to the rest may be summed up in these two, as they are, Acts xx. 28. *viz.* taking heed to themselves and the flock.

(1.) That they take heed to *themselves*. They must take heed to their feet, that they walk as becomes the gospel, and their office and character: to their tongues, that their doctrine and instructions be sound: and to their hearts, that these be upright, that so both word and walk may be holy. This I reckon a duty they owe to the rest of the members, as well as to themselves; because their holy tender walk is an ordinance of Christ for edifying the body, as well as sound doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* 1 Pet. v. 3. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples unto the flock.* And a scandalous untender practice, in a church-officer, wounds not only his own conscience, but does a singular mischief to the church; as a hurt in the eye not only wrongs it, but the whole body.

(2.) That they take heed to the *rest* of the members over whom they are overseers, conscientiously following the duties of their respective offices in the body.

It is not enough that they be good men, in their private capacity; but that they be good ministers, elders, &c. in their public capacity. If the stomach had never such a good disposition, yet if it keep all the nourishment to itself only, the body would go to ruin: so, if church officers ply not their official duty, the church suffers by them; they are useless, and worse than useless in the place they have in the body.

2. There is also a special duty that the *rest* of the members owe to the official members in the body. And this also may be summed up in two things:

(1.) A peculiar concern for them, Gal. iv. 15. *For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* It is evident, nature itself teacheth a peculiar concern for those members which are of the most diffusive usefulness in the natural body, by virtue of their office. Who would not take many thrusts through the leg, ere he received one through the heart? Who will put a toe in the balance with an eye? So, in the mystical body, however selfish many are, yet tender considering Christians will have a peculiar concern for official members.

[1.] This should proceed from a reverential *estimation* of them for their work's sake, 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake.* Their work is great; if they have the honour they have the burden with it. Their work is for the honour of the Head, and the profit of the body: and many a time they are like the candle, which giving light to others, wastes itself. The Master has put an honour on them, and a reverend regard to them, as his officers, is a duty acceptable to God in Christ; yet this respect to them is but civil respect, though the motive is sacred.

[2.] It should *vent* itself in these two respects.

(1.) *Praying* for them seriously, 2 Theff. iii. 1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord*

may have free course and be glorified. As their work is great, their needs, temptations, and trials are many. The better it fares with them, it is like to fare the better with you: on the contrary, the worse it fares with them, the worse it will fare with you. So much is your own case wrapt up in their's. Pinch the stomach with hunger, the plump members of the body will soon fall: let the disorders of it be cured, and the rest of the body will soon feel the good of it. The devil strikes at them, that in them he may strike at the whole congregation: and ministers get not only comforts, but afflictions from the hand of God, for the good of the people, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. Even then help them by your prayers, that bear the burden.

(2.) Supporting of them cordially, 2 Tim. i. 16. *The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me.* Encourage them in their work, which will be a lightening under a heavy burden. Ye should support their credit, and cast a veil over their infirmities, Gal. iv. 14. *And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus; and not make mole-hills in them mountains, as many do, who delight to blacken those of that character; unlike a kindly member of the body, which will not spread, but endeavour to cure the weakness of an official member. And by divine right the rest owe them a competent maintainance according to their ability, 1 Cor. ix. 14. Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

2. A ready compliance with them in the work of their office; as the body goes whither the eyes direct and the legs carry. An implicit faith and blind obedience is due to no man; but the mind of the Lord held out by official members to the rest, is to be readily complied with, as they would not incur the displeasure of the Head, 1 Thess. ii. 13. *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word*

of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

(1.) *Imitate* them, and follow their steps so far as they follow Christ. *Be ye therefore followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 1. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample*, Phil. iii. 17. It is a part of the work of their office to be examples to the flock; and if that be a divine ordinance, for the edification of the church, surely the rest of the members are obliged to follow the example; and if they do not, their practice, so far as it is holy, as well as their doctrine, will be a witness against them. This is a point but little regarded. Many will tell how church officers should walk, that never once look on themselves as obliged to follow their steps in the way of holiness: but the way of holiness is but one to ministers and people, tho' many are ready to make two of them, and take the broadest to themselves.

(2.) *Submit* to their instructions, admonitions, exhortations, &c. Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account*. What confusion would be in the natural body, if the members would not be guided by the light of the eye, or refuse the nourishment prepared by the stomach? So unnatural is it for the members of the mystical body, to be refractory to the official members in the discharge of their duty, or refuse their wholesome instructions, and to be satisfied without receiving benefit of ordinances dispensed by them.

O! learn to look on ministers, and other church-officers, as standing in this capacity and relation to the body whereof ye are members. Consider them as members of the same mystical body with yourselves, and as official members, in whose welfare, and regular discharge of their office, your own welfare is wrapt up. This would,

(1.) Make you modestly and Christianly concerned,

that they may do their duty to the *edification* of the body, Pſal. cxxxii. 9. For the people to treat their miniſters imperiouſly and diſreſpectfully, and ſuper-ciliously to dictate to them how to behave in the exerciſe of their office, as many do, and value themſelves upon it, is an argument of pride and emptineſs, of men's forgetting themſelves, and regardleſſneſs of that order which Chriſt, the Head, has appointed in his myſtical body. But for people, in a modeſt, ſerious, and Chriſtian way, to excite their miniſters to their duty, to inform and adviſe them of what may contribute to their carrying on the Lord's work moſt ſucceſſfully, as the Lord's word gives them warrant to do it, Col. iv. 17. and their own ſoul's intereſt in the matter gives them a right to it; ſo a godly miniſter would bleſs God for having ſuch an advantage. Are not all the members concerned for the eye, ſtomach, &c. in the natural body? But do they fall a beating of them, or overcharging them that they may do their office? No; but with all tenderneſs to them, they endeavour to enable them to do their reſpective offices.

(2.) It would put you on to a conſcientious *performance* of your duty to them, your own ſoul's intereſt engaging you thereto, 1 Theſſ. v. 12. The fable of the members conſpiring againſt the belly, to pinch it by with-holding of food, and being forced to give it over, by reaſon that they themſelves ſuffered by that means, may repreſent to us, as in an emblem, the folly of a people undutiſul to their miniſters, to their own ſoul's great loſs. The relation is ſo very near, that undutiſulneſs on either hand muſt be hurtful to both.

Secondly, The *ſimple* members are ſuch as are not office-bearers in the body, but private Chriſtians; theſe owe a duty, one to another, as members of the ſame myſtical body. They are the viſible members of the body of Chriſt, and ſo obliged to a native care for one another, 1 Cor. xii. 25. *That the members*

should have the same care one for another. This extends to all such Christians, through the world, as we have occasion to do this duty towards; but, in a special manner, it is to be exercised towards those with whom we live in actual church-communion, and partakers of the Lord's supper together, are, in a special manner under this obligation. As ye are *one bread and one body*, so I would exhort you to make conscience of the duties ye owe to one another as such.

Communicants are a separated body from others, distinguished from others by the most solemn badge of the Christian profession: O! if they would carry themselves as a people separated from the world to Jesus Christ, and joined together for him in one body, then would we see the benefit of communions, to the honour of Christ, the success of the gospel, and the good of their own souls.

The church is a society gathered out of the world, visibly joined together by the use of the sacraments; though they are in the world, they are not of it; and all the members of it should be a people dwelling alone, though in the midst of others, not reckoned among the nations. The truth is, there are many baptised in their infancy, who openly go over to the world's side; but all ye who are saints by profession, and particularly communicants, as ye profess yourselves to be of one body, and owe a Christian duty to them that are without; so, I would lay before you the *duties* ye owe one to another, by virtue of your being visible members of one and the same body.

Duty 1. Love one another affectionately and sincerely, John xv. 12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. To walk rightly in Christian communion, we must walk in love, Eph, v. 2. Ye ought to love all men, being ready to desire their good, and to do them all the good ye can; but ye owe brotherly love to all the visible members of Christ's body, which is so often recommended to the followers of Christ, 1 Thess. iii. 12. And the Lord

make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you. Rom. xii. 10. Be kindly affectionated one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. O! what an inconsistency is there in sitting down at the Lord's table together, the table of love, and the hearts of the partakers never united in love?

Object. There are some so naughty in their way and manner of life, that it is hard to love them with brotherly love.

Answ. The decay of love among the professors of Christianity is most visible at this day; and I must say, I despair of seeing due love among church-members restored, as long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world; and until the church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church. God separated them in the late times by the fire of persecution, and then this love flamed among them: Peace being restored, the church even mixed again with the world lying in wickedness, and that love died out of course. And while all are acknowledged as church-members, few, very few are loved as such. The New Testament Churches, tho' there were many hypocrites in them, yet they seem to have been constituted of visible saints, saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their practices, Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 2. 1 Theff. v. 5. But more directly to the objection.

It is plain, that brotherly love is to be proportioned to the degrees of the divine image discernible in any. And therefore, (1.) Where nothing of it appears, but people are openly wicked, we owe not this brotherly love to them: and every member of the church, private Christians as well as church-officers, should endeavour that they partake not of that one bread in the sacrament. But, (2.) Since the best are not free of some evils hanging about them, even to the discerning of others, we ought not to refuse brotherly love to any in whom any

lineaments of God's image appear, tho' they have several things in their way altogether unlovely. It is the work of grace here to pick the pearl of grace out of a dunghill of sinful qualities, and to love the person for it, drawing a veil over many sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8. *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.* And not to aggravate the ills about them, so as to hide their good from our eyes. Wo unto us if God should treat us so, yea, or the saints; wherefore, love one another.

Motive 1. It is the principle of the duties of church-communion, therefore called the *bond of perfectness in the church*, Col. iii. 12, 13, 14. In the primitive church they were most dutiful one to another; see the source of it, Acts iv. 32. *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.*—Where it prevails, it will make every one concerned for the good of his fellow Christian, as for his own: where it is not, people, though in church-communion, will be ready to say, *Am I my brother's keeper?* So, the want of it turns all loose.

2. It is a badge of sincerity: *We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren*, 1 John iii. 14. And without it we cannot prove ourselves true Christians, neither to ourselves, nor to the world of on-lookers, John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* For love to God will produce love to all those who bear his image.

3. It is the most natural result of the love of Christ to us, John xiii. 34. *As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* Never was there such love as that of Christ to his people in his dying for them; this shed abroad in the heart must needs make a loving disposition to him, and all that belong to him for his sake.

4. The near relation in which the followers of Christ stand to one another, pleads for it. They are fellow-members of the same body, joined together un-

der one head, are members of one heavenly family, shall dwell together for evermore in heaven, and are joint objects of the world's hatred.

Duty 2. Bear with one another's *weaknesses, failures, and infirmities.* This has many branches; see Col. iii 12, 13. *Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* Be of a meek, patient, forbearing, and forgiving temper, as to all men, so particularly to the members of the body of Christ, your fellow-members, and that because they are so. When we come to heaven we will have nothing to bear with: but till we come there, we will have occasion to exercise this grace towards others, and others towards us, since every one has their own imperfections, and there is not one to cast a stone at another on this score.

It is sad to see how easily professors are brought to cast at one another: how they cannot bear the least provocation, cannot forgive nor forget injuries; yea, many there are who rejoice in the failures of others, and are glad when they get an ill tale of them, or see some false step made by them, which they improve to run them down, and to the judging of their state. But consider, I pray you,

1. How the Lord bears with *you*, Eph. iv. 32.—*And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* O! what would come of us if God would bear no more with us than we can bear with our fellow-servants! Dreadful would the measure be, if God should mete to us as we often do to our fellow Christians!—Does the Spirit of the Lord suffer us long, and will not we learn long-suffering? Are we forgiven talents, and will not we forgive a few pence?

2. How the Lord bears with *them.* He overlooks

many things in his people, though he does not approve of them. Shall not his example draw us to imitation?

3. Do not we ourselves stand in need of *forbearance* and *forgiveness* from others? Eccl. vii. 21, 22. *Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.* And are every day in hazard of being led aside with temptation, Gal. iv. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.* Why should we then so forget ourselves, as not to allow to others what we need from them?

Is it not *your* interest in the matter, since you are of the body with them? When one hand labours under any sore, does not the other tenderly dress it, and even *those members of the body, which we think less honourable, do not we bestow abundant honour on them,* 1 Cor. xii. 23. So should we be ready to cast a veil of love over the infirmities of our brethren.

Duty 3. Watch over one another. Heb. x. 24. *And let us consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works: And xii. 15. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* This is one of the principal duties of church communion, and, if duly managed, would be of notable use for the honour of the Head, and good of the body. It is true, the Lord has appointed some watchmen, by office, in his church; but the law of love among the members of the mystical body, and the appointment of the Head, makes also every one watchman over another.

• I mean not to encourage men to a censorious prying into other men's matters, malicious searching into the hidden faults of others, to get something whereupon to make them odious. There are abundance of these who are spies from the devil's camp, improving

their discoveries, fancied or real, to the dishonour of religion, and wounding the reputation of the brethren. But that, with an eye of love, you would observe one another's walk, for your mutual advantage, to imitate what is lovely in one another, and endeavour to amend what is amiss, or to prevent it. I take it under these following things:

(1.) Excite and stir up one another to a *holy tender walk*, in the several parts or duties of it, Heb. x. 24. Every member of the body should be a spur to another, to quicken his pace in the way of duty; so far should they be from being hindrances to, and clogs upon one another. All of us have a principle of sloth in us, which disposes us to flag and sink in our endeavours after holiness; and happy they who have a fellow Christian to quicken them by word and example.—Prov. xxvii. 17. *Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

(2.) Warn one another of *snarcs* in your way, as follow-travellers towards Zion, 1 Thess. v. 14. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.* One may see a snare before another, which he is not aware of that is in the greatest hazard of it; and it is a piece of Christian-duty to warn one of it. This is to blow the trumpet as a watchman, the trumpet of private warning, the which if he does not, he is guilty of the sin his brother falls into, as not preventing it.

(3.) Confirm the *flaggering*, and labour to bear up him who is ready to fall, 1 Thess. v. 14. *Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak.* O! what a substantial kindness did Abigail to David, in preventing the sin he was slipping into? An enemy is to be helped to raise up his ass lying under a burden, Exod. xxiii. 5. that he may not lose it; how much more, when one sees his brother under a weight of temptation, is he to help him above it? like to be carried away with a stream, is he to catch hold of him, and do his best to draw him out?

(4.) *Admonish and reprove* one another, in a *spirit of meekness*, for what is amiss, Rom. xv. 14. 2 Thess.

iii. 15. Eph. v. 11. The infirmity cleaving to the best, with the variety of snares lying in our way, occasions every one sometimes to go wrong; and tho' it is easy to step aside, it is not so easy to recover, and come into the way again. This makes admonition necessary. There is a corrupt principle of self-love in us, that we are apt to look on our own faults with an eye prejudiced in favours of them; therefore, God has appointed this ordinance of mutual reproof and admonition, that each one holding the glass to his neighbour's face, they may see their spots, and wipe them off.

There is an *authoritative* admonition and reproof administered by church-officers, in virtue of their office, not only to hearers promiscuously in the preaching of the word; but to persons particularly by themselves, in the way of discipline, 1 Tim. v. 20. *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear*: Or privately, as Nathan did to David. See 1 Theff. v. 12. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them—which are ever you in the Lord, and admonish you*. The which, tho' privately administered, is public, in respect of the public person who gives it. But of this we speak not.

There is a *charitable* admonition and reproof belonging to private persons, in virtue of the law of charity or love, which makes them monitors of, and reprovers to one another. This, in respect of the objects of it, is two-fold:

I. General; common to *all men* within or without the church, whether visible members of the mystical body or not. It goes as wide as the holy law carries love to our neighbour. We are not to confine our charitable admonitions and reproofs to saints by profession, more than our love of benevolence and beneficence to them. We owe this duty, even to those of the world lying in wickedness, Eph. v. 11. *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*, compared with ver. 8, 12. and ought to do it, if so we may contribute to the plucking of the brands out of the burning.

It is true, there are some arrived at such a daring pitch of wickedness, that there is not the least hope of doing them good by admonition or reproof; but on the contrary, they are in hazard of being the worse of them. Concerning such, our Lord's rule is, Matt. vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.' But we should take heed that we do not rashly put men in this class: they may be the worse of a reproof at one time, who may be bettered by it at another time. And besides, a testimony against sin may be necessary, even in the case of such an one, in respect of others, witnesses thereto.— But neither is it of this sort of admonition and reproof we speak. But,

2. *Fraternal or brotherly* admonition and reproof, competent to the visible members of the mystical body among themselves, 2 Thess. iii. 15. Tho' we owe this duty and kindness to all men, yet it is plain there are special obligations to it on saints by profession, towards one another, and especially on communicants, who sit at one table of the Lord together. They are *one body*; they owe more than a common, *viz.* a brotherly love to one another: therefore, as in the natural body, one hand washes the other by special duty; so let all communicants, and all saints by profession, know that they are obliged in conscience to mutual brotherly admonition and reproof, as *they are one body, and members one of another*, Rom. xii. 5. And the sacraments, whether baptism or the Lord's Supper, much more both, bind them thereto.

This ordinance and special duty of church-communion, which would be of exceeding usefulness, if rightly managed, as it is, alas! very little in use in our degenerate age; is often so marred, when it is used, that matters are made worse thereby, and the disease takes strength by the remedy. People's minds are alienated, one from another; grudges are raised betwixt the parties; and so it is an occasion of evil. This ariseth from

two causes, the indiscreet management of the reprover, and the undue entertainment of it by the reprovèd.

1st, The *indiscreet management* of the *reprover*, who often ministers his remedy in such a manner, as it is apt to irritate the corruption of his brother, instead of exciting his grace or goodness, as it ought. To rectify this, and remove this grand hindrance of benefit by this duty, I lay before you these following things.

1. Look upon this duty of *fraternal admonition* and *reproof* as an *ordinance* of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, appointed by him, in his visible mystical body, for the spiritual good of the body. It is as really so, as preaching, praying, sacraments, &c. are, Matt. xviii. 15. *Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.* It has a blessing annexed to it, Prov. ix. 8. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.* The consideration of this might influence men to go about it with awful solemnity, and to fear its being marred in their hands.

2. *Begin at home*, in thy own life and conversation, to purge it, Matt. viii. 3, 5. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.* A man who attempts to reprove his brother, and is guilty of the same, or like offences, is like a profane minister reproving profanity, who cannot expect success, but to have it cast up to him, *Physician, cure thyself.* And this may let one see the mischief that his untenderness does, not only in involving him in personal guilt, but in the guilt of his neighbour's sin too, whom he puts himself out of the capacity to do good to.

Quest. *Is one, in such a case, free from his duty then?*

Ans. No, by no means; one's own sin can never free him from this natural duty. His business is to set about the work, removing the impediment of the success by repentance before the Lord; and to accuse himself, and

profess resolution to amend, in the first place, to his brother, and then to admonish him of his fault.

3. Be not *precipitant* and *rash* in your reproofs, but proceed on knowledge of the offence, in which so much moral certainty is required, as one cannot be justly blamed for rashness in thinking his brother to have offended so and so. The too ready crediting every thing that is spoken to our brother's disadvantage, or judging a thing to be an offence, which may be is none; a readiness to take other men's actions by the wrong handle, when there is a right one, and thereupon to reprove them, will more argue the want of that charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. than prudent zeal for God's honour and our brother's good: yet, in doubtful matters, it will often be found duty, prudently to insinuate that there is a suspicion, and what way he ought to remove it, 1 Thess. v. 22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

4. Let *love to God's honour*, and your *brother's good*, be the principle from which your admonition or reproof proceeds; and let it appear so, as much as may be to his conviction, 2 Thess. iii. 15. *Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* 2 Cor. ii. 4. *For, out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.* So little of this appears in the reproofs of many, that they seem to the reprov'd rather reproaches than reproofs, and to shew more contempt of the offender than love to him; and so the benefit by them is marred.

5. Be sure to found your admonitions or reproofs on the *word of God*, and convey them to your brother in a word of the holy scripture, the proper vehicle of a medicine for the soul or conscience. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another,* Col. iii. 16. How else can you think to reach his conscience? The word is the instrument wherewith the Spirit works, and upon which we have ground to expect the blessing. And

happy is he in whom the word dwells richly for this end.

6. Let it be managed with *meekeſs*, Gal. vi. 1. *Reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekeſs*. Zeal and meekeſs are very conſiſtent; they are fruits of the ſame holy Spirit. Beware of mixing your own paſſions with this duty; that is to bring common fire to God's altar, which marrs the acceptance of the ſacrifice with God, and is ready to marr the ſucceſs of it with your brother; *For, the wrath of man worketh not the righteousneſs of God*, Jam. i. 20. O! it is hard to hold off ſplitting on this rock: Moſes daſhed on it, though the meekeſt man on earth; *Ye rebels*, Numb. xx. 10. which ſhould make us jealous of ourſelves upon ſuch an occaſion. Happy is that man, who, when he declares God's wrath, can beſt hold down his own. In a ſpecial manner uſe mildneſs when the offence is a perſonal injury againſt yourſelves. Men who are like lions in their own cauſe, and lambs in the cauſe of God, are ſelfiſh naughty men.—They who are like lions in their own cauſe, and in God's too, owe their pretended zeal to their own ſpirits, not to the Spirit of God: but they who are lambs in their own cauſe, but as lions in the cauſe of God, leave conviction in the breſts of others, that they are acted by God's Spirit.

7. Be *patient* and *continue* at the duty as occaſion offers, tho' the fruit doth not ſo ſoon appear, and tho' one and the ſame perſon may give frequent occaſion, 2 Pet. i. 13. *Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to ſtir you up, by putting you in remembrance*; Luke xvii. 3, 4. *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him, and if he treſpaſs againſt thee, ſeven times a day, and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent; thou ſhalt forgive him*. Thus the Lord deals with us with long-ſuffering; ſo ſhould we with our brethren. We ſhould hold on as long as there is any hope of doing good by it.

Quest. *But what shall we do, when all we can do appears to be fruitless, and to no purpose?*

Ans^r. Our Lord's directions are very plain in this case, though very little practised, Matt. xviii. 15, 17.—'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established: and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'

8. Be sure to take *fittest season* for discharge of this duty. Every thing is beautiful in the season thereof; and there is a season for reproof, Eccl. iii. 7. The Spirit of the Lord takes notice of Abigail's observing it with her husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37. And of the blessed man it is said, He brings forth *fruit in his season*, Psal. i. 3. Unseasonable reproofs rarely do good, but often do much harm.

2dly, An *undue entertainment* of the admonition or reproof by the *reproved*. God has prescribed, in his word, how admonitions and reproofs are to be taken, as well as how to be given. They are to be received,

(1.) With *love* and *esteem* of the party that does us that good office, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. As we esteem a physician that would cure us of bodily blemishes, so him that endeavours to cure us of spiritual blemishes much more.

(2.) With *humbleness of mind*, suffering ourselves to be told of our faults, in order to our amendment, Heb. xiii. 22. 'And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.' So David, Psalm cxli. 5. 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.'

(3.) With a *practical answering* of the end of it. This our Lord calls *hearing of our brother*, Matt.

xviii. 15 Compare Prov. xv. 31, 32. 'The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise. 'He that heareth the reproof, getteth understanding.'

But, where are they to be found, who thus entertain admonitions and reproofs? Nay, the most part cannot endure to be reprov'd or admonish'd of any thing amiss in their way. Instead of giving a Christian entertainment to admonition or reproof, their proud hearts rise in passion against him that dares tell them their fault: they will defend their deed, which, in calm blood, their own consciences condemn; and if they can gather any dirt against the reprov'er, right or wrong, they will be sure to fling it in his face on that occasion. This deserves to be lamented, with tears of blood if we could command them. To such I would say,

1. Admonition and reproof is an *ordinance of Christ*, appointed by him in his church among the visible members of this body, Matt. xviii. 15—20. 1 Tim. v. 20. Why are ye angry at your brother for doing his duty, which he is obliged to do, under the pain of the Lord's displeasure? Why will ye be reckoned members of Christ's family, and will not submit to the ordinances and laws of his house? Is it fit the church of Christ should be as when there was no king in Israel, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes?

2. It is that which thy brother has a special *interest* in, and a *right* to see to, as being a member of the body. Nothing more ordinary than, What are you concerned? The eye might as well question the concern of the hand in drawing a mote out of it, or the face in wiping a spot off it. *And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee,*—1 Cor. xii. 12. His concern is plain, he is a visible member of the same body with you, and your faults, which give offence, affect him and the body too. In a corporation of tradesmen, every member has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the corporation. In a neighbourhood of husbandmen, every one has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the neighbourhood. Yet, in a so-

ciety of Christians by profession, one may not be allowed to reprove another for what is done against the laws of Christianity. *Be astonished, O ye heavens!*

3. It is *thy own interest*, and the advantage of *thy soul*, to be admonished and reprov'd for thy faults, Prov. vi. 23. *Reproofs of instruction are the way of life.* It is a real kindness done thee, Psal. cxli. 5. Why wilt thou be angry with thy mercy? — Many will be ruined for the want of a faithful friend to admonish them of what is amiss in their way. Men do not readily espy their own faults in full light: and when they have none to say, it is ill they do, they are apt to flatter themselves in their iniquity to their own ruin. But admonition and reproof is the way to repentance and reformation.

4. The trial of thy *state* whether thou be a real Christian or not, depends more on the way of entertaining admonition and reproof than thou art aware of, Prov. ix. 8. *Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.* It is a good sign of a gracious soul, to entertain it in a Christian way, Prov. xx. 4. *He that regardeth reproof is prudent.* It speaks a humble soul, one ready and willing to know his faults, and amend them, to whom conscience is dearer than credit, and the approbation of God than the applause of men. But, on the contrary, it is a very black mark in one, not to bear admonition and reproof, Prov. xii. 1. *Who so loveth instruction, loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof, is brutish;* and chap. xv. 12. See how the Spirit of God describeth a wicked generation, Isa. xxix. 21. *That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate.* — Amos v. 10. *They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.* This temper of spirit speaks a man to be unwilling to see his sin, and therefore unwilling to part with it; to be a lover of darkness rather than light, a lover of his own credit, more than God's honour; to be proud, selfish, without due regard either to God or his bro-

ther. It is true, a good man may, at a time, take a just reproof very ill, as Afa, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. but it is not the habitual disposition of his spirit.

5. Not taking with admonition and reproof is a forerunner of ruin, Prov. xv. 10.—*He that hateth reproof shall die; and xxix. 1. He that being often reproofed, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* As it is a high pitch of sin, and runs up the offence to a height, so it is the presage of the approach of a heavy stroke. *Let no man strive nor reprove another; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest: Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall in the night,* Hof. iv. 4, 5. They who will not take an admonition or reproof from their brethren, may expect God will reach them one from heaven, that they will not get shifted. It is a terrible remark made on Eli's sons, their not taking with reproof, 1 Sam. ii. 25. *They hearkened not to the voice of their father because the Lord would slay them.* See Prov. v. 12. The sum of what is said, you may find, Prov. xxv. 12. *As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold; so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.* Let the reprover manage wisely, and the reproofed entertain it obediently, so shall it be profitable to both.

The impediments thus removed, I would press this duty, of brotherly admonition and reproof, among all the visible members of the mystical body, all saints by profession, and communicants particularly. Admonish and reprove one another, for what you discern to be offensive in one another's way. Make conscience of this duty; and to engage you, take the following motives.

1. For the sake of the *Head*, that is, for Christ's sake. The sins of professors and communicants do, in a special manner, reflect dishonour on Jesus Christ, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And therefore, while we see the visible members of that body dishonouring their Head, our hearts should stir within us for that dishonour. Here

is a fair occasion to vent our zeal for Christ, to declare our sympathy with him, P^sal. xlix. 9. *Thereproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.* And, in such a case, ye are upon your trials, as to what regard ye have to his honour.

2. For the sake of the *body*. The welfare of the mystical body lies in the welfare of the members; it cannot be right while the members are wrong. Consider the offending party as a member of the body, and thou wilt see the body of Christ is concerned in his not walking with a straight foot, which may stir thee up to admonish him. Scandalous practices, or offensive steps in a member, reflect dishonour on the whole body, Eccl. ix. 18. Yea, and the contagion, if not timely prevented, is apt to creep from one member to another, and so annoy the whole body, Heb. xii. 15.—*Left any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* For this cause Paul openly reprov'd Peter, Gal. ii. 14.

3. For the sake of the *offending* member. It is one of the greatest offices of love thou canst do to his soul, to admonish him of his offence, James v. 19, 20.—*'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.'* Thou wilt thereby do him a double kindness.

(1.) *Remove sin* from off him, which is a load so much the more dangerous, as he is not aware of it, Lev. xix. 17. It is a *hating* of him, in God's account, not to rebuke him, as it would be not to draw him out of a mire, when he is sticking in it. If he had disjointed a leg or arm, wouldst thou not set it again, if thou couldst? Such harm do wrong steps in a Christian's way to his soul; therefore,—*'if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,'* Gal. vi. 1.

(2.) It will *prevent* his sinning more in that way. One wrong step, if not righted, makes way for ano-

ther; and much guilt is contracted by one's not being told of his fault, being in that case, 'like a son left to himself, who brings his father to shame;' whereas, a faithful reproof might prevent repeating the same folly. And as it would thus be a kindness to him, in respect of the putting away of sin, so consequently in preventing of strokes from the hand of the Lord.

4. For your *own sake*. God has laid this duty upon you, under pain of his displeasure; so your own interest is engaged here. As ye would not partake of other men's sins, make conscience of this duty, without which the guilt will creep over on your own souls, and the punishment thereof with it, Eph. v. 11. And why should one by the neglect of his duty, adopt other men's sins, defile his own conscience, and marr his peace with God? Better displease all the world, than make a breach betwixt God and our own souls.

5. For the sake of the common *badge* of the visible mystical body of the Christian profession, the *holy sacraments*, 1 Tim. vi. 1. Is it not cutting to hear men say, 'Take up your professors, your communicants?'—O that professors would consider the Christian profession to be of that dignity, and so tender a point that they might tremble to think of bringing a stain upon it by their loose walking! O that communicants would remember, that though the partaking of the Lord's table is in itself a passing action, yet it is an abiding holy sign, whereby they are externally distinguished for Christ; and that they would beware of such practices as may render their badge mean and despised in the eyes of the world. Or, if some will be so untender as not duly to regard it, that others would be so tender thereof as to check them for their offensive carriage, out of a regard to the holy badge of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments.

6. For the sake of those who are not of the body, but of the world *lying in wickedness*. It is a piece of Christian duty to regard these, Col. iv. 5. *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without*. God writes

his impartiality in his judgments, in not passing by the offences of those called by his *own name*, Isa. xlii. 4. And it would much contribute to commend religion to those who are strangers to it, and impress them with honourable thoughts of the communion of saints, if the members of it were faithful to check every evil thing among themselves, Acts v. 1. and downwards, compare with ver. 13. otherwise snares and stumbling blocks are laid before the blind world.

Duty 4. Walk *holily and tenderly*, so as your conversation may be exemplary, and edifying to one another, Matt. v. 16. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. xiv. 19. The church, in scripture language, is often called *heaven*; and every member thereof ought to be as a shining light there, and not the *pastors* only, Phil. ii. 15, 16. 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.'—This is the most effectual way of edifying one another, *viz.* by a holy example. And it is one great advantage of church-communion, whereby one's soul is edified, while the members labour so to walk. For understanding of this, two things are to be marked.

(1.) There is a holiness of *heart*, and a holiness of *conversation*, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. The former is the spring of the latter; the former lies in the inner man, the latter in the outward. Holiness of heart is a *personal* duty, which not the church, but God and one's own conscience can take notice of directly; therefore, I speak not of it, while treating of the duties of the members of the body one to another. Holiness of conversation is a relative duty, in so far as our fellow-members ought to see it in us all, and may see it where it is to their own edification; and we owe it as an indispensable duty to the body whereof we are members, *viz.* That our conversation be exemplarily holy and tender, Cant. i. 8. For, we are not only to *know* Christ, and speak of him, but to *live* him, Philip. i. 21.

‘For me to live is Christ.’—This is the holiness and tenderness I speak of.

(2.) Though it is abominable hypocrisy to do good works to be *seen of men*, that they may gain their applause: yet it is not only lawful, but a necessary duty of Christianity, and particularly of church communion, to walk so as your walk may be exemplary, and to have an eye to the edification of others in walking tenderly before them, Matt. v. 16. ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.’ 2 Thess. iii. 9. ‘Though our internal religion lies only betwixt God and us, yet our overt-acts are apt to be copied by our brethren; therefore, we should endeavour to get the copy fair, chiefly to please God, and next to edify our brethren.

Now, this exemplary, tender, holy walking, required of every visible church member, for edifying the fellow-members of the body, hath many branches, being as broad as the whole law of God on the outward man. I shall reduce them to these two general heads.

[1.] Be exemplarily holy and tender with respect to the *doing part* of religion and a *holy life*, Luke i. 6. The members of Christ are not to be idle, but active, dying to sin, and living unto righteousness. Be exemplarily holy and tender.

(1.) With respect to *duty*, Eccl. ix. 10. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.* Let your conversation be filled up with the performance and conscientious discharge of every duty required at your hands, that it may be uniform: *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments*, Psalm cxix. 6. Let your duty be conscientiously performed in all the parts of it; since he is your Creator and Redeemer, refuse him no piece of required service, for ye are wholly his, Acts xxvii. 23.—Be conscientious in your duty to man, for God’s sake, and so join in your practice what God has joined in the commandment, Acts xxiv. 16. Neglect not

personal duty which lies betwixt you, Tit. ii 12. and have a special regard to the duties of your station, and the relation wherein ye stand, if ever you would have your conversation edifying. God has set every one of us in some station and relation; and the conscientious practice of the duty of our respective stations makes a man or woman shine, however low a sphere they move in, 1 Tim. vi. 1. *Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed,* 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. There is no person who may not this way edify the body of Christ, and be an useful member for their own and other's good.

(2.) With respect to *sin*, Jude, ver. 23. O the mischief done by the sinful liberty church-members take to themselves! they fearlessly break down and go over the holy hedge, and others, seeing them before, do follow after, and so they prove ruining to themselves and others too, Matt. xviii. 7. Think no sin little, since it is an offence against a great God, and makes way for greater, not only in yourselves but in others too. For the sake of the Head, and the rest of the members, abhor it as hell, Rom. xii. 9. and 1 Thess. v. 22.

(3.) In the practice and use of *indifferent* things. There the apostle's rule should take place, Rom. xv. 1, 2. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* It is not enough that the thing is in itself lawful; ye are also, in respect of your brother, to consider, if it be expedient, 1 Cor. vi. 12. What is in itself indifferent, may in its circumstances be rendered unlawful to you, in so far as ye cannot do it without the scandal of your brother, Rom. xiv. 20. The neglect of this is one of the crying sins of this day. Men consider their own selves, without regard to others: and hence fearlessly lay stumbling-blocks before others. The sense of the duties of church-communion is much lost among all parties in this church at this day: in the natural body

a thing will be refused, though it be good for the stomach, if it be ill for the head, &c. But, in this degenerate generation, the members of the visible mystical body are grown so selfish, that to please themselves they can drive over others, without any regard to their good or hurt.

[2.] Be exemplarily holy and tender in the *suffering part* of religion. And be so for the edification of the body. Others have been so for our good, Heb. xii. 1. so should we be for the good of others. What crosses and afflictions the Lord may be pleased to lay on you bear Christianly, with patience, submission, and resignation; bringing forth the fruit of them, Rom. xii. 12. *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.* They are trials, and in them we ought to carry so, as God may be honoured and our brethren edified, while we are by divine providence brought upon the stage to undergo our respective trials. Consider here,

(1.) God, in laying afflictions on some of his people, has an eye to *other's* good, as well as that of the afflicted party: even as blood is let out of the arm or foot, not for the good of the arm or foot only, but the good of the whole body; though it is only one member that gets the wound, yet the design is for the rest of the members too, 2 Cor. i. 6. *And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.* As when one is examined, the rest are instructed; when one of the children of a family are chastised, the rest are thereby bettered; so our gracious God often teaches many at the expence of one only.

(2.) A Christian behaviour under trouble is one of the most *influential* points of Christian practice, likely to have the greatest efficacy on others, spectators of it, and witnesses to it, or to whose knowledge it may come, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Hence the *blood of the martyrs* was

said to be the *seed of the church*; and the cause of the gospel never lost by persecution, while the persecuted were honestly carried through. Doing well is ready to influence others, but suffering well is far more so. A cross carried evenly and Christianly has a certain force to draw others to imitation, as it is most admired.

(3.) Those who, by reason of their afflictions, seem to themselves to be laid up as useless, are mistaken; they have a most precious opportunity put into their hand, to be *serviceable* to Christ and the members of his body, 2 Col. i. 24. 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake.' God has brought them forth on the stage, to take trial of their suffering graces, for the instructing, exciting, strengthening, and edifying of others. Job was a man who did much for God in his day; but the suffering part of his life has been of the greatest use to the church in all ages since, and will be to the end. The Psalmist David complains, Psal xxxi. 12. that he was *like a broken vessel*; but every sherd of that broken pot has been of good use to the church of Christ since, and has helped to heal many.

(4.) Wherefore Christians, under their afflictions, ought to consider that they suffer as *members* of the body, bearing that part allotted for them of the sufferings appointed for Christ mystical; for the sufferings of Christ personal are at an end, but the sufferings of Christ mystical are but yet a-filling up, Col. i. 24. This would arm them with patience, as considering their particular trials to be, in some sort, a common cause for the good of others as well as their own; and may excite them, in the blackest lines of providence, to cast such a fair copy as others may write after.

To press this duty of church-communion, consider,
1. The interest of *God's name* and *honour* in it, John xv. 8. 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' The fruitfulness of those who are planted in the house of the Lord

brings much glory to the master of the house; and their barrenness brings much dishonour to him before the world. And should not the one be vigorously pursued, and the other guarded against, by all those whom he has called into the fellowship of his Son?

2. The interest of your *fellow-members* in it. It is a dark world; they are the most useful in the communion of saints, who most shine as lights: Every action of yours, every piece of your carriage, being in church-communion, is apt to be copied. By your tender example you may do good to many; by your untenderness, you may prove stumbling-blocks to others.

3. The interest of the *gospel* in it; Tit. ii 9. 10. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' It is the glory of the gospel, that the power thereof appears in the lives of the professors thereof, stamping holiness and tenderness, upon every part of their own walk: and, on the other hand, it brings great scandal on the doctrine of Christ, that the professors of it are unholy in their lives.

4. Your *own* interest is in it for time and eternity. As ye sow ye will reap, both for kind and quantity.

Duty 5. Bear one another's *burdens* of afflictions, crosses, temptations, and trials, Gal. vi. 2. 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Heb. xiii. 3. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' 1 Cor. xii. 26. 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer, with it.'—This is a natural duty of the members of one body. That part of the communion of saints, which is above, is got quite beyond these: but those of them who are yet in the world, are in the place of trial, where the clouds return after the rain. But not being standing each one by himself, but in the body with other fellow-members, bearing their part of the sufferings allotted for the body, there is all reason that the afflic-

ted's lot should be looked on as a common cause, and each one should help to bear the burden with them; their burden, of simple affliction, or burden of temptation. And,

(1.) Have a cordial *sympathy* with them, and hearty concern in their afflictions and temptations; and so express it as they know it, Rom. xii. 15. Let your hearts be touched with the fellow-feeling of the distresses of your brethren; and therefore *put on bowels of mercy*, &c. Col. iii. 12. and lay aside selfishness and unconcernedness with the case of others. It is a mortified member that is not touched with the pain of other members of the body; and he who has no kindly sympathy with the saints, in their troubles and temptations, seems not to partake of the spirit of that communion, Amos vi. 1, 6. 'Wo to them that are at ease in Zion,—that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.' And let them know it; for what comfort can it afford to them though your bowels yearn towards them, if they understand it not; if they see it not, it is all a case to them as if it were not.

(2.) Bear their burden as it affects *them*, and not always as it would affect yourselves, Rom. xv. 1. Many weigh the afflictions and temptations of others in their own balance, so find them very light; and therefore pass them as unworthy of their concern, Job xii. 5. 'He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.' But the true way of judging of the weight of these things is, as they are apt to affect the afflicted party; and with that weight we should bear them, 2 Cor. xi. 29. 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' One mote will disturb the eye, when a hundred of them lying on the hand will create no trouble, no hazard. Shall the hand then be unconcerned to get it out? That may make a heavy affliction, and a dangerous temptation to one, which would be but a trifling one, and perhaps none at all to another.

be a greater act of Christian obedience, in one to make his way through a temptation or affliction, in itself small, than in another tho' ten times greater; as the widow's throwing in her mite was more than all the gifts of the rich men, Luke xxi. 1, 2, 3.

(3.) Let your mouths be open to enquire into their *griefs*, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and your hearts open to receive their moans, Col. iv. 7, 8. 'All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you,—whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.' If any member of the natural body be sore and wounded, how natural is it for the hand tenderly to uncover and open it up, the eye to pry with compassion on the several parts of the sore, &c. even when they cannot remove the trouble? Such is the case of human nature, in its present state of weakness, that there is a kind of relief, though but a sorry one, in venting of their griefs into the bosom of one where it may be entertained with sympathy. The want of which makes afflictions and temptations often like a fire shut up, preying on one's spirits, Psalm xxxix. 3. and has made the best of men complain heavily, Micah vii. 1, 5. and downwards.

(4.) Comfort, encourage, advise, and direct them *suitable* to their case, 1 Thess. iv. 18. This is all that is within the compass of one's power to do for their afflicted brethren, in some cases, Matt. xxv. 36. And thus may one, by a word fitly spoken, be a happy instrument to refresh the bowels of the afflicted, and blunt the edge of a temptation, 2 Tim. i. 16. Job xvi. 5. 'I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.' And here a special tenderness is required; and, with a due regard to the circumstances of the afflicted, all harshness is to be evited, lest one add affliction to the afflicted; which was the rock Job's friends split upon, and caused him to make that effectual resentment, Job xvi. 4, 5.

(5.) What you can in conscience and reason, *ward off* or *carry off* of their burden, do it; for ye are 'mem-

‘bers one of another.’ Rom. xii. 5. Phil. ii. 4 ‘Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’ So ye are to give all your spiritual or temporal assistances to the lessening or removing of their trial in a way of duty. This should particularly appear in shielding one another’s reputation, which is often blasted by venomous tongues and open ears, which together lay a heavy burden on the suffering party, Prov. xxv. 23.

(6.) In troubles and temptations from men, *support* and stand by the oppressed for their deliverance, especially in the cause of Christ and religion, 2 Tim. iv. 16. ‘At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.’ And chap. i. 16, 17. ‘The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.’ We are not born for ourselves, but for God’s honour and the good of our brethren. And the leaving of those helpless, on whom by the divine providence, the storm of the trial or temptation falls, is a forsaking and being ashamed of the cause of Christ in the world. Thus ought we to bear one another’s burden, as members of the body of Christ. To stir you up to which necessary duty, consider,

Lastly, Earnest *prayer* is to be made to God for our brethren under their trials, that they may be supported, refreshed, and delivered, according to the will of God; and this whether their trials be from the immediate hand of God or man, Acts xii. 5. ‘Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.’ 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2. ‘Finally, brethren, pray for us, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.’ This is a special way of bearing one another’s burdens, to bear them before the throne of grace, and to wrestle with God for them there. This is one of the greatest advantages of the communion of saints, *viz* a commu-

nion of *prayers*, that when any known weight lies upon a member, the rest cry unto the Head on their behalf of it. And here I offer four things.

(1.) It is much to be wished that Christians praying together, when occasionally meeting, were more in use. And particularly, that those who are in distress would not only require ministers or elders to pray with them, but even fellow Christians visiting them, and that such should readily comply with such a desire, both observing circumstances, so as to discern when and in what cases it may be to edification. It is very agreeable to the communion of saints, and to that love and sympathy which ought to be among the members of Christ.

(2.) As it is a commendable practice in the church, to require public prayers on behalf of the sick, or those otherwise afflicted; and as the minister is the mouth of the congregation, so ye would consider that ye ought affectionately to join in these prayers, as parties nearly concerned, and whose prayers for the afflicted are desired, forasmuch as the prayers desired are the prayers of the congregation, and not the minister's only. — 'The language of these papers, is, *Brethren, pray for us*. And therefore, I beseech you, let not this be a matter of mere form to you, in which you may only notice what is begged for them; but let your hearts go along with the words even the length of the throne, for a brother or sister in distress.

(3.) Carry home with you the case of these to your family and secret prayers, and confine not your concern for them within the walls of the church. If the afflictions of others do touch your heart as they ought, you may carry a copy of the paper home with you on your sympathizing hearts, to mind you to put up petitions for them in your families and in secret. If ye have neglected this formerly, mend it in time to come; and, when you have done it, know ye have done no more than what is your duty, Heb. xiii. 3. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.'

(4.) Some cases of others in affliction may require of you *extraordinary* prayer, by setting some time apart for that very end, either yourselves alone, or in conjunction with fellow Christians. So David, in the case of the child—*fasted and went in and lay all night on the earth*, 2 Sam. xii. 16. And in the case of others too, Psa. xxxv. 13, 14. And so in the case of Peter in prison, Acts xii. 12. *many were gathered together in the house of Mary, praying.* The serious consideration of the kind of the affliction, and of the person under it, with respect to the honour of God, the good of the church, and your own particular interest depending thereon, must determine these cases.

I will add, by the by, That where *prayers* are desired for those in affliction, the affliction being removed, *thanksgiving* should likewise be desired. It is but the prevalency of an unallowable custom, to give up notes for praying for the sick, and yet to give none for thanksgiving for the recovery of the party when recovered. If the congregation weep with them, it is reasonable they have occasion to rejoice with them too; if to petition for the mercy, to give thanks for it too, Luke xvii. 17, 18.

Motive 1. Consider it is the special *command* of your Head, Gal. vi. 2. it is a *fulfilling of the law of Christ*, viz. the law of love. Our Lord Jesus loved his people, so as to die for them; therefore he requires them particularly to love one another. His compassion to them was without a parallel; therefore he will have them full of bowels towards each other; he bare the burden of the whole, the burden of guilt and curse due to them for sin; therefore he will have them bear one another's burden. Here is the special reason why it is called the *law of Christ*.

2. Ye have the *example* of the glorious Head for it, John xiii. 15. 'For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.' He is touched with all their afflictions, Isa. lxiii. 9. If any annoy them, he reckons himself persecuted, Acts ix. 4. A

most tender sympathy he has with them; 'for, he 'that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye,' Zech. ii. 8. And as for their temptations, he is not unconcerned about them, Heb. iv. 15. Imitate your head, O members of the body; sympathise with them whom Christ sympathises with, lest ye pour contempt on those whom Christ honours, and forget the afflictions of those whom he tenderly remembers.

3. The trials and distresses of others are designed for *your good*, as was said before. Our merciful Father, in compassion to the rest, teaches them at the expence of one. Does it not then require your sympathy, that others are afflicted for your sake? Col. i. 24. Should not ye answer the design of Providence, in exercising of those duties and graces which Providence lays afflictions and temptations on others to bring forth into exercise in you? He lays the rod on your fellow-members, to bring you and many others to the throne of grace.

4. What is thy *brother's* case to-day, may be thine to-morrow. Is he under affliction now? thou mayest be under the same hereafter; or in another as hard for thee to bear, as it is for him now to bear his. Is he under temptation? as fast as thou seemest to stand now, thou mayest be as low under the same, or worse, to-morrow, as he is to-day, Gal. vi. 1. 1 Cor. x. 12. Refuse him not that help of thee, which thou mayest need of him ere long. There is no trouble, no temptation which befalls one member of the body, which another can certainly secure himself from.

5. It is necessary to *evidence* thy being of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 26. Col. iii. 12. How can it be accounted a living member, that has not sympathy with the rest in pain? but, that Christian sympathy of bearing one another's burden speaks union with the members of the Head. That hardness, selfishness, and carelessness about the trials and temptations of others, which is found in many, cannot but darken the evidences of good people so far as it prevails, and cast them as naught in whom it reigns.

Duty 6. Edify one another by *Christian conference*, Eph. iv. 29. 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' 1 Thess. v. 11. 'Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.' In so far as the body is made up of several Christians, they ought to have suitable conference, for the edification of one another as members, as they are brought together by divine providence. It is the duty of joint members, of any lawful society, to treat among themselves of the interests of it, and its concerns. Fellow-travellers to one place are to be useful this way to one another. Christians are a society by themselves, the communion of saints, they are fellow-travellers towards Zion: Christian conference is the native result of the relation. I shall branch out this in these things.

1. Those who by Providence are cast together *ordinarily*, whether in a family or neighbourhood, so as they must ordinarily converse together, should labour to be useful to, and to edify one another by their communication; Heb. iii. 13. 'But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.' Religion should be carried by us into all our relations; and however we be posted in particular societies, we should always remember our general calling and relation, as visible members of the mystical body, that we converse together as becometh saints.

2. *Occasional* meetings of Christians together should be thus improven. There is a commandment, *to speak of those things while men walk by the way together*, Deut. vi. 7. We find the two disciples going to Emmaus thus exercised, and a happy issue of their conference, Luke xxiv. 14, 15. Were men's spirits habitually heavenly, even occasional encounters would produce something of this sort betwixt fellow Christians.

3. Christians meeting together on holy and spiritual *sacred* occasions, should, in a special manner, be

thus improv'd, as on Sabbath-days, and at sermons. Then it is the day calls for it; and the Lord's word and ordinances minister matter of Christian conference. Days have been, when the people, going or coming from ordinances, have been sweetly employ'd this way, Psalm lv. 24. and, between sermons, either went alone for prayer and meditation, or gathered for Christian conference. But, alas! this is much decay'd, and among none more perhaps than among us. I often see people standing busy speaking together after the public worship is begun, and with my eye or voice, must labour to break off the conference: the which if it were not worldly, would surely be broken off, by the beginning of the public worship. The worldly discourse in our church yard * has been, and is an offence and stumbling-block to strangers; and is like to turn the reproach of the place, whereby God is highly dishonour'd. — This is a horrid profanation of the Lord's day, an open contempt of it and his ordinances, which speaks the gospel senseless and tasteless to you; and is a presage of a stroke, Neh. xiii. 18. Alas! how think ye one should preach to people making such preparation for hearing? How should ye profit by preaching after such communications? Isa. lviii. 13, 14. How shall we pray for God's blessing on your labours and substance, or look to be heard, when ye sacrilegiously rob God of his own day, at this rate? — I beseech you, for the Lord's sake, and your own soul's sake, and as ye would not provoke the Lord to leave me as an idol-shepherd among you, who shall have no power to profit your souls, reform this practice, and either go by yourselves for prayer and meditation, or converse like Christians.

4. Fellow Christians should *communicate* their cases one to another, as far as Christian prudence will allow,

* What the worthy author here justly complains of, is far from being a singular case; but may be too justly applied to most other places, to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of religion, and even of the Christian name; and many are culpable of this sinful practice, of some of whom better things might be expected.

and strengthen, instruct, and edify one another, Psalm lxvi. 16. The wise man observes, that 'two are better than one; for, if the one fall, the other will lift him up,' Eccl. iv. 10. And happy are they who thus have a friend in need. How many might have instruction in what they know not, the edge of temptations blunted, their hearts warmed, and their souls bettered, by a mutual communication of cases, troubles, temptations, and experiences.

5. Appointed *private meetings* of several Christians together, for prayer, and Christian conference, for their mutual edification, providing it marr not family worship, nor be improven to the prejudice of public ordinances, as they are warranted by the word of God, so might be of good use (if rightly improven) to the advancement of religion, Acts xii. 12. Mal. iii. 16. Col. iii. 16. By this means Christians might improve both in gifts and grace, in knowledge and love; and they have been blessed of God to these holy ends unto many: and ordinarily, in parishes where the gospel begins to thrive, they are set up almost as naturally as the birds draw together in the spring; and where the gospel-work is going back, they decay, owing their fall, either to coldness in God's matters creeping in, or with the fiery heat of division.

Motive 1. The *necessity* and *usefulness* of it is great. It is necessary and useful for the honour of God, 1 Pet. ii. 9. for the good of our brethren, Rom. xiv. 19. and for our own good, Prov. xi. 25. The tongue is called our *glory*, because it is the instrument of glorifying God, and so doing good to others: and, without this, men are chargeable with laying up their talents in a napkin, hiding their light under a bushel.

2. The *thriving* or *decay* of religion goes hand in hand with it. Look to the times wherein religion prospered, and you will find, that *they who feared the Lord spoke often one to another*; and as that wore away, so religion decayed. Nearest the heart nearest the mouth. Where the fire is burning on the hearth, the smoke is

going forth of the chimney. Where religion is lively in the heart, it will appear in men's conversation.

3. Times of *abounding sin* and *approaching wrath* is a special season for it, and calls the fearers of God to set about it, Mal. iii. 16. Such is the day in which we live, *wherewithin iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.* God is removing the pillars, and his judgments are abroad in the world; and lesser strokes are sent as forerunners of greater.

Duty 7th and lastly. Be ready to *assist the needy members*, and to communicate of your worldly goods to the poor of the body; 1 John iii. 17, 18. 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' Rom. xii. 13. 'Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality.' It is much to be regretted, that many of the poor, especially the vagrant ones, have no semblance of piety or membership in the body of Christ; yet even these have a right to supply from us, because they are God's creatures. But the poor saints have a double right to it, not only as God's creatures, but as members of Christ; and therefore the church is bound particularly to see to them: Gal. vi. 10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The Lord in his wisdom has seen it meet to make some of his members poor in the world, not only for their own trial, but the trial of their brethren, who are obliged to supply them, Deut. xv. 11. 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land.' See Matt. xxvi. 11. This duty I branch out in five particulars.

1. Seasonably act towards the relief of those members who are fallen into *decay* in the world, as ye have opportunity, Lev. xxv. 35. 'And if thy brother be waxen

‘poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, tho’ he be a stranger or a sojourner that he may live with thee.’ As the keeping of a man that is stumbling from quite falling down, is much alike with helping him up when he is fallen; so, the relieving of a man at the brink of poverty, is much alike with relieving him in it. This duty I take to be aimed at, Luke vi. 35. ‘But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.’ And if it were more exercised, there would be fewer poor than there are.

2. Abound in *private distributions* towards the poor members, at your houses, or otherwise, as you have occasion for it, Matt. vi. 3 Heb. xiii. 16. ‘But to do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.’ Occasions of this nature are ordinary, which try what sort of stewards we are of the good things of this life which providence has put into our hand. It was Job’s comfort in his poverty, that when he was wealthy, he communicated of what he had to the poor, Job xxxi. 19. and downward.

3. Conscientiously give in to the *Sabbath’s collections* to be distributed by the church. God has appointed these, and the Lord Jesus has appointed church-officers for taking care of the poor in the church, Acts vi. 1, 3. And what they are to give out is to come into their hands by the church collections, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. ‘Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.’ So this matter of the Sabbath-day’s collections is not to be looked upon as a business of mere fashion, but as a divine ordinance of the church, which should make people, out of a conscience towards God, to give in to it, in a suitable proportion to the substance God has put into their hands.

4. Grudge not *extraordinary distributions*, towards the relief, not only of other congregations, but other churches whom ye never saw, nor will perhaps see in

the face, Rom. xv. 26. 'For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the saints which are at Jerusalem.' This is a duty of the communion of saints; for all the churches and congregations of saints in the world make but one body of Christ, and they who are at the greatest distance from you are your brethren. Why should any think themselves unconcerned with their distress?

5. Be ready to give of your substance for *pious uses*, towards the advancing of the good of the body, which is the church, Prov. iii. 9. There are several occasions people have of laying out money for pious uses, which want of due consideration makes them to do grudgingly. But if thou hast an occasion put into thy hand, by this money to honour God, to bring about good for the souls of others, to contribute to the good of the church, thou art to look on it as a special duty of the communion of saints, and an occasion of bestowing it to a noble use.

As to what one is to give, every one must conscientiously determine that for himself: but here is the general rule, *viz.* that people are to give in a proportion to the necessity of their brethren, and their own ability, Rom. xii. 13. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. One is to eye,

(1.) *The necessity of their brethren*: for that may be too little for some, which may be more than enough to others whose straits are not so great. And withal, in weighing this their necessity, it is to be noticed, if the poor walk suitable to their condition; for, neither religion nor reason requires us to foster them in voluntary idleness, or in living beyond the bounds of their condition, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.

(2.) *Their own ability*. What one gives must be his own, and not another's, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. Those to whom God has given much, of them much is required; those who have little, the less is required. Our own strait condition does not altogether excuse from it. The widow's two mites were required, and accepted; yea, the people are bound to

labour so that they may have to give to the poor, Eph. iv. 28. 'Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' And whatever is in their power to do for them, they are obliged to do, Acts iii. 6.

Motive 1. Consider our *Lord Christ* looks on what is given to his poor members as given to himself, and will make honourable mention of it at the great day, Matt. xxv. 35, 36. 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Christ is in them, his image upon them, they and he are one; and shall not their fellow-members regard them as such, in supplying of their necessities? We are to part with our all to him at his call. Sometimes he requires it by persecutors, and then we are to give it up at his call for his sake: sometimes by his needy members; and then also it is given to him, *Lent to the Lord.*

2. We are not absolute *masters* of our substance, but *stewards* of it, accountable to the Lord for our management. The church is God's household, and Christ has secured, by the covenant, necessaries for this life to all that are his, Isa. xxxiii. 16. 'Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.' Only he has put the portion of the poor members in the hands of others, to give it out to them, according to their necessity, and what of it is in their hand, Luke xvi. 10, 11, 12. Therefore we shall be unfaithful stewards, if we distribute not to the necessities of the saints.

3. They are *fellow members* of the same body with you, and *fellow-heirs* of the same inheritance, Gal. vi. 10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The spiritual relation that is betwixt us and them challengeth it as a debt of love: Have we not all one Father, one elder Brother, one Spirit knit-

ting us to one Head, and one heritage for ever, to which men are admitted without respect of persons? Suppose several men were travelling together into a far country to receive a common inheritance, would not those who have abundance of spending money supply those who are run short in the way? So should we do with the poor saints.

4. It tends much to the *honour* of God and the *credit* of the gospel, and of the church. Every society looks on themselves as obliged to see to the supply of the wants of their members: and should not the communion of saints be exemplary therein, considering the most strait ties among them? By our Lord's own verdict, 'Giving is a more blessed thing than receiving,' Acts xx. 35. therein we do, in a special manner, appear in likeness to the Lord, Luke vi. 35, 36. And, Oh! should we not honour with our substance, HIM, 'who, 'for our sakes, became poor, that we might be rich?' 2. Cor. viii. 9.

5. It has a *reward of grace* annexed to it, being rightly performed. It is the best way to secure a through-bearing for us and ours, Prov. xxviii. 27. 'He that 'giveth to the poor shall not have lack.' What we have is liable to many accidents; but laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for at our hand, Eccl. xi. 1. 'Cast thy bread upon the 'waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.' What is thus laid out brings in to the giver, Prov. iii. 9, 10. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the 'first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be 'filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with 'new wine.' Solomon observes the accomplishment of it, Prov. xi. 24. 'There is that scattereth, and yet in- 'creaseth.' And tho' our good works do not merit either the temporal or eternal reward of glory; yet even the eternal reward will be according to our works, and that is an eternal truth, 2 Cor. ix. 6. 'But this, I say, 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; 'and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also boun- 'tifully.'

Infer. V. Admission to the Lord's table is a matter of the greatest weight and concern, to be managed and gone about with all solemn seriousness and caution. Who so considers that, being one bread, we declare ourselves thereby one body of Christ, must needs see this; and that there is great need to take heed to our feet in entering on that holy ground. And considering that the church is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the Head, there is need to look well who be admitted thereto as complete members of the visible body. And here it is evident,

1. That there ought not to be a *promiscuous* admission to the Lord's table, which some have contended for. It is not only contrary to our Lord's express command, Matt. vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs;'—but contrary to the nature, use, and ends of that ordinance. It is a distinguishing sign, to put a visible difference betwixt the communion of saints and the communion of sinners; and therefore cannot be common to both: Shall the badge of the members of Christ be put upon those who bear Satan's mark on their foreheads? Shall they be declared of the body of Christ, who are, to the conviction of the church, *of the world lying in wickedness*?

2. Admission to the Lord's table is an act of *church-power* and *government*: for, if the church be a body or society by itself, and the Lord's table the special privilege of that body, whereby one is declared and allowed to be of that body, there can be no lawful admission thereto, but in the way of church-power and government. For, what corporation is there, whereunto one may be admitted without an act of the governing part of it? Our Lord has appointed *governors* in his church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. who have a power to admit to, and debar from the sacrament, Matt. vii. 6. and this belongs not to the minister alone, but to the society of ruling church-officers; that is, the minister and elders, for the keys of government, to which admission belongs, are not given to *one* but to the *unity* of church-officers, 2 Cor. ii. 6.

3. There ought to be a *due trial* of those who are admitted to the Lord's table, that it may be seen whether or not those who seek to be admitted are qualified according to the laws of the visible kingdom of Christ, lest such be brought in as may bring a stain on the society, and corrupt and defile them, instead of edifying them. This also flows from the nature of the church, as a separate society, and a communion of saints: For, to bring in hand over head, without consideration of the persons, is much a case with throwing open the doors of the sanctuary, that any who pleases may enter. It is true, since God only knows the heart, no doubt hypocrites and naughty persons may be let in as honest-hearted Christians; the devil's goats may come in by their likeness to Christ's sheep; but if their outside be promising, that is all the church can judge of, other things are left to God's judgment.

4. The whole matter is of the *greatest weight* and *deepest concern*; and that,

[1.] To the *admitters*, who are, as it were, the porter's of the Lord's house, and should look well whom they admit to the Lord's table, that it be not profaned through their default. There are two things requisite to give one a right, before the church, to the Lord's table.

(1.) A competent measure of *knowledge*; without this people cannot *examine* themselves, nor rightly *discern* the Lord's body, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29. and they are declared none of the Lord's people, Isa. xxvii. 11. 'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.' The minister, whose office is to teach, is the most competent, though, perhaps, not the only judge in this point.

(2.) A *blameless life*, not scandalous and profane, Matt. vii. 6. Those cannot be fit guests at the holy table, whose conversation is openly wicked. And ministers and elders, who are, by their office, overseers of the manners of the people, are to enquire into this.—

And whoſo duly conſiders it, will find it a moſt weighty piece of work.

[2.] To the *church*, and every member thereof: Is it not the concern of every one of the ſociety, who be admitted as fellow-members of the body, to partake of the greateſt privileges of the church? It is the duty of all to do what in them lies, that God's ordinance be not profaned, that the communion of ſaints, which is one bread, receive not harm by the bringing in thereto ſuch as will ſtain and defile it, and that they be not partakers of other men's ſins. 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. *Your glorying is not good; know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened: For, even Chriſt our paſſover is ſacrificed for us.*

Queſt. *What can and ought private Chriſtians to do in this caſe?*

Anſw. If the caſe or offence of the party, being ſuch as renders him unworthy to be admitted, cannot be removed with private admonition, either through the party's obſtinacy, or the publickneſs of it, in that caſe, they ought to bring it to church officers, in order to ſtop the admiſſion, Matt. xviii. 15. If they do not this, they partake of the guilt; if they do, they have delivered their own ſouls, though the church officers do not their duty, and may partake with a good conſcience.

[3.] To the *party himſelf*. It is the taking on of the external public badge of the communion of ſaints, a ſolemn declaration of his being one body with the members of Chriſt, the which muſt needs be of great concern to any one who duly conſiders how ſolemn and awful an action this is. To go about this work ignorantly, indeliberately, and raſhly, without due preparation, is a taking of God's name in vain with a witneſs. Wherefore,

(1.) Let thoſe who have a hand in admiſſion to the Lord's table, be careful and conſcientious to approve themſelves to God in this weighty matter.

(2.) Let the whole communicants be concerned to see to it as they have opportunity.

(3.) Let persons looking that way duly consider the weight of the matter.

Those who have been once orderly admitted, may at every occasion thereafter claim their privilege, in case they have kept free from public scandal. But as for those who have not yet been orderly admitted, they ought to make it a matter of time, that there be no hurry in their admission. I have often complained, that some never shew their desire of admission, till there be little time left either for themselves or us to consider of that weighty business. I have endeavoured to prevent that, by giving intimation some weeks before, but almost still in vain, as to some. May we be helped to take some method hereafter that may effectually prevent it. Is it not highly reasonable that those who by office are to see to this, be satisfied, both as to the knowledge and conversation of those they must admit? And why should people be so conceited of themselves as not allow a competent time for this? Let all consider,

1. The *honour* of Christ, how it is concerned in this matter, that that be not said concerning us, Rom. ii. 24. 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.' The comely order of the Lord's house is, for his sake, to be carefully observed.

2. The ordinance is in *danger* of profanation, and all are in hazard of being guilty of it.—The admitters bring guilt on themselves when they are negligent in this matter, Ezek. xlv. 7. 'In that ye have brought 'into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, 'and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary to 'pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread.' The whole church, when they are not in their duty, Lev. v. 1. and the party, Ezek. xxiii. 39.

3. The church is in *hazard* of being defiled, Heb. xii. 25. *Left any root of bitterness springing up should trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.* Some pro-

sane leaven brought in, may soon leaven the whole lump.

4. The party who comes unwarrantably runs a terrible risk, 1 Cor. xi 29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

5. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be highly prized, and the partakers of it to walk worthy of their character and privilege.

(2.) Let all those who are come to years of discretion duly value this high privilege, and timeously prepare themselves to partake of it. They must needs be under mighty prejudices, or very untender persons, who, without much ado, live without this ordinance, time after time.

(2.) Let those who are partakers remember their character, as declared visible members of the body of Christ, and walk towards the Lord, and towards one another, as those who are the Lord's by personal dedication, and live in church communion.

Thus have I shewn you what a society professors and communicants are, and what lies upon them by virtue of their being thus joined in CHURCH COMMUNION.





