

DEVOUT
MEDITATIONS,
FROM THE
CHRISTIAN ORATORY,
BY THE
REV. BENJAMIN BENNET.
WITH AN
INTRODUCTION
ON RETIRED DEVOTION IN GENERAL.

—♦—
ABRIDGED AND NEWLY ARRANGED IN FOUR PARTS,
BY S. PALMER.

—♦—
FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.
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TO WHICH IS ADDED,
EXTRACTS FROM SCUGAL'S "LIFE OF GOD,
IN THE SOUL OF MAN."

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T. R.
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PREFACE.

Mr. BENNET'S *Christian Oratory* has ever been held in high estimation, by pious Christians of different denominations, as a work well adapted to promote the devotion of the closet, and thereby the interest of practical Christianity.

Dr. *Doddridge*, in his *Character of Authors*, having pronounced the *Christian Oratory*, Mr. Bennet's best piece, adds, "It would have been better had it been less." And the author himself appears from several passages, to have been sensible of this: in his preface he expressly says, "that he had exceeded all due bounds in this work." The editor of this condensed edition, therefore, considers himself as fully justified in his present undertaking; es-

pecially as he has been encouraged by the opinion and earnest persuasion of some judicious friends, who had long wished to see such a work executed.

At first he intended only to strike out with a pen, all that appeared redundant, and to correct the many inaccuracies and typographical errors. In this way he went almost through the whole book; but on the revisal of it, he was not satisfied with what he had done, and therefore wishing this excellent work to have every advantage he could give it, transcribed the whole. In doing this, he availed himself of the opportunity of transposing many words and clauses, as well as some whole paragraphs, and entire sections. He has also occasionally inserted a few words of his own, where they seemed wanting, which are distinguished by [].

The above account chiefly refers to the *MEDITATIONS*, which constitute the principal part of this volume.—These are here classed under four distinct heads, specified in the table; the

author not having strictly observed such an arrangement. A few are wholly omitted, being either of small importance, or superseded by others on the same subjects.

The author's long quotations from other books are also either omitted, or greatly shortened, especially those from SCOU GAL'S *Life of God in the soul of Man*; which excellent little piece it is hoped, most readers of this either do possess, or will procure.— Some long notes of a controversial nature, in answer to books which are little known, are here entirely left out, as having a tendency rather to check than promote that spirit of devotion which it was the chief object of the Meditations to cherish.

But that part of the work which is most condensed, is what relates to retired devotion in general; the arguments for it, and the objections against it; some part of which was at the beginning, and the rest at the end of the book. The substance of both is here

brought together, as seemed most natural, to form an INTRODUCTION to the whole. As there are so many other works extant in which these subjects are treated of, particularly the duty of secret prayer, the editor has retained little more than a syllabus of this part of the original work, which he flatters himself most readers will judge quite sufficient.

It will be no small advantage to this edition that the volume is so far reduced as to be portable in the pocket, while every thing important is retained.

Hackney,
April 23, 1812.

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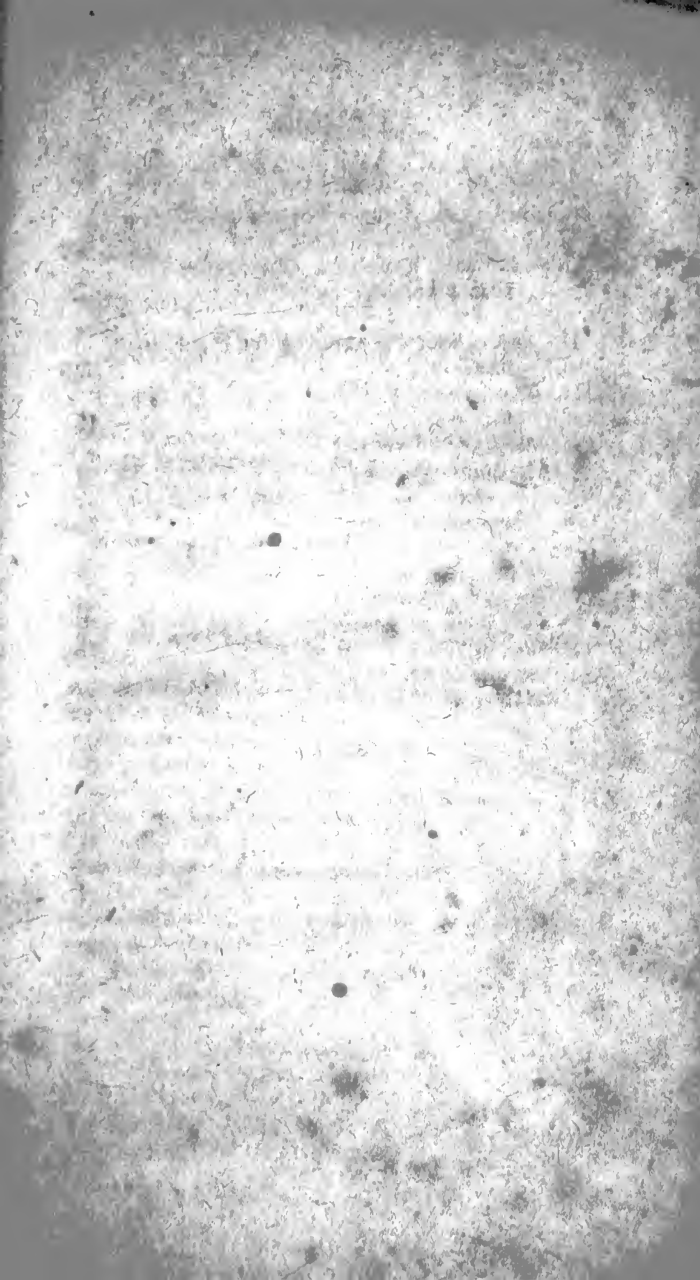
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INTRODUCTION

ON

RETIRED DEVOTION IN GENERAL.

IT will be granted by all experienced Christians, that there is nothing which tends more to preserve religion in its life and vigour, than a steady, regular discharge of the duties of the closet.—“Apostacy (says an excellent divine,) generally begins at the closet door.” I have, therefore, determined to consider the subject of closet-religion distinctly, that I may afford devout readers the best assistance I can in so important an affair.—I shall ground my discourse on that text,

LUKE vi. 12. *And it came to pass in those days, that he (viz. our blessed Lord,) went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

On which passage, observe, *First*, THE PLACE to which he retired; “a mountain:” and more particularly an edifice erected there, called *Proseucha*, that is, an oratory, or prayer-house;

which, literally from the Greek, signifies, *in the ORATORY of God*. That the Jews had *Proseuchæ*, or houses of prayer, distinct from synagogues, and indeed before they had any synagogues, several learned men have proved. Of this kind they suppose the sanctuary mentioned, *Josh. xxiv. 26*, was one. They differed from the synagogues in their form, being open at the top; and in their situation, being in high and retired places, surrounded with trees; as also in their use, being intended for prayer only. One of these we find expressly mentioned, *Acts xvi. 13*. *And on the sabbath we went out of the city, by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: literally, "where it was said there was a house of prayer."* Into one of these houses our Saviour now entered. Let us observe in the next place,

Secondly. The WORK for which he retired thither. He went up to the oratory in this mountain "to pray." It is not necessary to suppose that it was for prayer only; probably when he retired, it was also for reflection and meditation. He had now entered on his public ministry and had sufficient experience of the malice of his enemies. He had also a full prospect of the opposition he must still meet with from the world. He was sending forth his disciples to preach his doctrine, and he foresaw the difficulties they had to struggle with. No question he would, on these occasions, look back on what was past, and forward to what was to come; to the remaining stages of his life, and to the awful concluding tragedy; confirming his resolution, and refreshing his mind, among other considerations, with the joy that was set before him.—However, as this text and other scriptures, speak only of his retiring to *pray*, this might be his principal business. He was "a man of sor-

rows," and therefore it was necessary that he should be a man of prayer. The apostle tells us, *Heb. v. 7.* that "in the days of his flesh," i. e. throughout his state of humiliation, "he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." In his agony in the garden, we are told, "he prayed more earnestly." And, on some occasions, we find, he spent a long time in secret devotion.—We are next to observe,

Thirdly. The TIME he spent in it on the present occasion. "He continued all night" in the *Proseucha*, the oratory of God; that is undoubtedly in the devout exercises which have been mentioned. Having been engaged in the business of his office through the day, preaching, working miracles, answering the cavils of his enemies against himself, his doctrine and his disciples, he retires at night for holding communion with his heavenly father; and for his greater convenience, he goes to one of the Jewish houses of prayer, which stood in a solitary situation on a mountain; and there, so intense was his devotion, that he passed the whole night in religious exercises, solacing himself in his heavenly Father's presence.

From hence I shall take occasion to press upon the disciples of Jesus Christ, the imitation of their master's example, in having their times of retirement from the world, when they are to enter into their oratories, or closets, and there converse with their God.

In treating on this subject, I shall first say something concerning the Christian oratory, or *place* of retirement,—then give an account of the *business* we have to transact there,—take notice of the proper *time* for retirement, and lastly.—shew the *obligations* we lie under to follow the

example of our Lord and Master in this part of his character. After this will follow some specimens of pious Meditation on a variety of useful topics.

§ I. *Of the PLACE of Retirement.*

Concerning this I observe, in the first place, we should make choice of the most secret place we can, to avoid ostentation, and all suspicion of it. On this head we have the advice of our Saviour, *Matt. vi. 6.* "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet." The word signifies an inward retired apartment. Having condemned the pride and vanity of the Scribes and Pharisees in their prayers, "who loved to be seen of men" in the performance of their religious duties, he cautions his disciples against imitating them, and advises them to be as private as possible in their devotions; to "shut the door" of their apartment, and there "pray to their Father who seeth in secret," seeking his approbation alone. Such privacy will be of use to prevent interruption, and it will be more convenient for the management of our work. The use of the voice may be of advantage, in which we may take the greater liberty, when most withdrawn from the hearing of others, as well as in regard to our bodily posture.

Some have thought it subservient to the end of retirement, to have the place of devotion solely appropriated thereto, as this would be a likely means of putting the thoughts of all worldly things out of the mind. But as it cannot be expected that the generality of Christians should

have such accommodations in their houses, so it is not of such importance as to deserve any great solicitude. The same place may serve for sacred and common work at different times, provided we attend to both with a suitable temper of mind, and exercise a due degree of watchfulness. If the heart be in frame, the Christian may be devout in any place that is tolerably convenient. However, as the work I am recommending is of the greatest importance of any in the world, we should endeavour to be provided for it in the best manner our circumstances will allow. A convenient apartment is very desirable; and it is of great importance to have it furnished with such books as may be helpful to us for all the purposes of devotion. A Bible, a commentary, a psalm book, and other religious tracts well chosen, are the chief ornaments of a Christian's closet, and of the greatest use to him in his work there. Such as cannot attain the best accommodations, must not for that reason neglect private devotion, but perform it as well as they can under all their disadvantages. Those members of families who have no choice of apartments, should endeavour to accommodate one another; and sometimes they may use Isaac's oratory, which was the open field.

§ II. *Of the Work to be done in Retirement.*

1. PRAYER.—Our Lord went into the oratory on the mountain “to pray;” to converse with his God and Father. And this is to be our stated employment in our closets. Secret prayer is generally considered as a duty of such importance, that some serious persons seem to make it the whole of closet devotion, whereas this is only one branch of it. It is, however, allowed that prayer, properly so called, is a principal exercise

of devotion, and therefore it shall be here first considered, though with brevity, as it is largely insisted upon in many books of devotion, to which I refer the reader for what relates to the properties and several qualifications of prayer: Only observing in general, that acceptable prayer must be offered in sincerity; in faith; in the name of Christ; with fervour and importunity.— These are essential and unchangeable; the same in secret as in public. But the matter of secret prayer is various, according to the variable circumstances of Christians; for

In secret prayer, we should have a special respect to our present case and situation: as for instance, the supply of a present necessity; the pardon of a late transgression; direction in any affair of importance now depending; deliverance from an imminent danger, or threatening temptation; assistance and success in any duty of peculiar importance and difficulty; support under any heavy trial, &c. And if we have lately received any signal mercy, we should, in our private devotions, be particular in expressing a grateful sense of our obligations for it. In short, our prayers should be formed according to our hearts, as our hearts should be formed according to our present circumstances.

From hence it is evident, that a greater liberty may be taken in closet-prayer, than is allowable in public, with respect to matter, method, and expression. And on this account as well as others, I cannot but think what is called extemporary prayer is better suited to private devotion, than the use of forms; though I doubt not but serious persons, who have been long accustomed to them, may exercise great devotion, and find much comfort and benefit in the ordinary use of

them. Even they, however, if they endeavour it, might perhaps surmount the necessity of a stated form, which cannot answer every emergency, nor take in all the variety of a Christian's case.

But notwithstanding the special regard that ought to be had to our present circumstances, we ought not, in our private prayers, to neglect those subjects of devotion which are common to all Christians at all times. In order to pay a proper attention to these, it is of importance to understand the matter and method of prayer in the whole compass of it, including invocation, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, self-dedication, and the conclusion; the order of which may at different times be varied, and one part of prayer may at one time be dwelt upon longer than at another, as there may be occasion. But some regular method is ordinarily advantageous in private, though not so necessary as in public worship.

II. PSALMODY is by no means unsuitable to accompany our secret prayers. We are exhorted to "speak to ourselves," as well as to "admonish one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Singing, though with a low, suppressed voice, might be of great use to stir up our devout affections, and particularly to compose and cheer our spirits when we labour under any dejection; to bring our minds into a proper frame for the other parts of our work in our retirement; or, if we close with it, to leave a happy relish upon our spirits, of what we have been engaged in. But besides these immediate acts of worship, there are other religious exercises to be performed in our retirement, which are of indispensable importance. The next which I shall mention is,

INTRODUCTION.

III. **READING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.**—It is supposed that the Jewish *Proseuchæ* were appropriated to prayer, and that the law was not read in them, as it was in the synagogues. Be this as it may, it is certain that in the Christian oratories we are to converse with God in his word, as well as in prayer. This is what I would earnestly recommend. God “has written to you the great things of his law:” do not account them as “strange things;” do not neglect them as foreign things, in which you have no concern; but let it be a part of your daily closet religion to peruse your Bible; to meditate on the law of the Lord, and the great things contained therein. As this is a matter of the utmost consequence, in which many Christians are defective, I shall endeavour to assist you in it, by laying before you some brief directions.

1. **Make choice of proper parts of scripture.**—I cannot admit that reading all the books of scripture, in the order in which they lie, is the most profitable method. All scripture indeed is useful for the purposes for which it was written, but all is not alike useful, or equally fitted for the service of the closet. Therefore, I say, make a prudent choice. Select those parts of the Bible that you can best understand and best improve, as the subject of your more constant reading — There is a two-fold way of reading the scripture; the one is in a way of rational study and inquiry; the other in a way of devotion. The former I recommend as a help to the latter.

2. **Fix the method of reading; and take care to have your work prepared before hand, that you may not be at a loss what portion of scripture to read, nor satisfy yourself to read any where, just as the Bible may open.** It might be useful to

cast the books which you intend to peruse into a sort of kalendar. I would generally have a select psalm joined with every part of scripture, with a view to assist your devotion.

3. Endeavour to comprehend, as well as you can, the meaning of what you read. There is no more devotion in perusing an English translation of the Bible than a Latin one, if you understand neither. It was a very proper question of Philip to the eunuch: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" We should often put this question to ourselves. In order to read the word of God with understanding, it would be of advantage to consult some good commentary upon it; one that is short, and that gives the sense and connection in a few words, is best fitted for your assistance in your daily devotional reading.

4. Expound that part of scripture which lies before you to yourselves; preach upon it to your own hearts, and improve it so as may best answer the purposes of devotion. That I may fully explain my meaning, I shall give you some specimens of that method of commenting upon scripture, and making application of it, which I intend.

5. Endeavour to get the heart impressed with the important things contained in the scriptures, and formed according to the main tenor and purport of the whole. The word of God should *dwell* in us; the doctrines, the laws, and the spirit of the Bible, should be transcribed into our souls, so that it may become a law within; inwrought, as it were, into the frame and constitution of the mind. Thus it was with the believing Romans, as the apostle speaks, *Chap. vi. 17.* "Ye have obeyed from the heart

that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you," or rather, *into which ye were delivered*. The word rendered *form*, properly signifies a *type* or *mould*, and the allusion is to the impression of a stamp or seal upon wax, or to the pouring of liquid metals into a mould, of which they receive the same shape and image. So Christians, by a due application of the truths contained in the divine word, receive the lively impress of them upon their souls, and are "changed into the very same image;" which is the image of God himself, as engraved in the sacred oracles, and particularly as exhibited in the person and character of Jesus Christ:

In order to this, read the Scriptures with pure intentions; with minds free from prejudice, sincerely desirous to know the truth. Read with suitable affections: with deep humility and teachableness of mind: with profound reverence, considering God as speaking to you. When you peruse his awful threatenings, let your souls "tremble at his word." When you are conversant with the glad tidings and promises of the gospel, exercise love, gratitude, and joy. Make present use of the portions of Scripture which you read. Do not merely entertain your minds with speculations on the truths they contain, but make immediate application of them. They will supply you with matter for meditation and prayer, as well as prepare your minds for these exercises. Treasure them up also in your memories, to repel temptation, as Christ did, and to give law to your thoughts, words and actions. In short, practice should be the great end of all our reading. "The Scripture," says *Erasmus*, "will be read with the greatest profit, if, when a man takes it into his hand, it be with this design, that he may become a better man, and correct

“ his own life, and all his desires, by the rules
“ of it.”

Once more; in all depend on God, and implore his Spirit for assistance in this work, that you may understand, apply, and improve, what you read, as you have now been directed. How successful a student was David in the Holy Scriptures; and yet you find him often imploring further light and instruction. “ Open thou mine
“ eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out
“ of thy law,” &c. Let us imitate this great and good man, praying for the Spirit of God to impart his light and influence in reading his word. We are not indeed to expect a new light, that is, a new revelation, distinct from, or supplementary to, the scripture; nor are we to lay aside our reason and understanding, relying upon an immediate afflatus, or inspiration, in reading and interpreting the written word: that would be downright enthusiasm. Yet we may rationally expect the Spirit’s help in reading the Bible, if we humbly seek it, in order to a right knowledge and suitable improvement of it. Nor will you ever know the truths of Christ, so as to feel the power, and taste the sweetness of them, unless the Holy Spirit opens your eyes and hearts. Nor can this reasonably be expected without frequent fervent prayer for his sacred influence.

Another employment in the Christian oratory is,

IV. SELF-EXAMINATION:—which is the trial of ourselves; our spiritual state, our lives and actions: bringing them to the test, or standard, which is the word of God. This contains the essential distinguishing marks of a Christian, by which he may be known. With these, therefore,

we are to compare ourselves, in order to judge what we are. He is a true Christian who possesses the temper, and maintains the walk here required. He that wants these is "reprobate," that is, disapproved.

The knowledge of our state in general, whether we be sincere Christians or not, is what may be attained; which is necessarily implied in the scripture exhortation to self-examination. See 1 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?" Again, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Such knowledge is what many have attained. "We know," saith the apostle, 1 John, iii. 14. "that we have passed from death unto life." Nor do I apprehend the assurance of our spiritual state is so extraordinary as some would imagine. And it is of such high importance, that it is wonderful any thoughtful Christian can be easy one week or day without it. I cannot but earnestly recommend it to every reader diligently to seek after it. For this purpose examine and try yourselves over and over again, and cease not till you come to some clearness with reference to your everlasting state.

Do you ask how this may be known? I answer, by the evidence from scripture and our own hearts compared together. The one describes the Christian, the other reports whether we answer that description or not. The scripture pronounces him to be a Christian, and in a state of salvation, who repents of sin, who believes in Jesus Christ, who loves God with all his heart, who "through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body; who by a patient continuance in

“well doing seeks after glory, honor and immortality; who loves the brethren, who takes up his cross and follows Christ,” &c. Our concern therefore, is to examine whether this be our character or not. If my conscience tells me that I answer to this description, I may safely draw the conclusion, that I am a true Christian and shall be saved.

It must, however, be observed, that a solid, satisfactory evidence of our spiritual state is ordinarily the fruit of much experience, and of considerable progress in religion. In order to the attainment of it, therefore, it is of indispensable importance, that we not only often repeat the examination of our hearts and lives, but that we labour after higher attainments in all the branches of practical godliness. The brighter our Christian graces shine, and the more abundant the fruits of holiness are in our lives, the more easily will they be discerned. Nor must we neglect to implore the illumination of the blessed Spirit of God, who is said to “witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God.” There may possibly be what is called the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, being an immediate communication of light and joy to the soul; but this is what none have any warrant to expect. The ordinary method of his operation is, witnessing *with the spirits* of God’s people, i. e. concurring with the testimony of their own consciences respecting their religious character, in consequence of diligent examination of themselves by his written word.

Let us then take proper time and pains to settle this great point, and not rest satisfied till it be decided, on what foundation we stand as to our hope for another world. Let us in good

earnest search and try ourselves, and beg that God would "search and try us;" that is, help us in the trial of ourselves, and "if there be any wicked way in us, that he would lead us into the way everlasting."

To prevent unnecessary discouragement to any, it may be proper to subjoin one caution; viz. not to look too high, nor expect more in ourselves than the word of God makes to be essential to the Christian character. Let not any conclude that they are not *real* Christians, because they are not among the most *eminent* Christians. The present inquiry is, not concerning the *degrees* of grace, but the *truth* of it; which may consist with many imperfections though not with any allowed sin. The grand question is, whether you are "upright before God, and have truth in the inward parts;" or in other words, whether it is your sincere desire and constant aim in all things to please God and be accepted of him.

But besides this examination of our general state, and prevailing character, there is a review of ourselves and our actions which should be our daily business. We are exhorted, *Psalms* iv. 4, to "commune with our own hearts upon our bed, (or in our chamber,) and be still." In our place of retirement, we are to converse with ourselves, with our own hearts; and, among other things, about what has passed in the day. A practice which has been recommended by heathen moralists, particularly by *Pythagoras*, in what are called his "golden verses." He advises his scholars every night to review the actions of the day, and ask themselves such questions as these: "What have I done? What duty have I omitted? Wherein have I transgressed?"

&c. *Seneca* says, "that the way to govern the senses and passions is to call the mind daily to account;" and tells us, *Sextius* did this, at the close of the day, addressing himself to his conscience in the following manner: "What evil of thine hast thou healed to day? What vice hast thou withstood? In what respect art thou better?"—"Anger," says he, "will cease and become more mild when it expects daily to be brought before the judge. Nothing more advantageous than this constant custom of searching through the day. How composedly shall we sleep after such a trial, &c." He adds, "I daily take this course, plead my cause and sit in judgment on myself, and at night, when all is hushed and still, I look over my words and actions, and hide nothing from myself." "In such a controversy thou wast too keen; such an one thou rebukedst too freely; be upon thy guard for the future."—What noble examples are these! How inexcusable shall we Christians be if we be found less circumspect than these Pagans!

The advantages of such a course are not few or small. Particularly; we may hereby attain a clear knowledge of ourselves. He that is daily beholding his face in this glass, cannot easily mistake or forget what manner of man he is.—Hereby we shall be directed in the special duty that lies before us. Examination is in order to correction and amendment. If we rest in this exercise without looking any further, we abuse it and ourselves.—It will many ways assist present devotion as it will suggest matter for confession, petition, or thanksgiving.—It will be an excellent preservative against sin, and contribute not a little to promote circumspection and accuracy of life. It is scarcely possible to pursue the method I am recommending, and to

live in a loose incautious manner. I will only add,—as such a course tends to make life more innocent and fruitful, so it will render death more safe and comfortable. Did we accustom ourselves thus to settle accounts every day, we should have the less to do at last.

I shall subjoin a few brief DIRECTIONS for the better conducting the work of self-examination.—1. Acquaint yourselves well with the rule by which you are to examine, which is the word of God; and consider nothing as sin or duty but what it makes such.—2. Be full and particular in your self-inquiries. Examine how every part of the day was spent—how you conducted yourself in every situation—in what manner you engaged in your business—how you performed your religious duties—how you behaved in company—how you governed your passions—what opportunities you embraced or neglected for doing good, &c. And do not neglect a transient review, when you have not time for more.—3. Do not examine merely to censure, but to approve as there may be occasion. We should not place religion in complaining: we ought to be thankful for the good we do or get any day, and may take the comfort of it.—4. It may be proper sometimes to take down in writing the more remarkable transactions and occurrences of the day, whether agreeable or otherwise, the review of which may be highly beneficial.—5. Besides the stated reviews of every day, there are times that call for more special examinations; such as the Lord's day, a sacramental sabbath, or the day preceding it; a fast day, new-year's day, or a birth-day; when you may revise former accounts of yourself, and compare your state at different periods, in order to judge what progress you have made

in religion, or what declensions you have suffered.—6. Endeavour to keep conscience tender and faithful, that it may duly discharge its office in accusing or excusing. In order to which never stifle its convictions, nor act contrary to its dictates.—7. Apply to God for his direction and assistance in this duty, that you may not deceive yourselves, but judge righteous judgment. And let your addresses to him in prayer be regulated by what you find to be the result of your impartial examination of yourselves.—Finally, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and upon every censure of yourselves, remember, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I now proceed to another duty of retirement; namely:

V. MEDITATION.—By this is meant, not a transient reflection, of a serious nature, but a fixed contemplation upon some religious topic, which is purposely chosen to occupy the mind, with a view either to gain a more thorough acquaintance with it; or to have the heart more deeply impressed by it, and to apply it for the purpose of spiritual edification.

Concerning this religious exercise I would make a few observations.

1. That it is not a matter of indifference, or a kind of free-will offering, which may be performed or not; but that, so far as persons have capacity for it, they should regard it as an important duty. As such it is recommended in scripture. Consideration is frequently enjoined, and the neglect of it severely reprov'd. Meditation on the sacred writings was expressly command-

ed to the Jews, as well as a diligent reading of them. Thus *Jos. i. 8.* "The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Self-converse, which is one branch of meditation, is prescribed, *Psalm iv. 4.* "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, (or in your bed-chamber) and be still." This sacred exercise is also recommended by the examples of good men. We read concerning Isaac, that "he went out into the field, at even-tide, to meditate." And David tells us that he habituated himself to the contemplation of the nature, the works, and the word of God. "I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." And he mentions it as the character of a good man that "he reads the word by day, and meditates thereon by night."

2. Though it may be allowable to reflect upon a variety of subjects successively, yet it is advisable ordinarily to fix upon ONE, and keep to that; explaining and applying it as you are able. In order to which it will be of use to choose it before hand, that you may not be at a loss; and it may be convenient to note down a number of subjects, as they may occur, of which there is an endless variety, sufficient to employ the Christian through the whole of his life. Of these it is proposed hereafter to give an ample specimen. But besides those that are previously noted down, occasional subjects of meditation will frequently occur, in your families, in your company, in your walks, as well as in the course of your reading, which it will be wise and useful to take the earliest opportunity of improving by pious reflections, which you may

sometimes do with advantage, while your hands are employed in your business, or while you are going from place to place. Such general and loose reflections on the occurrences which you casually meet with, may be of great use, particularly to keep worse thoughts out of the mind. But I would recommend,

3. That you set apart some particular seasons for the express purpose of pious meditation; and that having fixed upon some interesting subject, you pursue it at length in the most orderly method you can; which will be found of great use to prevent confusion, to give you just and comprehensive views of the subject, as also to enable you to make the best practical improvement of it. Sometimes it may be advisable to read an essay on the subject upon which you purpose to employ your own thoughts, as a guide to them. And if, after you have been reading the Scriptures or any other pious book, you accustom yourselves to meditate on the subject, it will contribute greatly to improve your knowledge of that subject, as well as to fix the ideas in your memory, and thus cause your reading to turn to the best account. A few good books carefully read, and thus meditated upon, will contribute more to your increase of knowledge, and religious improvement, than the bare reading of ten times the number of volumes in the ordinary way, without such subsequent reflections.

4. I reckon it best, frequently at least, to *write* the meditation, especially when it is on some specific and peculiar subject. Though reflections may be occasionally made without the labour of writing, or any special care in ranging the thoughts, the kind of meditation I am now

recommending will require a little more pains;— but we need not be very solicitous about method or style. What are the psalms, but a collection of divine meditations upon various occasions answerable to the circumstances that David and others were in? We should look upon their practice as an example to us, and set it before us for our imitation and encouragement.*

§ III. Of the TIME of Retirement:

I do not apprehend that there are any hours appointed by God for devotion, or which may be called *canonical* hours, wherein our worship will be more acceptable than at another time. The Jews, indeed, had their hours of prayer: viz. one was the *third* hour, or nine o'clock:— another the *sixth*, or twelve o'clock; and another the *ninth* hour i. e. three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of the evening sacrifice. See these referred to as observed by Peter and John, David and Daniel. *Acts* x. 9. iii. 1. *Psal.* lv. 17. *Dan.* vi. 10. The like practice was afterwards taken up by Christians, from a humour that early prevailed of modelling their worship according to the manner of the Jewish church. We have frequent mention, among the primitive writers, of “the hours of prayer,” which, at length, were multiplied to six or seven. These canonical hours are not only held sacred by the Romanists, but have been had in veneration by some Protestants, who have written books of devotion accommodated to them.—I need not

* The practice of occasionally *writing* meditations, has this recommendation, that they may be reviewed with some advantage at a future period.

stand to argue with impartial men, that all this is an arbitrary service, and can plead no higher authority than what is called ecclesiastical. It is certain that, under the gospel, God has not appointed any particular hours of the day as sacred to devotion, and men have no authority to do it. Here every Christian is left to his own liberty and choice.

Neither has God told us how often in the day we should retire for devotion. And yet the scripture sufficiently intimates that we should be frequent in it, particularly in prayer. This is the least that can be intended where we are exhorted to "pray without ceasing, to pray always, and not faint," &c. Though prayer is not to engross all our time (as some have weakly thought), yet he who seldom prays, cannot be thought to fulfil these precepts.

But the scripture not only directs us to pray often, but to pray *daily*. This may be collected from the Lord's prayer, in which we are taught to say "Give us this day our daily bread." And we may farther conclude from scripture, that we ought to pray *twice* every day. As the daily sacrifice under the law was offered morning and evening, so it seems reasonable that we should have our morning and evening sacrifice continually. There appears to be a natural fitness in it, that we should begin and close the day with God. How reasonable is it that in the morning we should look up, and adore the hand that has protected us through the night, and commit ourselves to its conduct through the day. It is also equally reasonable that in the evening we should review the day, own the divine providence in the blessing of it, and commend ourselves to its protection for the night. It is, as the psalmist

speaks, "a good thing, it is decent and comely to
"give thanks unto the Lord; to shew forth his
"loving kindness in the morning, and his faith-
"fulness every night."

The examples of good men recorded in scripture seem to carry the matter higher, and recommend three times to be observed in the course of daily devotion. Thus David resolved. *Psalm* iv. 17. "Evening and morning, and
"at noon, will I pray." We find also that Daniel regularly pursued the same course. *Ch.* vi. 10. And the Christian may find his account in doing the like. A short retirement at noon, when circumstances will admit of it, may be a repast in the midst of the business, hurry, and company of the day, may keep the fire of the altar in, and prevent the mind from being immersed in the cares of this life.

But as God has not appropriated any particular hours to devotion, the time of which is left to every one's discretion, we should choose those seasons which, on due consideration of our circumstances, we judge most convenient. In the morning, it may ordinarily be best to prepare for devotion immediately after we rise, and not suffer any other business to intervene. At night we may be more at liberty. Though it will be best to fix on some hour which is generally found most convenient, we need not tie ourselves invariably to observe it, as several things may unavoidably fall out to interrupt us; and therefore we should allow ourselves a latitude, and leave room for unforeseen impediments; still guarding, however, against all unnecessary avocations, [and never deferring our evening devotions to so late an hour as to be rendered unfit for them by drowsiness, or to be tempted to hurry

them over. In general it is advisable, where business will permit, to perform the worship of the closet, as well as of the family, before the evening repast, as after it there is danger of becoming sleepy or slothful.]

I shall close this head with answering an inquiry which some readers may find occasion to make, viz. Whether it be necessary to go through all the work that has been prescribed every time we retire? Can it be expected of the main body of Christians that they should have capacity or time for it?—I do suppose there may be some serious Christians who are not qualified to perform all this service at any time. Persons of no education and of mean abilities can make little or nothing of mediation on particular subjects or expounding scripture to themselves, [it will be sufficient for them seriously to read and apply what they meet with in books.]—Others of better capacities can seldom go through all this work for want of time. This is especially the case with labouring people and servants, whose business occupies almost all the time they can spare out of their beds. Some masters seem to look upon servants only as another species of working cattle, so as to allow them scarcely any time to themselves. It cannot be expected of persons thus situated that they should pursue the course recommended.

It is also allowed that none are always in such circumstances as to admit of all these exercises. The most devout may sometimes be indisposed, or may want time for them; as for instance, when upon a journey, or when taken up with and fatigued by necessary business. In such cases it may be sufficient to commit themselves to God by a short and serious prayer. But

doubtless there are many Christians who may ordinarily attend to the business recommended, if it be not their own fault, at least once every day. One hour might suffice for all the purposes of devotion according to the plan proposed. And surely one hour out of the twenty-four is but a small proportion of our time, to be redeemed from the common business of life, for work so important and so profitable. Let none admit of such excuses as their own consciences will not justify in the prospect of the tribunal of God.

They who are so taken up with necessary business that they really have not time every day for all these religious exercises, might perhaps secure an hour for them, one or two evenings in the week. And it is particularly desirable that they should improve the Lord's day for this purpose. This is sacred time, set apart for the work of our souls and another world, when we should dismiss this world, and be wholly at leisure for God and the concern of eternity. On this day, besides the worship of the sanctuary, most persons may find considerable time to spend in their Oratories, in reading, meditation, self-examination and prayer. It cannot with any degree of modesty be pretended by any, that the course recommended would bring too great a burden upon them: there is something so shocking in such an objection, that no Christian should ever think of urging it.

Let us briefly review the work recommended in the whole compass of it, and see what there is burdensome, or discouraging. In the morning after a few serious thoughts and ejaculations while rising and dressing, a chapter is read; then follows a prayer of a quarter of an hour or

half an hour, as circumstances admit; at night a review is made of the day. A chapter is read with such remarks as may easily occur, (or with some good exposition) and the whole closed with prayer. This is recommended as a christian's ordinary daily course of devotion, with such variations as accidental circumstances call for. Besides this, he is advised to devote an hour or two on some evening in the week, but especially on the Lord's day, for more special meditation and self-examination. I pretend not to prescribe the precise order of these duties, any more than the length of them. As there is no scripture injunction respecting either, both must be left to every one's own judgment and conscience.

§ IV. *Of the OBLIGATIONS to worship God in Retirement.*

SOMETHING of religion seems inseparable from the nature of man, as a creature capable of it. Accordingly, some of the heathen writers have mentioned this as the grand difference between a man and a beast.—Divine worship is essential to religion, and is what the nature of God, and our dependance upon him and obligations to him require. This is plainly taught us by the light of reason; and as this teaches the necessity of worship in general, it also recommends secret worship in particular, as being attended with advantages peculiar to itself.—The holy scriptures, though they do not expressly institute it, plainly suppose it to be an acknowledged duty, and lay down such rules for the discharge of it as confirm our obligations to it. The Bible is full of this subject.

Secret worship appears to have been the practice of the church of God, and of all the sincere members of it, in every age of the world. Particular instances, as recorded in scripture, are needless; we are encompassed about with a cloud of witnesses.—Christ supposes his disciples would pray, and therefore he gives them rules for the performance of the duty. Christians, through the whole of the New Testament are represented as men of devotion.—And Christ himself was an eminent pattern of it. How he withdrew from company and prayed alone, has already been represented, and therein doubtless he designed to set us an example.—Once more, such is the state of Christians, their dependance on God, and their own insufficiency for the business of religion without constant supplies from above, that the plea of necessity in this case, is enough to prove the duty before us, and may supercede all further arguments. The exercises of retirement, meditation and prayer are the appointed means of deriving all kinds of spiritual supplies from above, whereby the Christian is strengthened for his warfare, and fortified against the world and the impression of sensible things. In short, he hereby obtains “grace to help in every time of need.” And our spirits will flag and our graces will languish unless refreshed by constant intercourse with the great paternal spirit.—Even the soul of Christ, though in a state of innocence and perfection, had so much feeling of its dependence, as to seek supports, supplies, and comfort from his God and father, by constant devotion. And can we think to be safe amidst so many dangers, and successful in religion without it? I appeal to all serious persons in the world whether they do not find that religion pros-

pers or decays in the soul according to their diligence in the duties of the closet.

But instead of enlarging on the arguments for a constant and careful attention to them, I shall close with a few directions.

§ V. *Directions respecting private Devotion.*

1. ENDEAVOUR after a true spirit of devotion, the foundation of which is laid in the inward renewing of our natures.—2. Guard against every thing that would keep you out of your closets; excess of worldly business, diversions, company, &c. The society even of friends must be enjoyed with caution. *Amici fures temporis*, says *Lord Bacon*. “Friends are robbers of our “time.” Clubs and frequent evening visits must be watched against, self-denial and resolution must be exercised if we would secure time for the duties of devotion. 3. Make the devotion of the closet subservient to a holy life, in all its branches. If your devotion make you proud, censorious, uncharitable, sour and morose, ready to justify yourselves and despise others; much more if you take encouragement from it to acts of injustice, fraud, or fleshly indulgence, it is a false devotion, and the sacrifice of the wicked, “which is an abomination to the Lord.”—“It “is not true religion,” says *Lactantius*, “which a man leaves behind him at church,” and the same may be said of the devotion of the closet; it should appear in its good effects in our temper and conduct out of it: in the constant integrity and usefulness of our converse. I may add, in the serenity of our minds, and the cheerfulness of our behaviour. A cloudy face is far from being the natural result of true devotion, which rather

tends to give an amiable and inviting lustre to the countenance: certainly none in the world have so much cause to be cheerful as holy and devout persons. They that have a good God, and a good conscience to converse with, and are upon good terms with both, have a continual feast, and it becomes them to be joyful at it.

Some OBJECTIONS may be made to that course of retired devotion which has been recommended in this work; but I reckon them rather as excuses for sloth and disaffection to religion, than real reasons: viz. "the want of time—that all this is more than is necessary or than God has required," &c. For the proper answer I shall leave the reader to his own conscience.

I am ashamed to say that some may be found so far perverting the gospel of Christ as to plead, that such a course of closet duty savours of *Legalism*. "We are to be saved, (say they) by believing, not by working; by Christ only, in a way of free grace."—If the meaning be, that grace saves us without sanctifying us, and that Christ was holy and devout in our stead, to excuse us from being so, it is downright enthusiasm, and subverts the whole gospel. We are saved by Christ, but it is "from our sins."—His grace appears most eminently in the refinement of our minds, the spirituality and devotion of our tempers. And it is by our diligent exertion of our powers in the use of means, of which reading, meditation, self-examination and prayer, are some of the chief, that the life of holiness is maintained in the soul, and it is prepared for the perfect vision and enjoyment of God in heaven.

DEVOUT
MEDITATIONS.

PART THE FIRST.

Meditations on Several Chapters in the Bible.

MEDITATION I.

On Reading the First Chapter of GENESIS.

I HAVE here an account of the creation of the world in six days: the particulars, the order and manner of the work. I learn that it was accomplished by the word of the Almighty. As it is elsewhere said, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth. He speak, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast." He only said, "let there be light," and there was light. "Let there be a firmament," and there was a firmament, &c.

Here also I have an account of the formation of Man: how he was distinguished from the rest of the creatures, being made in the image or likeness of God; rational, holy, and immortal, having dominion over this inferior creation.

The chapter concludes with God's review of his work, and his approbation of it. "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good;" exactly suited to answer the end of its creation and the design of the all-wise Creator.

How full a demonstration is here of an eternal, necessary, infinitely-perfect Being. How strong a proof of the existence of that God, whom, as a Christian, I am taught to worship. How authentic, clear, and satisfactory a history is this of the original of all things, in comparison with what heathen philosophy could ever attain to. What an illustration is here of the attributes, and the perfection of the divine nature! How amazing that power which spake such a world as this, and the glorious luminaries above, into existence. How admirable the wisdom that shines forth in the variety, order, and harmony of all things. O my soul! how worthy an object is this glorious Being of thy fear, thy love, thy dependence, and thy worship.— Let me ever remember him as *my* Creator, and "glorify him with my body and my spirit which are his."

MEDITATION II.

On the SECOND Chapter of Genesis.

To preserve the memory of so glorious a work as that of creation, and to give opportunity for conversing with its author, I here find a Sabbath, a day of sacred rest, was appointed: "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it." And if infinite wisdom saw it convenient for innocent man in paradise to have a stated time for solemn and social acts of devotion, how much more necessary is it for him in his present depraved state; being fallen into such a sad forgetfulness of God, of his duty, and his happiness. O my soul, be thankful for this day. Acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God in the appointment of it. Remember to keep it holy. Endeavour to withdraw thy thoughts from earthly things, and let this day be as one of the days of heaven to thee. Sabbath religion was from the creation; it is the good old way: walk in it, and never be ashamed of it. The homage due to the Creator, and the care of thy highest interests, demand this of thee.

In the summary repetition of things in this chapter, the creation of man is resumed, and further explained. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Here I observe a signal instance of the power of God, in raising out of the dust so admirable a structure as the human body. I also learn that the soul hath a different original, being breathed from God himself: an intimation of its immortality, and of its superior dignity and excellence above the

body. The one is of the earth earthy; the other a spirit, from heaven. "Particula divinæ auræ:" a ray of divinity; the offspring of God. O may I duly value it, and not sacrifice it for the sake of a little animated dust, but with suitable care secure its immortal interest.

Man was constituted lord of this lower creation, and for his greater delight, God provided a most pleasant garden, where he was to reside, and which it was his business to cultivate. But amidst all the enjoyments of Paradise he wants something to complete his happiness. God himself declared, "It is not good that man should be alone," and kindly provided an help meet for him; formed out of him a second self, to be the partner of his cares and pleasures, and to be united with him in the bond of love and affection.

But no sooner is his happiness thus completed than all is lost. Adam had received a positive law not to eat of a certain tree on pain of death.—The thing was indifferent in itself, and therefore a proper test of man's obedience to his maker and sovereign. The penalty threatened was death.—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This penalty he incurred. The woman, indeed, was first in the transgression: listening to the suggestions of the old serpent, she ventured to eat, and then tempted him to follow her example. He yielded, and they both became mortal creatures. O my soul! guard against the snares of a prosperous state. When thou hast a garden, and an *Eve*, beware of the *serpent*.

It was this transgression that opened the sluices, and let in the flood of calamities which have overflowed the world. "By one man's dis-

“obedience many were made sinners.” “In Adam all die.” When I reflect on the nature of the crime, I cannot think the punishment unjust. It was an act of rebellion against the sovereignty of God. There was, however, a reprieve granted, and a redemption from the curse provided. How exceeding abundant that mercy which proposed a Saviour! how rich the grace that found a ransom! O my soul! contemplate in this instance the evil nature of sin.—Every deliberate known sin is “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” It is a rejection of God’s authority, and setting up our will against his. Let me “stand in awe, and sin not.” Lord subdue my will entirely to thine. “Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, that I may be innocent from the great transgression.” And enable me cordially to embrace the great redemption wrought out by the woman’s promised seed, and to live under the constraining influence of redeeming love; that so having felt the evils of the first Adam’s disobedience, I may rejoice in all the happy effects of the second Adam’s righteousness. “As sin hath reigned unto death, so may grace reign through that righteousness unto eternal life.”

MEDITATION III.

On the First Psalm.

In this psalm I observe, in the *first* place, the character of the blessed man. He is described negatively in these particulars. “He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” By which is meant, that he is distinguished from such persons in his principles, his

temper, and his conduct in life. He doth not approve of their course, imitate their example, or walk in their way; which is the way of vanity, worldliness, pride, profaneness, neglect of God and religion. He may, indeed, through the surprize of a temptation, step into the way of sinners; but he does not *walk*, or so much as *stand*, in it; much less doth he *seat* himself in the scorner's chair, despising religion, and making a jest of sacred things. On the contrary he is thus positively described: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." He not only reads the Holy scriptures, but he studies them, and they are his constant exercise and entertainment. He delights to peruse the histories therein contained, for the information of his understanding; the precepts therein delivered, as a most exact rule of life; the promises there given, as a never-failing spring of consolation; and the whole as the means of sanctifying his nature, and maintaining pleasing intercourse with heaven.

Secondly. Here is the blessedness of such a person. "Blessed is the man;" or, *O the blessedness of the man!* He is certainly, fully, and every way blessed: This I can readily credit. Surely none on earth are so happy as they that have such a relish for the word of God. "Great peace (as it is elsewhere said) have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." More particularly; such a man is compared to "a tree planted by the rivers of water," from whence it is supplied with sufficient moisture to render it always fresh and fruitful; "it bringeth forth its fruit in its season." This similitude implies, that the main happiness of a good man lies in his fruitfulness; being ready to every good word and work; and that his delight in

God's law has a special influence in this view. What a canal of water is to the fruit-tree planted on its bank, that is the Holy Scripture to the believer; he derives refreshing and fructifying influence from it.

The good man's blessed state is illustrated by the opposite state of the ungodly. "The ungodly are not so." They are not like a fruitful tree, but are as "the chaff which the wind driveth away." They are of little worth, and of no stability. And at last, the difference between the one and the other shall fully appear. "The ungodly shall not stand in the final judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous," but an awful separation shall be made between them.

Lastly; the reason of this distinction is mentioned. "The Lord knows," that is, he approves "the way of the righteous;" which implies that he disapproves the way of the ungodly; and therefore it shall end in misery; "it shall perish," and he shall sink into perdition.

And now how obvious are such remarks as these.—That religion is the only true and solid foundation of happiness. Blessedness is annexed to the character, not of the *great*, but of the *good*.—That the grand distinction between the righteous and the ungodly is founded on their different regards to the divine law.—That, therefore, it is of the highest consequence rightly to value, study, and delight in the word of God.—And that hereafter, a glorious distinction shall be made in favour of them that do so, by God himself the final judge, by whose sentence every one must at last stand or fall.

O my soul! learn from hence thy duty, thy interest, and thy happiness; learn what to chuse and what to shun. Guard against the counsel and the way of the ungodly. "If sinners entice thee consent thou not." Whatever they may pretend, they are far from blessedness. Be not disturbed at their success, and envy not their seeming prosperity. They are but as chaff, and shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire. Lord teach me thy statutes! Help me to make thy law my delight, and to rest in thy favour as my supreme happiness!

MEDITATION IV.

On the Second Psalm.

THE apostle assures us, *Acts iv. 25*, that David wrote this psalm, though the title does not mention it; and he speaks of it as a part of scripture, given by divine inspiration. "God spake," says he, "by the mouth of his servant David." The occasion of it probably was, his peaceable settlement on the throne of Judah and Israel, after the opposition he met with from the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, &c. He expostulates with these malicious opposers of his government, and ridicules their attempts as vain, since God had placed him as his anointed on the holy hill of Zion, and had determined to support his throne. This was fulfilled (as the apostle goes on to shew) in the Messiah, the son of David; towards whom the same part was acted over again by Herod, Pontius Pilate and the rulers of Israel. But he that sitteth in the heavens despised the malice and laughed at the weak efforts of such worms of the earth. Christ the Messiah was, by the decree of God, to sit upon

the throne typified by that of David, to rule over the Gentile world, as well as the Jewish nation, with absolute authority and irresistible power.— This was the counsel of God, and it shall stand: “ Jesus shall reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.”

The psalm concludes with advising all to own and obey this mighty sovereign. Be convinced then, O my soul! of thy duty and thy interest.— “ Be wise, be instructed,” in this momentous affair, “ Embrace the Son lest he be angry, and thou perish in the way.” Let it be no objection with me against the Saviour, that the rulers did not believe in him; as this was foretold, and the event verified the prediction, my faith in him is the more confirmed. It is evidence from fact that Christ’s kingdom is “ founded on a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” He has hitherto withstood all opposition, and every future attempt against his government will prove in vain. “ He will strike through kings in the day of his wrath.” Let me then humbly bow to his sceptre, that I may not be broken by his rod. Lord enthrone thyself in my heart! Take full possession of my soul, and grant me the blessedness of those that trust in thee!



MEDITATION V.

On the Third Psalm.

I LEARN from the title, that this is a psalm of David, composed when he fled from his son Absalom. I observe the distress this good man was in, the particulars of which I read in his history,

2 *Sam.* xv. 12. The conspiracy against him was so strong, that his case was thought desperate.— Many said, “there was no help for him in God.” Hence, O my soul! learn to expect troubles and painful exercises in this world. Since so great a saint as David was not free from them, let me not wonder at any that I may meet with, nor object to any that the divine wisdom shall appoint.

I here observe the exercise of his faith in a most eminent degree. “But thou, Lord,” says he “art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of mine head.” By faith he cast his burden on the Lord, at the same time that he made supplication to him. “I cried unto the Lord,” says he “with my voice;” which imports his great importunity; and he did not cry in vain; for he adds, “and he heard me.” Learn, O my soul! from the example of this good man, to make God thy refuge in the time of trouble; seek unto him, and leave thy concerns in his hands.

I observe, next, the blessed fruit of David's faith and prayer. How calm and easy was his mind hereupon. “I laid me down and slept,” says he, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that rise up against me.” Now, I suppose, it was that he uttered those admirable words, 1 *Sam.* xv. 25, 26. “Carry back the ark of the Lord into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.” q. d. “Let me be a king or a victim; something or nothing, as thou O Lord, pleasest.” Having thus thrown himself at the feet of the most high, and poured out his soul on the mount, whither he retired for devotion,

he is disburdened of all anxious thoughts; all is still and calm within, and he can sleep in the midst of terror and deaths.

O my soul! learn this way of intercourse with thy God. Let a time of trouble be a time of prayer; and when thou art afraid trust in him. Imitate the devotion, the submission, the faith, so admirably exemplified in this psalm, thus come what will, thou art under a sure protection. God will be thy shield, thy dwelling place, thy all.—The psalm concludes with prayer for further and full deliverance, ascribing the glory of all victory, safety and success, to God. Lord form my mind according to the spirit of this, thy servant, and help me to believe and pray, and praise like him, remembering that “salvation belongeth unto the Lord.”

MEDITATION VI.

On the First Chapter of MATTHEW.

I find, in this chapter, a pedigree of Christ, or a list of his ancestors. It has some difficulties, which the Jews, and other enemies of the gospel, have urged against it; but they are no stumbling blocks in my way. The great design of it doubtless was, to assure us that Jesus Christ descended from those families, to which he was promised. As this was highly necessary to be known, the evangelist Matthew, before his narrative of the conception and birth of Jesus, takes care to clear that matter, by giving us his pedigree, as Luke also does (in another form) before his account of his public ministry.

According to the ancient promises and pro-

phesies, the Messiah was to be of the family of Abraham. It was also promised to David, that "of the fruit of his body God would raise up Christ to set upon his throne." And it is observable that in this chapter, he is first mentioned as being of the family of David; the reason of which might be, that the promise to David was latter, and most in the minds of the Jews, who universally expected their Messiah as the son of David.

For the greater clearness, or help of the memory, his genealogy is divided into three remarkable periods; three times fourteen generations: viz. from Abraham to David; from David to the captivity; from the captivity to the birth of Christ. The first division includes the age of the patriarchs; the second that of the kingdom, and temple, till the time of its ruin; the third from the destruction of the temple and the kingdom till the appearance of the Messiah. The first brought the Jewish state to glory, in the reign of David; the second to misery, in the captivity of Babylon; and the last to glory again, in the kingdom of Christ.

Though I may not be able to obviate all the difficulties which have been started in this genealogy, that need not to stagger my faith. The evangelist, having drawn out a table of Christ's descent from David and Abraham, left it to the perusal and judgment of the age; and I never heard that the Jews of that time, who were well skilled in matters of this nature, ever charged him with mistakes; so that I must impute the difficulties in question to the want of those means of satisfaction which the Jews then had.

In this chapter, I find an account of some

circumstances relating to the conception and the birth of Christ, which are very extraordinary; more especially that of his being born of a virgin, through the power of the Holy Spirit; on which account, among others, the prophet Isaiah said "his name should be called **WONDERFUL.**" What great expectations might we justly form from so extraordinary a person! What esteem and reverence are due to him! But more especially on account of that personal glory of his, under which he was announced by the angel, v. 22. "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and they shall call his name **IMMANUEL**, i. e. God "with us."

With what delight should I read that other name given him, by the same angel, by which he was more commonly called, viz. that of **JESUS**, which is the same as *Joshua*, a name which imports his *office*, as it signifies a **SAVIOUR**. "She shall call his name **JESUS**, for he shall save his people from their sins." O my soul! what shalt thou say to these things? Pause a little, and with humble devotion contemplate this surprising subject. How comfortable, how delightful, the name, **JESUS**, the **SAVIOUR**! It is "as ointment poured forth." To perishing sinners this is the most grateful sound in the world. Behold here the accomplishment of many ancient prophetic oracles. Surely "this is he that was to come," nor will I "look for another." This is that "seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed."

But I observe some restrictions in regard to that salvation, of which he was to be the author. "He shall save his people from their sins." Only the people of the Messiah will be eventually saved by him: such as believe in him, and are subject

to him. And he saves them not *in* their sins, but *from* them. O may I be found one of his peculiar people, and secure an interest in him, as *my* Saviour! May I accept the salvation which he came to bestow; a salvation from *sin!* from its power and pollution, as well as its guilt and punishment. Never call him JESUS, if he be not thy LORD. He saves both by his blood and by his spirit. He both atones and sanctifies. Nor must thou expect the benefit of his Cross, if thou dost not bow to his sceptre.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

DEVOUT
MEDITATIONS.

PART THE SECOND.

ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

MEDITATION I.

On the Love of Christ.

REV. i. 5. *Unto Him that loved us.*

THE work of redemption is a mystery of love, both in the Father and the Son. So the scripture represents it. "In this was manifest the love of God, that he gave his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—"Christ hath loved us and given himself for us." So eminent and signal was his love that it is made his character and description. *Unto HIM that LOVED us.* So also *Rom. viii. 37. Through HIM that hath loved us.* It is not said *who he is;*

what is spoken of him is a sufficient designation of the person intended; for he hath so loved as never any other did. Love is his name, and love his memorial in the church for ever.

O my soul! contemplate this glorious subject in a manner worthy of it. Lord enlighten and enliven my mind: tune my earthly affections, and raise them to a suitable pitch, that I may feel the influence of the Saviour's love.—Awaken every faculty within me: while I am musing may the fire burn. I would view the present subject in the glass of the gospel, which alone can show it in its proper light. I would first consider, what this love of Christ is, and then, wherein it appears.

The love of Christ includes compassion and bounty: unmerited, disinterested favour. Love in us has generally great selfishness in it. Either there is something agreeable and beneficial in the object that recommends it to our esteem, or we are laid under obligations by the friendship and kindness shewn us. But the love of Christ is not this way excited. We had not done any thing to oblige him, nor was there any thing in us, except our misery, to engage him towards us. The love of Christ is a free, generous, heroic love, like that of some great and public benefactor, who, touched with the distresses of mankind, undertakes their relief. When we were not only without strength, but ungodly sinners, Christ espoused our cause, and even died for us. How great, as well as free, was this his love. No instance of human love can equal it. The highest to which that ever rose was, for one friend to die for another, as in the case of *Damon and Pythias*. "Greater love" (as he himself speaks) "hath no man

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“than this, that he lay down his life for his *friends* ;” but greater love hath He manifested, who laid down his life for his *enemies*.

The love of Christ is above all our thoughts and conceptions. The apostle speaks of it as that which “*passeth knowledge.*” *Eph. iii. 19.* We cannot find it out to perfection, so as to measure his love in its utmost latitude, or the fourfold dimensions which he there ascribes to it; viz. its “*breadth and length, its depth and height.*” Yet he prays that the Ephesians might “*comprehend it with all saints.*” Which implies that all saints study this subject; diligently search into it, and endeavour to comprehend it. Something of it they know, and they desire to know more and more. They bend down their minds, as the angels are represented doing, to look into these things; and the apostle wished and prayed that his friends at Ephesus might, in like manner, study the love of Christ, and advance in the knowledge of it. And, O my soul! join thou in this delightful pursuit. Nothing is more worthy thy inquiries. Lord direct me herein, and shed abroad thy love in my heart. “*Let Christ dwell there by faith,*” that I, being “*rooted and grounded in love,*” may better understand the love of my Redeemer, and feel more of its constraining influence.

Let me now consider *wherein* he hath manifested his love, so as to justify this character of him as; “*He that hath loved us.*” And here I may naturally reflect, in the first place, how readily did he undertake for poor sinners in the covenant of redemption. The wisdom of God, as moral governor, required an atonement for sin: some honorable expedient upon which he

might forgive, and treat with sinners in a manner consistent with all his perfections, and the authority of his law, so that he might appear "just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." The expedient was, that his Son should appear in our nature, and therein die a victim. To this he cheerfully consented. He well knew that instead of legal sacrifices, which were altogether insufficient for our redemption, it was the will of God he should be made a sacrifice himself; and he readily offered himself for that purpose. "Sacrifice and offering," says he, "thou didst not require; then said I, lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O God; thy law is within my heart."

"When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law. The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." Amazing condescension! The Son of God became the son of man, that thou mightest be advanced to the dignity of a son of God! "He who was in the form of God, was found in fashion as a man, yea, took upon him the form of a servant."

What manner of love was this! "Ye know (says the apostle) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor."

As a proof of the love of my Saviour, let me consider the circumstances of outward meanness in which he appeared on earth. His mother, tho' of the royal line of David, was of a family at that time greatly reduced: witness her being espoused to a carpenter, and their being put into a stable at Bethlehem. It is said, "there was no room for

“them in the inn:” but, had they made any considerable figure, doubtless they would have been complimented with better accommodations. She is forced to shift for herself, and lodge with the cattle. She there brings forth her son, and lays him in a manger. Her poverty farther appears in her offering at the time of her purification; which was only two young pigeons; the sacrifice which the law allowed for those who could not afford a lamb.

Blessed Lord, what condescension and grace was this! What a stir and bustle do we often see at the birth of a poor worm! What pompous preparations for a lying in! What attendance and ceremony at the birth of a little creature called an heir! And yet, behold the Son of God, “the heir of all things,” comes into the world in this obscurity. O my soul, view thy Lord in this debasement, and thence infer the greatness of his love, as well as admire his humility. Look to the manger of Christ, and learn to despise the pomps and vanities of this world, as well as adore the love that brought him thither.

And how great an argument of love may we find in the condition and manner of his life. He was not only known as the carpenter’s son, but it seems he worked at the carpenter’s trade. *Mark* vi. 5. See the Son of God subject to a poor artizan, working as an ordinary mechanic for his bread! When he entered upon the stage of public action, he still appeared in circumstances of low abasement. He had neither house to live in, nor estate to live upon.—“The son of man,” says he, “hath not where to lay his head;” but he was beholden to the hospitality of his friends, and subsisted by their

charity. "Certain women," we read, "ministered to him of their substance."

And how ill was the treatment which he generally met with in the world. How was his moral character vilified. He was traduced as a deceiver, a mad man, a traitor, a blasphemer, a confederate with devils. Thus "he endured "the contradiction of sinners against himself;" of sinners to whom he had the kindest designs, and for whom he was doing the kindest actions. Strange, mysterious love, that reconciled him to such treatment. He foresaw it all, and yet submitted to it, in the prospect of the great salvation he was to accomplish. Lord, may I never forget thy love, nor think much of poverty, reproach, and persecution, for thy sake.

But what shall I say of his love in DYING for us? On this the scripture lays the greatest stress of all. "To him that loved us, and "washed us from our sins in his own blood. "Christ loved us, and gave himself a sacrifice "for us;" willingly submitted to the shameful, painful death of the cross; not for his friends, but for his enemies. Take a view, O my soul, of this last scene, so full of tragedy and amazement, and read his love in tears, and groans and blood. When the Jews saw him weeping over the grave of Lazarus, "behold," say they, "how "he loved him." How much more reason have I for such a remark, when I see him not only weeping, but dying for lost sinners.

Nor did his love terminate with his death: his government as head of the church is a government of grace and love. What glorious displays of love are made towards sinners in their first conversion, and in their following course.—

On the Love of Christ.

The apostle Paul, reflecting on his own case, exclaims, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant," and he adds, "in me he shewed all long-suffering, as a pattern to them that should hereafter believe." As he washes them from their sins in his own blood, and they are made accepted in him, the beloved, he continues to interest himself on their behalf. He acts as their "advocate with the Father;" he knows and pities their infirmities, he sympathises with them in their temptations, sufferings and conflicts: as the good shepherd, "he gathers the lambs in his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads the weary and heavy laden."

Finally; heaven is the preparation of his love: and, indeed, it is there only that we shall fully understand how great his love is, when we see its final issue. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." This was his grand object in coming from heaven, that he might advance his servants and followers thither. He entered heaven as our "fore-runner," and he tells us he went "to prepare a place for us, and that he will come again and receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also." Heaven, which is the price of his blood, is the most glorious fruit of his love, and they who are safely brought thither, clearly see the propriety of this character of him, as of "Him that hath loved us," and accordingly own and adore him as such for ever.

MEDITATION II.

The Love of Christ—continued.

AND is this the love of my Redeemer? Has he loved us, and *thus* loved us? How great the obligation, O my soul, to love *Him!* Love begets love: all ingenuous minds find it so. Indeed, sometimes it softens the hardest heart, and overcomes the most untractable natures. How was Saul, in the midst of his rage against David, subdued by an instance of his generous kindness.—“ And Saul lift up his voice and wept: and he said unto David, thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil; forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand thou killedst me not. Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.” Love has irresistible charms; it can melt down an enemy, and carry all captive before it. And canst thou, O my soul, stand out against the force of this most amazing, glorious, triumphant love of the Redeemer? O, lament the want of love where it is so much due, and so highly deserved.

How do we feel ourselves obliged by a small favor from our fellow-creatures? If they confer benefits upon us, and often repeat their kindnesses, they make us their property, and we are devoted to their service and interest. But, alas! the love of my Redeemer hath not had the same effect; though it be the greatest, the most free, generous, and beneficial, how little influence has it had upon me! Wretch that I am, that any low instance of love in a fellow mortal, should have more force and authority with me,

than that which is the wonder and song of saints and seraphs above. Let me bewail this obduracy and insensibility, that (as a good man said) “I cannot bring this vile heart of mine to love the Lord Jesus Christ.” Stir up thyself, O my soul, and turn thy affections from the worthless things which engross them, into the proper channel, and to the proper object. Let the love of Christ constrain thee. He has every thing that can invite and engage thy strongest affections.

How amiable and excellent is his person. “He is the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” View him in the various excellencies of his character and offices. Consider the wisdom of his doctrine, the goodness of his laws, the grace of his government, his mediatorial qualifications, as prophet, priest, and king; his fitness to be the head, the protector, and the Saviour, of the body. “In him all fullness dwells. He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” View him as the glorious *Immanuel*, tabernacling in a human body, and speaking as never man spake. View him in the several steps of his humiliation and triumph: in all the acts of his power, faithfulness and grace, and thou must be convinced that thou oughtest to love him, and wilt hereby learn to love him more and more. Vouchsafe, Lord, to be my teacher, and kindle the flame of love in my breast.

Nor let me rest satisfied with feeling the greatest warmth of affection, while I contemplate a Saviour’s love, but let it be my concern to give substantial *proof* of my love to him. His love was not a mere warm affection or zealous profession, it was not idle and inactive; he loved us

so as to labour, to suffer, and even to die for us. Let my love to him, therefore, manifest itself in all suitable expressions and active exertions.

1. By frequent, high, and honourable thoughts of him. Let Christ dwell in my heart by faith. Let me exalt the Lord Redeemer by frequent meditations on his glory and his grace.

2. By devout ascriptions of praise: saying, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and strength and honour, and glory and blessing." Join with the church on earth in her praises: join with those before the throne above: join with the angels in heaven, who are all commanded to worship him.

3. By fervent desires after his presence and devout intercourse with him in his word and ordinances. Herein believers are said to "have fellowship not only with the Father but also with his Son Jesus Christ." There is an enjoyment of the blessed God, and of the Lord Jesus even in this life, which affords a little heaven to holy saints, and is the earnest of the full joys above. They that truly love Christ understand this, and one proof of their love to him is their desire of, and delight in, this spiritual intercourse with him.

4. By zeal for his honor and devotedness to his interest. "Lovest thou me?" says Christ to Peter.—"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." Let me consider in what way I may advance his kingdom, and promote the great designs for which he came into the world. And let the

zeal of love carry me through any service, how expensive soever, that I may be acceptable to him. Lord quicken me by thy grace, that I may be able to say, "For me to live is Christ." May all I say and do centre in him. May I think, contrive, speak, and live for him and to him; employing my time, my talents, and all my faculties for his honor, and to serve his cause.

5. By loving and serving his members; remembering that monitory, yet comfortable word, of his: "For as much as ye have done it to the least of my brethren ye have done it unto me." There is a love of benevolence and compassion due to the human species as such. When one accused the philosopher of throwing away his bounty upon an undeserving person, he well answered, "I did it not to the *man*, but to *humanity*." But those that bear the image of Christ should be especially dear to us. Lord, may they whom thou dost vouchsafe to call thy brethren be owned by me as mine; may I ever love them for thy sake, and in loving them may I express my love to thee.

6. By obedience to all his commands. This he himself has proposed as the grand test of our love. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. If a man love me he will keep my sayings." Had I the tongue of an angel, or the professed devotion of a seraph, it would not prove me a lover of Christ, without subjection of heart to his authority, and a life governed by his precepts. O let me then get the law of my Redeemer written on my heart, and by a steady, cheerful, constant, universal obedience, manifest the sincerity and ardour of my love.

Finally, let me shew my love to Christ by longing to be with him. It is one description of the saints, that they "love his appearing." O my soul! often think with pleasure of that glorious day, when Christ, who is thy life, shall appear, and thou and all his redeemed shall appear with him in glory. Wait with patience, and yet with an earnest, rejoicing hope, crying, "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Thus let me love, and thus let me testify my love to the Lord Jesus. He hath so loved me as no words of mine can express; no actions of mine can requite. Never, never let me forget his love, nor fail of shewing my remembrance of it. *Xenophon* mentions an Armenian prince who, being taken captive with his queen by *Cyrus*, and being asked if he desired to have his liberty, and his kingdom and queen restored, answered—'As for my liberty and kingdom I value them not; but if my blood would redeem my wife, I would cheerfully give it.' *Cyrus* having afterwards restored him all, the prince asked his queen, what sort of a person *Cyrus* was; to which she replied, 'I do not know; for my mind was so taken up with the man who would have given his life for my ransom, that I could think of no other. My Lord has actually done for me what in this case was only offered, and exceedingly out-done it. He has ransomed me with his more precious blood. O may I feel the like sentiment of gratitude fixed in my heart! And may my whole power, interest and life, be made a sacred holocaust, a whole sacrifice, offered up to him on the altar of love!

MEDITATION III.

On the Crucifixion of Christ.

LUKE xxiii. 33. *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him.*

WHEN the devout martyr *Ignatius* was brought to the stake to be burned, recollecting the greater sufferings of his Lord and master, he exclaimed, "My love was crucified." And did ever love break forth in a more glorious flame? Turn aside, O my soul, and see this great sight.—"There they crucified him!"—This was not an accidental thing, owing to a hasty resolution of his enemies, but appointed of God, and voluntarily submitted to by himself. It was an event which had been frequently foretold. It was represented by ancient types, e. g. by the brazen serpent, which our Lord himself thus expounds, *John* iii. 14. As also by the paschal lamb, *Ch.* xix. 36. It was likewise plainly foretold by the ancient prophets, particularly by *Isaiah*, ch. liii. So that when the Gentiles and the people of Israel conspired against Christ to put him to death, they did no other than "what God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done," *Acts* iv. 28. It was also repeatedly foretold by Christ himself, who exactly foreknew all the circumstances of his sufferings, which he made no attempt to avoid; well knowing that "it behoved him thus to suffer," in order to answer the great ends of his coming into the world; and this manifests the greatness of his love.

But let me attend a little more particularly to the nature and circumstances of the death he

suffered for our sakes, which will more fully enhance the greatness of his love.

Crucifixion was a death excessively painful. His body was fastened to the cross by nails, pierced through the palms of his hands, while his arms were widely extended on the transverse beam, and his feet in like manner fixed to the upright post. These being the most nervous parts of the body, they must be sensible of exquisite pain, which must have been greatly increased by the whole weight of the body bearing upon them. In this posture he hung for several hours, dying a lingering death. The Romans borrow the word by which they express torment, *Cruciatu*s, from *Cru*x, a cross; and from hence we derive the term *excruciating* pain.

This was also a death full of shame and ignominy, being peculiar to slaves or strangers, guilty of the most enormous crimes. Hence *Cicero* in his oration against *Verres*, mentions it as a high offence that he had caused some free-men to be crucified; intimating, that this was so great an indignity put upon a citizen, that words could not express the vileness of him that could be the author of it. Yet this death did the Son of God submit to. The Lord of life stoops to undergo the punishment of the vilest slave, and thus to be numbered with the worst transgressors. This was esteemed an *accursed* death. *Deut.* xxi. 23. "He that is hanged is accursed of God." All that were executed by being hanged on a tree, were looked upon as under the curse of heaven, and exposed to the execrations of spectators; were hung up between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either. Accordingly it is said of our crucified Saviour, "he was made a curse for us." And

it was an addition to his ignominy, that he was hung between two notorious malefactors, as if equally criminal.—[The *place* also where he suffered was peculiarly ignominious, of which the evangelist takes particular notice: *There* they crucified him: namely at *Calvary*, without the gate of the city, in which he was deemed unworthy to live or die; called also “*Golgotha*, the place of skulls,” where numbers of the vilest of criminals had been put to death and buried, and therefore held in the utmost abhorrence.]

But there were some circumstances attending the crucifixion of *Christ* which greatly aggravated his sufferings. He had been previously scourged, and delivered up to the rabble to be abused and insulted. He had been stripped of his own garments, and in derision had a scarlet robe put on him, a crown of thorns placed on his head, and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, to mock his pretensions to royalty. Barabbas, an infamous criminal, was released in preference to him, as if he were the most guilty. And, even when suffering the tortures of the cross, the rude populace treated him with the grossest insults, and the most wanton cruelty. Nor was this all. But such were the inward horrors of his soul, as to extort from him that doleful exclamation, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” After which, with a dreadful groan, he quickly gave up the ghost.

Lord, what shall I say to all this? What a mystery, what a miracle of grace and love! O my soul! contemplate it with wonder and praise. Lord teach me the proper lessons to be learned at the cross of Christ: help me rightly to understand, to apply and improve them.

1. The subject demands my most reverent attention. The son of God, whom all the angels are commanded to worship, hung upon a cross, loaded with reproach, as well as racked with pain—never was there such a spectacle exhibited before! It struck a sort of terror into the whole creation. The sun hid his face; the veil of the temple was rent; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the graves were opened; and even his enemies were seized with amazement and made to relent, confessing, “Truly, this was a righteous person, this was the Son of God.” Surely there must have been something of high importance intended in this extraordinary event. Not to suppose it would be a reflection upon the wisdom of God. There could not have been such a solemn apparatus but upon some great design; every step towards which was the ordination of heaven, the contrivance of infinite wisdom. That design was no less than the salvation of a perishing world. View the whole affair, O my soul, with all possible reverence, and study all the particulars of it with the closest attention. Paul “determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

2. Of what infinite consequence is the salvation of the soul. What a value doth the cross of Christ put upon it. What a wretch must he be who makes light of that which was so dearly purchased. The grand end for which Christ died, was “to deliver us from the wrath to come,” to restore us to the favour of God, and procure for us eternal life. We have redemption and salvation through his blood. And shall I contemn what he thus valued, and neglect what cost him so dear? O let me never despise my own soul, or that blood which pur-

chased it. Let me learn my own dignity in the price of my redemption. How shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation as that for which the son of God was crucified.

3. What abhorrence should this subject excite in me against sin, which was the cause of all that the Saviour suffered. Retire, O my soul, to Gethsemane; go up to Golgotha; set thyself under the cross of Christ. Think over the whole of the amazing tragedy, and thence learn the nature and the evil of sin. Never doth sin appear so "exceeding sinful," so much like itself; an hateful, accursed thing, as in the glass of Christ's sufferings; in his bloody sweat, in his agonies on the cross, in his "Lama sabathani." So detestable was sin in the eyes of God, that he did not think it consistent with the honor of his government to pardon it without a sacrifice; and this sacrifice must be his own son. "He was delivered for our offences, he was bruised for our iniquities." They were the procuring cause, they were the instruments of all he endured. These were, the nails, the thorns, the spear, which pierced his sacred body. "We were the persons who, by our sins, did impeach him; the spiteful priests were but our advocates. We, by them, did judge and sentence him: Pilate was but our spokesman. We, by them, did inflict the horrid punishment on him; the Roman executioners were but our agents. All the derision and contempt he endured proceeded from us: our sins cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him," with clamours more loud and effectual than did all the Jewish rabble. Upon them therefore it is just and fit that we should turn our hatred and discharge our indignation." It was against sin that the

divine displeasure was kindled. Let sin, then, O my soul, be thy aversion, thy hatred and dread forever. A common execution in which public justice take place, strikes an awe into the spectators, begets a reverence of the law, and is designed to deter them from the like transgression. Can I then behold the son of God crucified, as a most signal instance of God's abhorrence of sin, and not abhor it also? Shall I love what God hates, and has manifested his hatred of, in so great a degree, as not to "spare his own son," when he stood in the place of sinners?—Lord help me so to view the cross of my Saviour, and thy holiness there displayed, as thence to judge what sin is, and how to stand affected towards it.

4. How much peace and comfort may this subject afford the penitent believer. The cross of Christ is the Christian's triumph. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." "He hath made peace through the blood of his cross. In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."—Canst thou, O my soul, question the truth of this? And if not, why needest thou fear obtaining this forgiveness and redemption? If thou art a true penitent and a sincere believer in Jesus, dismiss thy fears and jealousies.—The blood of Christ is a sovereign balm for a wounded spirit. It is a glorious means of atonement, a standing evidence of God's reconcileableness to sinners, a monument of his rich mercy, and his readiness to bless us with all spiritual blessings. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" After this greater, fundamental bless-

ing, let me never question any *lesser*, but cheerfully trust in him for every other that is truly good for me.

5. What an argument is here for indifference to the world, and a contempt of all its pomps and pleasures. The son of God, by willingly submitting to such a series of sufferings as terminated in the death of the cross, fully proved the truth of his declaration, "my kingdom is not of this world." Let me not then seek great things for myself in it. Dream not of ease, honor and happiness here below. To affect them is incongruous for the disciples of a crucified master. They must be in their measure conformed to him in his humiliation: they must be willing to suffer with him, that they may be glorified together. O my soul! look to the cross of Christ, and be instructed.— 'Let us meditate' (says one of the fathers) 'on the cross of Christ, and we shall trample the riches and glories of the world as dirt under our feet. Such a sight will dim the lustre of all earthly grandeurs, and damp the sense of all carnal delights,' &c. Blessed Jesus, may I learn of thee, who wast meek and lowly in heart, and with the chief of thy apostles, "glory in thy cross, thereby becoming crucified to the world, and the world to me."

Lastly, how powerful a motive doth this subject afford to gratitude and obedience. The crucifixion of Christ was an instance of love full of wonder. This was the most astonishing instance of benevolence that the world ever witnessed.— O may I feel its effectual constraint! What gratitude do I owe him for his unparalleled, disinterested love! What service should I grudge, what sufferings should I refuse, for my dearest Lord, who, thought not *crucifixion* too costly an expres-

sion of his love to me? Being bought with such a price as that of his blood, let me henceforth consider myself not as my own but his. Let my motto ever be *Christus crucifixus cordifixus*. "Christ my love was crucified." And let the love of Christ herein manifested "constrain me henceforth to live not unto myself, but unto him who died for me and rose again."

MEDITATION IV.

On Divine Grace.

1 COR. xv. 10. *By the Grace of God I am what I am.*

GRACE is a term of different acceptations. Sometimes it signifies the *gospel*, as in *Rom. vi. 14*. "Ye are not under the law but under *grace*." Sometimes it denotes a divine quality or Christian *temper*, as in *2 Cor. viii. 7*. where it is particularly applied to *charity*. "See that ye abound in this *grace* also." But the most common, and indeed the primary signification of it is, *favour* or good will. Thus it is used where it is said "Jesus increased in favour with God and man." And it is applied to all those benefits which are the effects of the divine benevolence towards the children of men. Hence we are said to be "justified freely by his grace, and by grace we are saved." Sometimes it signifies, more particularly, the divine power exerted on the hearts of men, or the influence of his spirit, enlightening, renewing and converting the soul. So the apostle uses it, *Gal. i. 15*. "When it pleased God, who called me by his grace." It is also used for the divine

influence in general as continued to believers, for carrying on the work of religion in the soul. In both these views we are to understand the term in this passage: "By the grace of God I am what I am;" as also in the following words, "I laboured more abundantly, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." This divine operation upon the heart is, with propriety, called *Grace*, since it is the effect of the divine favour and good will to men, as is the gospel itself, and every spiritual blessing which it reveals, being derived from the same free source; so that to whatever the term *grace* is applied, the primary idea of it is retained. In all, "the love and kindness of God our Saviour appears."

And, O my God, how much am I indebted to this grace of thine! Help me to recount my obligations to it, and often to review the history of it, with humble, admiring, adoring thankfulness. I must say with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Without thy grace I had been nothing; worse than nothing.

It is by the grace of God that I am a Christian, and not a Jew or a heathen: that I enjoy the light of the gospel, and the many advantages of that new dispensation. That I was born where the sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings, while so many sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Lord, this is a distinguishing instance of thy favour and kindness; may I not receive this grace of thine in vain.

It is by the grace of God that I am a true convert, if, indeed, I am such; that I have been renewed in the spirit of my mind, and brought

heartily to engage in thy service. That I have been made to feel the power, and taste the comforts of the gospel, while others are strangers to both, and at best have only "a form of godliness;" which, alas! is the case with great numbers who have had the same external means with myself: the same Bible, and ministry, and the same education. "Who has made me to differ?" Not myself; not my will or wisdom, but thou, O my God; not my merit, but thy mercy.—Thou hast turned me from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto thyself. With the apostle I would thankfully acknowledge my obligations to that God, who hath "called me by his grace:" who, besides the external call of the gospel, has favoured me with the internal call of his spirit, whereby I was effectually engaged to give up myself to thy rule and government. I was dead, and thou hast made me alive: I was lost, and thy grace has found and reclaimed me: restored me to the proper use of my faculties: brought me to live the life of a reasonable creature, and answer the end for which I was made. I was once "foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures," and thereby hastening towards perdition. Lord, I adore the grace that has saved me. If I have been brought to devote myself to thee, and to engage in thy service, which is perfect freedom, and which leads to glory, honour and immortality, it is by thy grace I am what I am.

I must further acknowledge, it is by the grace of God that I possess any of the ornaments of a true believer. If any of the graces and virtues of the Christian temper are found in me, they are the fruits of thy spirit. My *faith*

is of thy operation. It is thou who hast begotten me again to a lively *hope*, and who hast shed abroad thy *love* in my heart. If I am endowed with the ornament of a *meek* and quiet spirit; if I possess, in any degree, that temperance, patience, brotherly kindness and charity, which are the characteristics of thy children, I have "nothing but what I have received." It is thou who hast clothed me with the robes of righteousness, and the garments of salvation. I own thy hand, and adore thy grace herein. It is by the grace of God also that I have been assisted in, and carried through, all my work and duty as a Christian. I cannot say "I have laboured abundantly;" but, if I have laboured *at all* for God, for the interest of my own soul, or for the good of others, I have the greatest reason to say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name be the praise. It is God that worketh in me both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

It is by the grace of God that I have been supported under all my burdens and conflicts; preserved amidst all my temptations, fears and dangers. How many, how great, the salvations God has wrought out for me through the course of my life! When a concurrence of troubles exceedingly threatened me, and I said "my foot slippeth, then thy mercy held me up." I was pressed out of measure above strength, but thou, O Lord, didst deliver my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I remember the perplexed thoughts, and the gloomy prospects I entertained: without were fightings, and within were fears. But "God who comforteth them that are cast down," supported and comforted me. To thy name be the praise. At

other times I have been surrounded with snares and temptations, but have been preserved by wonderful displays of Providence and grace.— Sometimes God has saved me by opening my eyes to see the snares spread for me; at other times by shutting them, that I might not be taken by the bait, so that I saw not my danger till it was past. O may I never forget the wisdom and sovereignty of grace herein, nor cease to acknowledge the divine invisible hand that was my defence and rescue.

It is by the grace of God that I have been directed in particular straits and difficulties. Often have I been at a loss concerning my duty, when upon serious application to God, he has pointed out to me the way I should chuse. I have had such experience of his special light and guidance, that I can never question his interposition, and desire never to forget it, nor ever to distrust it for the future. “Lord guide me still by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”

It is by the grace of God that, amidst much opposition and many dangers, I have stood my ground in the Christian profession, and not made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, but have held on my way: O that I could say, I have grown stronger and stronger! “Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day.” Lord, I adore thy grace herein! and would call upon my soul, and all that is within me, to bless thee for all that thou hast done for me. I adore and magnify that grace of thine by which I am what I am, and to which I owe all my past and present privileges, and all my hopes as to futurity. I bless thee for all the dignities and blessings of the Christian covenant; for the teaching and discipline of thy fa-

mily; for the delights and refreshments of thy house; for the hope that I am justified, adopted and sanctified, by thy grace, and for the promise and prospect of a future eternal glory and blessedness in heaven. Lord help me with a more ardent gratitude to celebrate the riches of thy love and mercy. Thy grace has been my salvation, and it shall be my song forever.

MEDITATION V.

On the Grace of God—continued.

1 TIM. i. 14. *And the Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.*

EVERY true Christian is so much indebted to the grace of God, that he should take a peculiar pleasure in celebrating it. Herein I have the great apostle for my monitor and example. He was a constant advocate for grace in all his writings; but he singles out the display of it towards himself, as a subject fit to exercise his warmest affections. He returns to it on all occasions, and relates the history of it with much devotion, when standing before courts of judicature. *Acts xxii. xxvi.* and likewise in several of his epistles. Thus, *1 Cor. xv. 8—10.* “Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time, for I am the least of the apostles, and not meek to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” And again, *1 Tim. i. 12—16.* “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, and

“ the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.” He seems to think himself the first and greatest instance of grace, intended as a specimen and pattern of God’s proceedings with others who were the chief of sinners. “ For this cause” (says he) “ I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

And am not I another example of the like exceeding abundant grace? This apostle, doubtless, had something peculiar in the circumstances wherein the grace of God found him, and in the manner of his call. But if my case be not exactly parallel to his, I am sure it is such as requires from me the utmost gratitude, and very much illustrates the grace of God. Lord, it is by thy grace that I am any thing; that I can do any thing that is good, or enjoy any thing with comfort.— Had I the faculties of a seraph, the tongue of an angel, it would be insufficient to set forth the riches, and exceeding abundance of thy grace towards me, which has attended every scene, but especially in my first conversion to thyself. If I was not before “ a blasphemer and a persecutor;” yet I was many ways “ injurious” to God and my neighbour, as well as to myself. I was vile and polluted; a sinner before the Lord, whose crimes were highly aggravated by the advantages I enjoyed. I cannot reflect upon my former course without standing amazed at my guilt, and at the grace that saved me.

I was born of parents professing the Christian religion, and exemplary therein. I had from them much good instruction, and many seasonable admonitions. I sat under the constant preaching of the gospel, and heard many a serious and useful

sermon, particularly from Mr. * * *, my pious pastor; but all in vain. I was often reprov'd for my crimes, reminded of my duty, and exhorted to pray, but without effect. I hardened my neck and continued in folly. I lived without God in the world; casting off fear and restraining prayer before him. Though I have but an imperfect remembrance of the early course of my life, I certainly know that it was wholly made up of vanity and sin. I particularly recollect that I was much addicted to the sin of * * and was often guilty of others. So little reverence had I for religion, that I used to ridicule a good man for his pious discourse and for his prayers. How justly might such a profane mouth been stopped in the dust, and so great a sinner plunged into hell! My guilt was highly aggravated by disregarding the rebukes of providence. I remember that at a time when I was the companion of fools, and had joined myself to certain "lewd fellows of the baser sort," I was visited with a dangerous sickness, in which all my friends despaired of my life; but was so far from being affected with the mercy of God in my deliverance, that I ridiculed a kind and faithful monitor who afterwards reminded me of it. This, and much worse, belongs to the story of my past life. And yet "I obtained mercy." It pleas'd God at length to stop me in my sinful course, to open my eyes, to touch my heart, and to convert me to himself. Have I not reason to say with Paul, "The grace of our Lord was to me exceeding abundant;" in thus plucking me "as a fire-brand out of the burning?"

And who is there that has been savingly converted to God, but has reason for the same acknowledgment? The methods of divine grace to-

wards different persons are, indeed, various and widely different. Some are engaged to religion gradually and insensibly, which is the case with most who have been early trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; who have known the scriptures from children, and like Abraham's family, have been charged to keep the way of the Lord. The religion of such grows up with them. They have been restrained from gross enormities, and preserved in good decorum. By means of the instructions of parents, and the public ministry, something has been done in them at one time and something at another; but when and how the work of conversion was effectually wrought, it is hard to say. They themselves cannot give a particular account of it: they, however, must acknowledge the grace of God to be the efficient cause. But, with respect to sinners who have long lived in a course of wilful, open disobedience, in the total neglect and contempt of religion, the change is more evident, and will ordinarily be known and observed both by themselves and others. Such a conversion has, doubtless, some advantages peculiar to itself, not only as it frees the mind from those doubts and suspicions with which others are sometimes exercised, who are wrought upon in a more gradual way, but as it gives more vigour to the Christian's motions afterwards in the divine life, as was the case with the apostle Paul.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, for his exceeding grace towards me, and for this circumstance of it, that I have such satisfactory evidence of the reality of the change. God be thanked that though I was the servant; the willing slave of sin, I have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered in the gospel: that I can say

with the apostle, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," but was engaged to harken to the divine call, and yield myself up to the will and authority of God. Though I was not called by an audible voice from heaven, it was in so signal a manner, and attended with such visible effects as will not allow me to question the reality of the thing. For a number of years I wandered like the prodigal from my father's house, and indulged myself in sensual pleasures, being wholly lost and dead to all the valuable purposes of life. Though I often attended public worship, I bore no part in it, nor ever put up an earnest petition to God in private. I heard the minister preach, as I heard him pray, without taking any personal interest in what was delivered, and I might as well have been asleep or absent.

Thus I continued destitute of all sense of religion, and was a mere mass of stupidity, folly and sin, till I was twenty years of age; when one day hearing Mr. * * preach on a striking text, my mind was strangely awakened. I seem to see the preacher still, and hear his voice. I well remember some of his words, and shall never forget them as long as I live.—I went home, fell upon my knees, prayed as well as I could, and wept abundantly. I have reason to think this was the day of God's power and grace to my soul. The scales now fell from off my eyes: I clearly saw the folly, danger and madness, of my former course.—The things of religion had such weight and authority with me as they never had before. From this time I was afraid of offending God even in the smallest matters. I was watchful over my thoughts and words, as well as actions. I durst not let a day pass without prayer, nor

could I be easy, unless I found my heart engaged and affected therein. Sermons and good books had now quite another savour with me than formerly, and the word of God was more precious with me, than thousands of gold and silver. The world appeared to me all vanity and emptiness, and I looked upon the scenes of carnal mirth and pleasure, in which I before most delighted, with contempt. My mind was habitually possessed with awful apprehensions of eternity, and I attended to religion as the one thing needful. In short I was become a new creature.

Afterwards, however, I had many conflicts in my mind; sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, and almost despairing; being assaulted with many and strong temptations. I found many difficulties in my way, and great infirmities attended all that I did; so that I was fearful the change in me was not genuine, and that I should not be able to hold out to the end. But, upon applying to my minister, and opening my heart to him, he answered my scruples, revived my hopes, and encouraged me in the way of duty, as he has done several times since; and thus through the rich grace of God, I proceeded in my course of religion, and, at length found myself strengthened and settled, and, like the Ethiopian convert, "went on my way rejoicing."

Lord, what shall I render thee for thy distinguished and abounding grace? I would never forget what thou hast done for my soul. And as thy grace to me has been exceeding abundant, I wish to abound in the work of the Lord. I remember, with sorrow and shame, my weaknesses and imperfections, by which my comfort and usefulness have been obstructed and thy

name dishonored. O, that thou who hast begun the good work in me, wouldst strengthen what thou hast wrought. Lord manifest and perfect thy own work, and I will shout "grace, grace" unto it."

MEDITATION VI.

On the chief Evidence of True Grace.

ACTS xxvi. 19. *I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*

THE conversion of this great apostle, which he here relates before king Agrippa, had in it something very extraordinary. As he was on his journey to Damascus, with a commission for persecuting the church of Christ, he was struck down to the ground by a light from heaven, accompanied with an awful voice, that of the Lord Jesus, addressing him by name, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Upon inquiring who it was that thus addressed him, and being told by the injured Saviour that it was He himself, who considered this cruelty to his servants as committed against *Him*, Saul, trembling and astonished asked (as related) *Acts ix. 6*, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Hereupon the Lord bid him to go into the city to gain information: acquainting him that he was "a chosen vessel," and that he should be employed as an instrument for propagating that gospel which he had so violently opposed, in the heathen world. Whereupon, says he, "O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" and then goes on to relate how readily he executed this extraordinary commis-

sion. The voice which he heard from heaven did not produce a mere transient conviction, a sudden fit of terror, or a temporary resolution: it was an effectual call, being accompanied with such power as reached his conscience, and produced a most surprising change in the temper of his mind and the course of his life; so that it carried its own evidence along with it. Here he began the happy period of his Christian life; that course of obedience to his Lord and Master, and those eminent services for his honour, and in the support of his cause, which he prosecuted with the most ardent zeal and the most indefatigable industry, to the end of his life.

Though his call was in itself so very extraordinary, the most satisfactory evidence of its reality arose from the *effects* and consequences of it.—The grace which Paul received was a principle of *obedience*. And such it is in all who receive the grace of God in truth. May I have the like evidence that I have been effectually called by grace, and be enabled to prove my faith by my works. Could I look back upon the most awful scenes of conviction; had I imagined that an audible voice from heaven had been addressed to me in my career of sin, and brought me not only to some penitential confessions, but likewise to enter upon some services of religion; yet if I had afterwards suffered myself to be entangled again in former pollutions, my supposed call could afford me no solid comfort, nor ought any former awakenings, or extraordinary impressions, to pass with me as proofs of a true conversion. On the other hand, though I had never felt those terrors of the Lord which some have felt, nor experienced any of those remarkable circumstances attending my conversion which some have experienced, so as to be able to

say *when* and *where* the good work was wrought; yet if I can with truth declare that I have not been “disobedient” to the voice of God in his written word; that I find myself under the habitual impressions of religion, and the fear of God; if I am conscious that I love him, and am careful to obey him in all things, I have no reason to question the truth of my Christianity.

God doth not tie himself up to one uniform method in dispensing his grace. We ought not, therefore, to think that the good work is not done at all, because it is not done in the way that it sometimes is, or that we may expect or wish.— ‘I doubt not (says a good divine*) it hath occasioned much unnecessary disquietude to some holy persons, that they have not found such a regular and orderly transaction in their souls as they have seen described in books; that they have not passed through all those steps and stages of conversion, which some (who perhaps have felt them) have too peremptorily prescribed unto others. God hath several ways of dealing with the souls of men, and it sufficeth, if the work be accomplished, whatever the methods may have been.’ He works all things “according to the counsel of his own will;” always with wisdom and in the manner that is best.

There is also no small difference in regard to the circumstances in which divine grace finds persons in their natural state, which may make a difference in God’s procedure with them.— Though all are sinners, all are not *alike* sinners: some inherit more vicious inclinations than others; their bodily constitutions derived to them

* *Scougal’s Life of God, &c.*—P. 61.

by their birth, dispose them more strongly to several sins than those of others; nor is it improbable that the mind may receive advantages or disadvantages for religion from the temper predominant in parents. There may be some happy souls who inherit what may be called natural virtue, or a peculiar amiableness of temper; and these having the advantage of a pious education from their childhood, are early seasoned with religion and by the grace of God are gradually confirmed in it; for, whatever the advantages of constitution or education may be, there is, in all, sufficient proof of their need of divine grace, and of their obligations to it.

Much more, no doubt, might be done by parents than ordinarily is done, towards the sanctification of their children in their earliest days. For want of their vigilance and fidelity, we have but few instances of such as escape the common pollutions of the world: And, indeed, where parents are the most careful, and appear for a time most successful, young persons are too often carried away by evil examples, and hurried on by sense and appetite into the paths of folly and sin: their early impressions wear off, and their goodness, "like the morning dew, soon goeth away." The manner in which God deals with these persons, and with others, is far from being fixed and invariable, so that none can judge with certainty of the work of grace by the manner of operation. Let me then be more concerned to know whether I *am* truly converted, than *when* or *how* I was; in order to which, the only certain rule of judgment is, the prevailing temper and conversation.

A truly religious course cannot commence without a principle of divine life in the heart,

which nothing but the regenerating grace of God can produce. Though we are called to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” that is, in the use of all appointed means, we are also told, that “it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” But the reality of his saving operations can only be ascertained by their *fruits*, which those in whom they are wrought may easily perceive. ‘When the spirit of God is poured out upon a man for his effectual conversion, there are presented to the understanding such lively, strong, and invigorating impressions as not only gain belief, but obtrude themselves so often and with such energy upon the mind, that he is divinely overcome, and yet without the least force on his reason or will; he seeing the greatest reason in the world for what is proposed, and choosing with the freest liberty; so that the renewed man becomes in all things another manner of person than he formerly was.’* He is now willing to be, to do, and to bear, whatsoever is agreeable to God’s revealed will. As he earnestly inquires with Saul, “Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?” so like him he is “not disobedient to the heavenly vision;” to the commands of divine revelation, desiring in all things to subserve the purposes of God’s glory. There is a harmony between God’s grace and our endeavours: the one doth not render the other unnecessary, but both must concur to make the Christian, and indeed in all the achievements of the Christian life:

Enquire then, O my soul, into this important matter as it respects thyself. Examine impartially, whether thou hast received the call of grace;

* *Scougal’s Life of God, &c.*

the illumination and unction of the holy spirit, which is the source of all vital religion.— And in order to be satisfied in this momentous point, examine upon what principles thou dost act in religion, and whether thou hast been obedient to the heavenly call? I have been baptized, and have professed faith in Christ and obedience to him, and sealed his covenant at his table.— But after all this, the main thing may be wanting. What evidence have I that my faith is genuine, and my profession sincere? What are the *fruits* which I have produced in my life and conversation?

Blessed be God for any reason I have to hope that the grace bestowed upon me has not been altogether in vain; that it has not been a dead, inactive principle, but a spring of divine motion, of spiritual affection, and holy operations. Alas! that it has been no more efficacious! that I have so much neglected the gift of God in me, and grieved his holy spirit by quenching his blessed motions. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; blot out my transgressions, heal my backslidings, strengthen what thou hast wrought, and “take not thy Holy Spirit from me,” but grant me a more abundant supply of thy divine influence, that I may abound more in all those fruits of righteousness and evangelical obedience, which are the most substantial evidences of any one’s loving God and being “called according to his purpose.”

MEDITATION VII.

On the Fruits of Divine Grace.

1 COR. XV. 10.—*And his grace was not bestowed upon me in vain, but I laboured more abundantly.*

DID conversion import no more than a proselytism to the Christian faith, as many think; did regeneration include no more than, as some maintain, what is done for us in *baptism*, I should have no occasion for self-inquiry. But certainly it comprehends a conversion from sin and the love of the world. “He is not a Jew,” nor a Christian, “who is one *outwardly* alone, “but he, who is one *inwardly*, whose praise is “not of men, but of God.” “If any man be in “Christ he is a new creature. If any one have “not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Examine then, O my soul, into the grounds of thy profession and hope. Paul had a clearness in this matter above most. The influence of God’s spirit upon his mind was so self-evident that he could speak of it without hesitation. But the most satisfying proof of his call was, the happy *effect* of it. The grace bestowed upon him was not in vain, for “he laboured more abundantly.” The vigour of his love and zeal were answerable to the grace displayed towards him.—Never was any one more distinguished by the grace of God, and never did any one more honour and improve it. Lord, may I have the like evidence of my call!

It is comfortable when persons can look upon the distinct circumstances of a divine work upon their hearts, and recite the minute history of

their conversion. But I would not lay the main stress upon this. The operations of the spirit, upon the minds of men, are sometimes mistaken, and may be counterfeited. Some take *conviction* for conversion; occasional heats of *affection*, or sudden flights of *devotion*, and even fits of *melancholy*, for a work of grace; and being persuaded that such a work was wrought in their souls, and being assured of the doctrine, *Once in Christ always in Christ*, they argue themselves into a full confidence concerning their good estate, though they have never brought forth "fruits meet for repentance." And this imaginary work they often refer to afterwards, and rest in, as the foundation of their hope and comfort, though their "goodness was as the morning cloud or the early dew that soon goeth away." O, may I not be under such a delusion! The grace of God is not a transient work, but a permanent principle. "The tree is known by its fruits." I have no sufficient evidence that I have received the grace of God in truth unless I can say, "It has not been in vain," but I have been engaged to "labour" in a steady course of religion and piety. Search, O my soul, into this matter with seriousness and impartiality.—That I may the better judge of my spiritual state, I will take a view of the genuine effects of divine grace in the life of a Christian:

1. The first effort of grace in the soul is ordinarily in a way of devotion towards God. No sooner are the eyes opened than they are darted towards heaven. It was remarked of Saul immediately upon his conversion, "Behold he prayeth;" which seems mentioned as an evidence of the change wrought in him. Religion generally begins here. The new creature first breathes in prayer. And his fervent supplica-

tions are accompanied with penitent confessions; often with strong crying and tears. Nor doth he satisfy himself with temporary fits of warm devotion, but "prays without ceasing." The true convert remains a constant supplicant before the throne of grace, through the whole of his life.

2. The certain and necessary effect of true grace is, the divine nature communicated: the image of God drawn on the soul, consisting of the several graces that adorn the Christian's temper and conversation. "These constitute the divine life: the root of which (says the excellent *Scougal**) is faith; the chief branches, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility.—These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of: the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul. And he who hath attained them needs not to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven, to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts written in his own breast."—It was not without reason that one said, 'I had rather see the real impressions of a God-like nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name is enrolled in the book of life. I bless thee, O my God, for what I have experienced of this great work, and the happy fruits thereof. Lord carry on what thou hast begun! Fulfil the work of faith, of love, and every other grace in me with power.'

3. The grace of God is a sovereign preservative against sin, and gives the conquest over it.

* *Life of God in the Soul of Man.*—P. 15, 16.

“ Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” They that are Christ’s are said to “ have crucified the flesh with its affections, and lusts.” They have in some measure done it already. The best of Christians, indeed, in this life, have sin dwelling in them, and are compassed about with many infirmities. But grace manifests itself in a constant, vigorous opposition to the remainders of sin, and by repeated struggles will gradually subdue them. Every nature has its antipathies, and will bend its force against such things as are destructive and hurtful to it. Thus it is with the *new* nature. As nothing is more contrary to it, or more destructive to its interests and comforts than *sin*, it cannot but hate and oppose it; so that there is a constant warfare in the soul of a renewed man.

“ The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” The best of Christians will sometimes complain of “ a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, bringing them into captivity,” and will exclaim, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ?” And I cannot but reckon it a mark of grace, and an evidence that it has not been received in vain, when we have a deep sense of remaining infirmities, and in the use of proper means, are striving for the mastery.

4. Divine grace in the soul is a principle of universal obedience and active service in religion. The grace of God in the gospel, and especially in the heart, teaches and disposes us not only to “ deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,” but also to “ live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.” Saul, under the first impres-

sions of grace, cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And his whole after-conduct shewed his loyalty to his great master. He "laboured more abundantly," and thought no pains or self-denial too much to promote the honour of God and the interest of his church. He could truly say, "to me to live is Christ."— With what a noble, generous zeal, did he go through his various labours for the honour of the Redeemer and the good of souls. He was willing "to spend and be spent" in this service, "not counting his life dear unto him," so that he might secure these ends.

And wherever the grace of God is received, it will have a practical influence. It will lead those who possess it to "have respect unto *all* "God's commandments," and it will dispose them to exert themselves to be useful in the world. The zeal of young converts is, indeed, generally more confined to their own spiritual concerns; but as they grow in grace it is more extended, and is employed about those duties which respect the interests of mankind, especially the church of God, and the welfare of their fellow-Christians. The various offices of brotherly love are some of the strongest evidences of a true conversion. "Hereby," says the apostle John, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Lord, may I have this evidence of thy grace! May it be the source of universal obedience, of ardent zeal for thine honour, and of catholic love to mankind. May I love Thee with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself; doing good to all, as I have opportunity, especially to them who are of the household of faith.

5. It is one effect and hopeful sign of the

grace of God, that it so transforms the heart, as that the work of religion becomes natural, easy, and pleasant. The Christian at first, indeed, may find difficulties in his way, and may feel some degree of reluctance to his duty; but as grace prevails, his difficulties are gradually overcome; his heart is enlarged, and he runs in the way of God's commandments with alacrity and cheerfulness.

‘ Religion is an inward, free, self-moving principle; and those who have made progress in it are acted not only by external motives, driven merely by threatenings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining him to do so and so, as by a new nature prompting him to it.—His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him; his love makes him willing to give, and though there were no outward obligation, his heart would devise liberal things. What our blessed Lord said of himself, is in some measure applicable to his followers, that it was his meat and drink to do his father’s will.’* Lord may I experience more of the power of thy grace in this view! May religion become more my delight, my very life and nature, my entertainment and joy.

6. The grace of God, when it is not in vain, is progressive: it carries the soul forward, advancing it to greater heights of purity. “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shin-

* See more on this head in *Scougal’s Life of God*,—P. 96. &c.

“eth more and more unto the perfect day.”—As the rising sun encreaseth in its brightness and strength of heat till it comes to its meridian, so it should be with the Christian: so it always *would* be if he did not restrain the divine principle, and quench the spirit. [But, though the good work may sometimes be at a stand, and the best of men do not make that swift progress which they ought and might do, yet the righteous will not only “hold on his way,” but will, on the whole, “grow stronger and stronger.” O may I be ever going from strength to strength, in every grace and every duty, and in my spiritual warfare go forth conquering and to conquer.]

7. True grace is of a humbling nature: after all its achievements and victories, it lays the soul low, and keeps it in a state of abasement. Paul, though more abundant in labours, and of distinguished excellence, yet how doth he shrink and contract himself. “I am nothing; less than the least of all saints. Forgetting the things that are behind, I press forwards towards the mark.” Hence that humbling strain, *Rom. vii.* which he would not have used while he was a Pharisee, when touching the righteousness of the law he thought himself blameless. But that grace which had so gloriously enriched him, emptied him also. The best Christians are the least in their own eyes.* Lord, when I contemplate what thy grace hath wrought in me, and done for me, and enabled me to do, may I have a constant sense of my own imperfections, and be nothing in my own eyes, but be still going on towards perfection!

* Nilque putans actum dum quid superesset agendum.

8. Divine grace raises the mind above this world, and fixes the affections upon another. It is of an aspiring nature, and moves with a constant tendency towards heaven. The Christian, in passing through this world, which lies in his way, maintains a continual warfare against it, in all the forms under which it appears, and through faith overcomes it; strips it of its charms and lays it under his feet. By the cross of Christ he is "crucified to the world and the world to him." His heart being in heaven, he looks down upon this earth with a pious contempt, and passes through its various scenes of vanity and trial with indifference, "weeping as though he wept not, and rejoicing as though he rejoiced not." Such was the apostle's happy temper of mind, which he recommends to others, 1 Cor. vii. 30. The affairs of religion, and the world to come, appeared so important, and so possessed his thoughts and all his faculties, that this world was almost out of his sight.—The solemn and interesting scenes which will take place at the day of the Saviour's second appearing (which he emphatically styles *that day*) so habitually possessed his mind, that in comparison therewith every other day, with all its occurrences, were but dreams and vanity. Alas! that I know no more of the efficacy of divine grace in this view! that my affections are no more carried out after the things of a future world, and that I feel no more indifference towards present things: That I have been so much hindered in my heavenly course by earthly troubles or enjoyments. Yet I desire to bless God that the concerns of eternity have, as I hope, the chief sway with me: may they have my whole heart! And by looking less at the things which are temporal, and more at those

which are eternal, may I have encreasing evidence that I have not received the grace of God in vain.

MEDITATION VIII.

On the Influences of the Holy Spirit.

PHIL. i. 19. *The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*

THERE are few mistakes in religion, I apprehend, more prejudicial to Christianity and the souls of men, than that of confining the operations of the spirit to his miraculous works, in the first dispensation of the gospel. Christ promised his spirit "to abide with the church forever." And the apostle, in the above passage, speaks of the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ as what he desired and hoped to be imparted to him, not only for the proof of his apostleship, but for the promoting of his salvation. In the same view *we* are encouraged to seek and depend upon the same divine influence.

The spirit of God (which is also called the spirit of *Christ*, being conveyed through him) is spoken of in scripture as given to all the faithful. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "By this we know that he abideth in us by the spirit that he hath given us." "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts."—To be under this influence is spoken of as characteristic of a true Christian. "As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God. Whereas, "if any man have not the

“spirit of Christ,” he is declared to be “none of his.” Sensual, and not having “the spirit,” are characters of the same persons.—Regeneration is represented as the “renewing of the Holy Ghost.” And in every renewed soul the holy spirit is said to take up his abode.—“Ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be the spirit of Christ dwelleth in you.”—The divine spirit doth not accomplish his work in the hearts of men at once, but by *dwelling* there affords continued assistance in maintaining and carrying it on. “The *supply* of the spirit,” imparts continued communications of that divine influence.

This supply is afforded for the improvement of every Christian grace. The several divine virtues, love, joy, peace, long-sufferings, &c. are called “the fruits of the spirit.” This influence is also imparted as a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the “knowledge of Christ,” for giving the Christian further instruction and light in the great things of religion, both of faith and practice.—This supply of the spirit, likewise furnishes the Christian for the duties, difficulties and trials of his course and warfare. “My grace,” says our Lord to the apostle under a severe conflict, “is sufficient for thee.” And every Christian may hope to be “strengthened with all might, by the spirit, in the inner man,” for doing and suffering every thing he is called to, if in a due manner he looks to him and depends upon him. We are directed and encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace; “that we may find grace to help in every time of need.”

O my soul, be thankful for the promised assistances and supplies of the good spirit of God,

who is the *Shekinah*, the glory of the Christian church. Blessed be God for all the help, success and comfort, I have had under his conduct. To this I would ascribe the praise of all that I am, and all that I have done. From the assistance I have experienced in past difficulties, I would take encouragement to depend upon the same for the future. Whatever dangers, temptations, and trials may yet lie before me, let me wait upon the Lord to renew my strength.—While I work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, I would also do it with a cheerful hope and confidence in God to “work in me” by his spirit, “to will and to do.”

Two things I would prescribe to myself, as stated maxims of conduct, *viz.* always to keep close to my heavenly guardian and helper; depending not on my own wisdom and ability but on his; sensible that if left to myself I can do nothing truly good; but that “through Christ strengthening me I can do all things.”—And to engage the supply of the spirit of Jesus, for every good work, I would take care not to “grieve or quench the Spirit,” but yield to all his motions in my heart, and govern myself by all the rules of his word: praying with all prayer and supplication to my Father who is in heaven, who has promised, “to give his Spirit to them that ask it.”

But besides the more stated and necessary aids of the divine spirit, common to all the faithful, there is what may be called the *extraordinary* influence of the spirit, vouchsafed to some persons at some particular times, and on some special occasions, for answering some peculiar purposes. For instance; sometimes a special effusion of the spirit of God is afforded to his

servants, to prepare them for extraordinary *trials* which lie before them, and to fortify their minds for sharp conflicts. Sometimes the favour is granted when actually *bearing* such trials, so that they have been supported under them, and carried through them, far beyond their expectations. I have met with the case of a person who had a variety of heavy trials upon him at once, any one of which, he says, would have been enough to have crushed him, had he enjoyed only *common* measures of grace and strength; But so abundant and seasonable was the supply of the spirit, that when things were at the worst, he was brought to a full resignation to the will of God, and to such calmness and serenity as he never enjoyed before; that he was so firmly persuaded of a good issue to all, as to enjoy the comfort of deliverance even before it came; and that sometimes, after intense acts of devotion, the exultation of his mind was such, that he could scarcely suppress it in the company of his friends.

Extraordinary assistance is sometimes afforded for special *direction* in cases of perplexity. When the Christian's mind has been embarrassed and his thoughts divided about the path of duty; when he has been earnestly solicitous to know the way he should chuse, and willing rather to suffer than to sin; in consequence of frequent and fervent supplications for the divine guidance, God has at length determined his mind with so much strength and clearness, that he has had the fullest satisfaction that the decision was from heaven. In some instances the consolation and direction which the Christian has received, has been by means of some suitable passage of scripture suddenly presented to his thoughts.

Sometimes the spirit of God accompanies his word and ordinances with such power, as to afford Christians extraordinary light and comfort, so as to make them "joyful in his house of prayer;" and at the table of the Lord in particular, they have found such enlargement of soul, and such a sealing of divine love, as to give them a delightful foretaste of heaven. And in some instances Christians of high attainments in religion, have experienced, in the secret exercises of meditation and prayer, extraordinary manifestations of the divine love to their souls, and such "witness of the Spirit" respecting their spiritual state, as have filled them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." A remarkable instance of this kind is recorded in the life of the great Mr. *John Howe*, in which is given a passage translated into English, which was found written in *Latin* by that eminent divine, in a blank page of the Bible which he used in his study. He there relates, that after having largely discoursed on 2 *Cor.* i. 12. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our consciences," &c. he awoke one morning from a most delightful dream, *Dec.* 26, 1689, when he had such a signal pledge of divine favour, as he often reflected upon with great complacency. But that at another time, *Oct.* 12, 1704, he experienced such a comforting influence of the holy spirit, as far surpassed the most expressive words that his thoughts could suggest.

If these things do not agree with some men's schemes of divinity, any more than with their experience, that is no argument against them, nor will it have any weight with such as know them to be important realities. O, my God, I bless thee for those seasonable supplies of the spirit which

I have experienced: for all the advantages of his influence, whether ordinary or extraordinary.— I praise thee for all the supports thou hast afforded me under my burdens and trials; for thy guidance in perplexity; for thy assistance in arduous duties; and for the comfort thou hast afforded me in thy good ways. O, my God! never leave me nor forsake me. “Uphold me by thy free Spirit,” and always proportion my strength to my day. “O cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

MEDITATION IX.

The Spirit's influence defended and improved.

LUKE xi. 13.—*How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask it.*

MANY warm disputes have been raised in the church of Christ about the influences of the holy spirit, the freedom of the will, &c. But I shall leave them with those whose leisure, profession, and studies, may qualify them to judge of such points better than I can pretend to do. There are, however, truths of great importance which I can clearly discern, in the midst of that dust which has been raised by the violent agitations of learned men upon these subjects. There are conclusions which appear to me firm and solid, which I purpose to abide by, notwithstanding some difficulties that attend them.

Our Lord himself, in the above passage, has expressly taught us, That God, our heavenly Father, is ready to give the holy spirit to them

that ask it, and more ready to confer this blessing than earthly parents are to give good things to their children. From hence I cannot but conclude, that good men under the gospel have the assistance of the spirit, not only in what is absolutely necessary to the *being* of a Christian, but also in what concerns his *well-being*: for more eminent degrees of sanctification, and the performance of the more arduous services to which he may be called; as also for his support and consolation when he is called out to suffer for religion. But it is equally plain, from this passage and many others, That the way to *obtain* this heavenly gift is to *ask* it of God in humble, earnest, continued and believing *prayer*. "Ask," says our Lord, "and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find." In this way the Christian may hope for grace proportioned to his occasions and circumstances.

O, my soul! lie thou at God's footstool: wait beneath his throne, and endeavour, by humble, importunate supplications, to obtain this glorious blessing. Nor would I only implore the assistance of the spirit in general, in the expectation of receiving it, but I would also be solicitous to be assured that I *have* his presence and help, mortifying my corruptions, sanctifying my temper, governing my passions, directing me in my difficulties, enlarging me in acts of worship, maintaining my intercourse with heaven, rendering me free and cheerful in religion, ready to every good work, and likewise patient and joyful in tribulation. Lord favour me in this, wherein so much as the pleasure and triumph of the Christian life consists.

I can see no inconsistency between the spirit's help, and human endeavours. These are always

in conjunction. The divine assistance does not render our exertions unnecessary, nor are our best endeavours sufficient without the divine help: there is a concurrence of both. We are not, therefore, to sit still and indulge in sloth, under a pretence that we cannot move or act without some extraordinary supernatural excitation. All the duties of religion are our proper work; and the assistance of the spirit of God is so far from being an excuse for the neglect of them, that it is the greatest encouragement to them. The language of the divine word is, "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you." We are to work, *because* God worketh in us; that is, *assists* us in our work. In all the duties of religion, we work through and by him, not merely as his instruments, but as proper agents, moving and acting under his conduct and influence. Hence that saying of the apostle, "I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

Attend, O my soul, to thy duty in the whole compass of it. I am to believe, repent, obey and work out my salvation, looking up to heaven for grace and strength. I would exert myself as if all was to be done by my own power, and at the same time depend on God and his grace as that without which I have no power at all.

I take it for certain that, as the spirit is given to different persons in different measures, that difference greatly depends upon their conduct, and the improvement which they respectively make of the spirit's assistance. "To him that *hath*, (it is said) shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever *hath* not (that is, doth not improve what he hath,) from

“him shall be taken away even that he hath.” The diligent hand maketh rich. The more humble, watchful and prayerful the Christian is, the more shall he abound in the gifts, the fruits, and the comforts of the spirit. But if he grow careless and slothful, indulging the lusts of the flesh, or giving way to anger, wrath, bitterness of spirit, he will grieve the good spirit of God, and may expect the withdrawment of his presence, as a punishment of his folly and sin.

Since the promise of the spirit is made in general to them that *ask it*, all those who humbly and earnestly seek this blessing have encouragement to hope for the bestowment of it, and none but they. If any have it not, it is, as the apostle James speaks, “because they ask not,” or, if they ask and have not, it is, “because they ask amiss.” None have any cause to object that they cannot ask aright. Doubtless we are capable of such asking as is required, and made the condition of receiving; otherwise the promise were in fact no promise: a promise to mock and deceive us. I pretend not to solve all the difficulties that may be started on this subject.—But the ideas God has given us of himself in his word, and the declarations he has there made, may assure us that he does not lay our salvation upon things absolutely out of our reach. Whatever inability we are under from the fall, a sufficient remedy is provided through a mediator.—Since God has called us to so many duties, and promised his holy spirit to them that ask it, to assist them therein, we must conclude those duties are possible, and that the necessary assistance will not be denied. In short, none shall perish for want of needful assistance on God's part. None can justly say that they could not

help sinning, nor will they be able at last to say that their damnation is unjust, or that God was not as sincere in his promises of grace, as in his threatenings of wrath. Their convictions of this will leave them forever speechless. And, if the real Christian has not that measure of the spirit's influence which is sufficient for the whole of his duty, it is either because he does not duly seek it, or because by some criminality he forfeits it.

Finally, I would ever bear it in mind as a certain and most important truth, That the great end of all the spirit's operations is sanctification of heart and life, or the performance of good works. Indeed, the promoting of *holiness*, (which is the refining our natures, and conforming them to the divine image,) is the grand object of all God's designs and acts of grace.— This was the end of the glorious scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, who is said to have “given himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” For this he lived and preached, and died a victim. For this also he promised and sent his spirit. This is expressly mentioned as the great end for which the divine influence is bestowed. Thus, says God, by the prophet Ezekiel, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.”

I cannot, therefore, understand what they mean, or how they read their Bibles, who speak in such diminutive terms as some do, of *good*

works, as if they were of no necessity in religion, or of no intrinsic value. We must not indeed put them in Christ's stead, and depend on them for that merit which is proper to his righteousness; but then we must be equally careful not to substitute Christ's righteousness in the room of our own, or to depend upon what he has done *for us*, to the neglect of what he requires to be done *by us*. This is an error of the most pernicious consequence; the worst heresy that infests the Christian church. This makes void the law of God, subverts the design of the gospel, and sets aside the office of the blessed spirit.—O, my God, suffer me not thus to pervert and abuse the gospel of thy grace. Grant me thy spirit as a “spirit of holiness.” Make me rich in good works. Help me to abound in all “the fruits of righteousness which “are to thy praise and glory by Christ Jesus.”

In whatever darkness men of a disputing humour may involve these subjects of *grace* and *duty of faith* and *works*, of the *spirit's* influence, and *human* endeavours, the views I have taken of them appear to be so clearly founded on scripture, so consistent and so important, that I cannot relinquish them upon any little cavil that may be raised against them. Upon the whole, there are two conclusions in which I am firmly established, which comprehend the substance of my reflections, namely,—That *all our success* and attainments in religion must be ascribed to the assistance of God's spirit, and all our *miscarriages* to our own *sinful neglects*. That every man's salvation is of grace, and every man's damnation of himself.

O, my soul! wait thou on God for all needful supplies of his spirit. I have his promise for it, and may be secure of the performance, if I

myself do not put a bar in the way, by despising the blessing, or neglecting the appointed means of obtaining it. *Luke* says, "He will give his *holy spirit* to them that ask him." *Matthew* has it, "He will give *good things*" to such; which includes all needful good. I may therefore cheerfully expect grace sufficient for me. For this, O my God, I would constantly supplicate before thy throne, with such importunity as shews a high value for the blessing.— Lord favour me herewith! O vouchsafe me thy spirit, and all the good things comprehended in that gift, and I shall rejoice in them more than in all riches. Let me have thy special conduct in the great concerns of my soul. Lead me by thy spirit in the ways of truth, of righteousness and peace. Lord take me under thy powerful protection; preserve me from all hurtful errors, and from every false way. Let thy spirit dwell in me, as my strength, my light, and my comforter. "Guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

MEDITATION X.

On the Special Conduct of Providence.

PROV. iii. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thy own understanding. In all thy ways, acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.*

THE doctrine of a particular providence, which is clearly taught in the sacred writings, is as reasonable as it is comfortable. To acknowledge that providence is the duty of all, and to exercise an habitual faith in it, is the happiness of all good men; who have sufficient warrant to con-

sider themselves as being more especially under the divine conduct, not only in the affairs of their souls, and such as immediately respect religion, but in those also which relate to this world; especially such as are the most important, and have the greatest influence upon their spiritual interests.

As this doctrine is so fully set forth in the Bible, that glorious system of religion, the Christian has unspeakably the advantage above all others. The heathens were miserably in the dark respecting it. Some of the philosophers denied all providence; particularly the *Epicureans*. And no wonder that they who thought the world was made by chance, should think it might be governed so. *Aristotle* is said to have confined a providence to the heavens, and denied its interposing in human affairs: and even the *Stoics*, who zealously asserted it, so limited it, as to leave it of little use and comfort to mankind. Though they taught that there was a *general* providence which governed the several species of beings, some held that it did not extend to *individuals* and others exempted the lesser concerns of men from its cognizance.—Hence that saying of *Cicero*, ‘The gods take care of the greater affairs, but neglect the less.’* They might, for instance, superintend such matters as the setting a ruler over a nation; but did not interest themselves in the low affairs of private families or particular persons. And it seems the best of these sages ascribed to virtuous men a sort of self-sufficiency independent on God and providence. ‘What need is there’ (says *Seneca*) ‘for importuning the gods, and wearying them with your petitions?’

* Magna curant Dii, parva negligunt.

‘ Make yourself happy.’† These were the principles of the people that sate in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death. How uncomfortable were they, compared with that scheme of providence laid down in the BIBLE! There we are plainly taught that all things are under a divine superintendence; and particularly that “the steps of good men are ordered by the Lord.” Not only that they enjoy such a *general* care of providence as preserves them from certain destruction; but that they may expect, if they duly wait upon God for it, an immediate interposition of his hand, pointing out to them the way of duty and safety. This has been the sentiment of many eminent persons who have appeared free from the least tincture of enthusiasm. ‘Those that truly fear God,’ (says the renowned sir *Matthew Hale*) ‘have a sacred guidance from a higher wisdom than what is barely human, namely the spirit of truth and wisdom, that doth really and truly, though imperceptibly, prevent and direct them. And let no man think this a piece of enthusiasm: any man that fears Almighty God, that relies upon him, and that calls upon him for his guidance and direction, has it as really as a son hath the counsel of his father.— Though the voice be not audible nor the direction perceptible to sense, yet it is as real as if a man heard a voice saying, “this is the way, walk in it.” The devout and holy bishop *Leighton*. in several of his letters, speaks to the same effect. Thus writing to a friend, who had a matter of difficulty before him, he says,— Our business is the study of sincerity and pure intention; and then certainly our blessed Lord

† Quid votis opus, turpé est Deos fatigare: fac te felicem.

‘ will not suffer us to lose our way for want of light.’ We have his express promise in the text, that if in all our ways we acknowledge him, he *will* direct our paths.

There is indeed no small difficulty in discerning the divine conducting hand, and no little danger, in some tempers especially, of being imposed upon, and mistaking a strong fancy of our own for the voice of God. But, though some may be deceived, [and therefore all need caution, this is no argument against the doctrine of a providence;] and God knows how to preserve his servants from delusion, who humbly wait on him.

His providential conduct is exercised in various ways. Sometimes it is by common means; such as the advice of friends, or the deliberations of our own minds, whereby we are determined this way or that, without perceiving any special interposal of providence. God may secretly direct a friend to give such advice as may determine our conduct; or, if several advise differently, he may secretly influence our minds which counsel to prefer and follow. In other instances a sudden thought may be struck into the mind, which at once determines us in such a manner, that we could not but think it was from God.— Sometimes a person in great suspense is directed to a text of scripture, so applicable to the case, and set home with such force, as at once to resolve his difficulty and determine his conduct.*

Such as know nothing of these things may ridicule them, but good men will not be laugh-

* See *Orton's Life of Doddridge*, 8vo. p. 57.

ed out of their comforts and dependence on God. Whatever darkness or difficulty there may be in the circumstances, I reckon the thing itself certain. Many Christians have experienced a special light and conduct from heaven in their affairs. All may not experience it at all times; but I believe it is ordinarily vouchsafed to such as are most observant to providence, resigned to it and dependent upon it: to such as are most devout and prayerful, particularly upon special occasions, and in the more important turns of life, wherein the Christian's duty, usefulness and comfort, or the credit and interest of religion may be eminently concerned.

I adore thee, O my God, for any instances wherein I have experienced thy favour in this respect. O my soul, still wait on God: live in a constant, humble dependence upon him.—“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own understanding.” Thou canst not see into futurity; thou knowest not what shall be on the morrow; nor art thou fit to chuse what should be. Leave all, therefore, in the hands of infinite wisdom. Consult the divine oracles. In all thy ways acknowledge God, beg his guidance and blessing, believing that he will direct thy pathis. Lord, I plead thy promise. “Send forth thy light and truth, let them lead me, and make my way strait before my face!”

MEDITATION XI.

On Contentment with our present lot.

PHIL. iv. 11. *I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.*

AMONG the many infirmities of mankind, it is a general one to be fond of change, and desirous of something new. They would fain be in some other state than that in which they are, and wish to be in what they think a better. This discontented turn of mind is the source of no small uneasiness and disappointment. The great apostle had attained more wisdom. He tells us, that he "had learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content." He was not only submissive to the will and appointment of God, in every condition of life, but had a complacency in it. His chief concern was about his *duty*, and how to comport with the providence of God in its dispensations, leaving Him to dispose of his outward affairs as he pleased, without any painful solicitude.

Not that every state was perfectly the same to him: he could not but be sensible to a difference between a good and a bad treatment in the world; between the faithful friendship of his beloved Titus, and the treachery of Demas and others; the kindness of Gaius and Onesimus, and the malice of Alexander the copper-smith; the warm affection and zeal of some among whom he laboured, and their after coolness towards himself, and apostacy from the gospel. He could not but feel the difference between persecution, bonds and imprisonment, and full liberty to preach the gospel; between the visions

of the third heaven and the thorn in the flesh. It was impossible that these things should be equally grateful to him. And yet he had learned in *every* state to be content. He had an all-sufficiency in God, and a sort of self-sufficiency (as the word signifies) in his own mind, from divine principles implanted there, which led him to converse with God, and live upon him in all circumstances, and consequently to bear every state without murmuring, and to rest in it with patience and pleasure, as what God had appointed.

Glorious attainment! Aim at this thyself, O my soul! Endeavour after this blessed evenness of mind; this divine composure, this holy contentment in every state; then nothing can come amiss to thee. Every state will be safe, and in the main comfortable. If it be ever attained thou must *learn it*: learn it of God. Frequently, therefore, apply to him by fervent prayer, for his teaching. Beg that he would discipline and form thy heart thereunto. As a means on thy part, often attend to such considerations as these.

1. That God governs the world, and has the ordering of all affairs. Nothing tends more to quiet the mind, under all the trials and grievances of life, than a firm belief in divine providence, as it is fully set forth in the Bible, that glorious system of religion. This gives the Christian unspeakably the advantage above all others.—Contentment was indeed a subject very much laboured by some heathen writers; but it is evident they wanted a true foundation of it: The knowledge of a divine providence superintending and governing all things. This the Bible supplies, which represents the providence

that governs the world as universal, powerful, righteous and holy, merciful and good, and as exercised towards good men with special tenderness and love. Contemplate, O my soul, this pleasing subject, and be well established in the belief of it. Survey it in all its properties, and thou wilt find it a powerful argument for contentment, and a constant source of consolation. Consider, whatever state thou art in, God has the ordering of it. "Not a sparrow falls on the ground without him, and the hairs of thy head are numbered." If Shimei curse David, it is because "the Lord bade him." All the ingredients in thy cup, and all the variety of thy state, are from him. However second causes may concur, and whatever guilt there may be in the instruments of thy trouble, religion teaches thee to look above them to the first mover. Let me do this with that reverence of his authority and wisdom which becomes me. "Be still and know that he is God."

2. Consider that thy present state may be best for thee: if not most agreeable to thy inclination, yet most profitable to thy soul.—Hadst thou the mixing of thy own cup, thou wouldst soon destroy thyself. Were all the bitter ingredients taken out, though it would be more pleasing, it would be less wholesome. Thou wouldst have such a burden removed: thou art importunate to have the thorn in the flesh taken away. But the answering thy petition might endanger the soul. Resign thyself then to thy God, fully and without reserve: leave him to carve thy portion for thee, whose wisdom is infinite. He knows what is best for thee, and thou art assured of his faithfulness and love. "All the paths of the Lord are

“ mercy and truth unto such as keep his cove-
 “ nant and his testimonies.”

3. Consider there is no state in the present world however favourable, that is entirely free from trouble. Since the apostacy there is a vanity and a curse in all our enjoyments. So that we do but deceive ourselves when we expect so much relief as we are apt to do from this or that change. We find something pinches and makes us uneasy where we are, and therefore we are for shifting our situation. But it would be to no purpose. It is a fruitless effort for rest here below, where we can never find it.— Wherever we fix our tent, we shall find something or other to annoy us. Though we should repose ourselves under the most pleasant gourd, some “ worm at the root” would smite it, and make it presently wither. ‘ I see’ (says the excellent Leighton) ‘ there is no place, city or country, valley or mountain, free from that sentence ‘ so early passed upon the earth for man’s cause, “ Thorns and briars shalt thou bring forth.”— ‘ But he that is well shod walks on safely till he ‘ come where there are none. But since that is ‘ not *here*, we are to use great deliberation in ‘ our removes. Thorns grow every where, and ‘ from all things below; and to a soul trans- ‘ planted out of itself to the root of Jesse, peace ‘ grows every where too, from him who is our ‘ peace.’ We shall find something amiss in every state. If present company be somewhat irksome, a greater solitude may be more so. There is not so much real difference, in point of true satisfaction, between one state and another, as we are ready to imagine. We complain of grievances in this or that situation; but we might find the same in another, or worse; nor

can we escape the vanity and vexation there is in all things here below, till we are quite beyond them.

4. Consider, that the present state will soon come to a period, and all its troubles terminate with it. If thou hast not such pleasing accommodations at thy inn as thou desirest, it is but for a day and thou art gone. "The fashion of this world passeth away." It is constantly passing, and will so soon be quite passed, that it is not worth while to be very solicitous about a change. The present fashion may serve for the present time, since a new one is just ready to take place, which will change no more for ever. O learn then to moderate thy concern about this world, and the transitory things of it. "The time is short, therefore weep as though thou weepest not: rejoice as though thou rejoicest not." The next state, which is just at hand, is the only one that deserves thy attention.—
 ' What is this poor moment and all its concerns, to the immense eternity that we believe? And how doth one serious thought of it shrink all affairs, public and private, and all this present world, into nothing! What have we to think and speak of but *that*, till the blessed day come which shall let us into it?'—*Leighton*.

O could I read aright that word ETERNITY, and understand its awful sound, it would drown the noise of this world, and silence its clamours. Lord help me to look beyond this life; and withdraw my thoughts and affections from it; to sit down calm and easy in my present state, as ordered by thy Providence [and patiently wait for that joyful period when all its troubles shall be for ever over, and shall issue in complete and everlasting rest.]

MEDITATION XII.

The Christian's daily Walk.

PROV. xxiii. 17.—*Be thou in the fear of the Lord
all the day long.*

THE sacred writer of this book often assumes the character of a Father, addressing his catechumens or scholars as his sons. Thus v. 15. "My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Not that we are to understand him as speaking to his own son alone, but rather as a divine teacher, who takes the title of Father the better to engage the attention and affection of his disciples; while he delivers his counsels and maxims in the name of GOD, the common Father of mankind, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. See *Heb. xii. 5.* To us he speaks "as unto children" in the present passage: "Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

It is common in scripture to describe religion by some eminent *branch* of it; especially such as has a peculiar influence upon the whole; or such a divine principle from whence the whole will flow. Of this nature is the *Fear of God*.—It includes some just apprehension of his nature and perfections; of his constant providence, inspection and presence; a holy reverence of him and subjection to his authority as our governor, and an earnest solicitude not to offer him by transgressing any of his laws. To be in the fear of the Lord "all the day long" is to be religious all the day; to be steady and constant in our acknowledgment of God, and in our care to avoid his displeasure, and to approve ourselves

in his sight. In a word, it is what the scripture represents as "walking with God."

Endeavour, O my soul, thus to walk. "Set the Lord always before thee." Carry religion with thee in all that thou doest. "Bind the commandment continually upon thy heart." Let religion accompany thee through all the occurrences of every day. Let it prescribe laws to thy thoughts, words and actions, and influence thee in thy whole behaviour. Lord help me by thy grace thus to walk with thee *daily* and *all* the day. For this purpose I would prescribe to myself the following rules.

1. I would resolve to begin every day with God, and consecrate my first thoughts to him.— "When I awake," says the psalmist, "I am still with thee." Not only under his protection (for that he was equally when asleep,) but in the devout temper of his mind. I would endeavor to be thus with God; saluting him with my first waking thoughts, saying,—I laid me down and slept under thy care, and thou hast made me to dwell in safety. I praise thee, O thou preserver of men. In thy hand my breath is, and thine are all my ways. I commit myself again to thy care; keep me from all evil through the day, and help me in the duties of it, &c.

2. As soon as I can conveniently, I would retire for secret, solemn devotion, and would take care that nothing unnecessarily shall prevent this being my first work; that thus my mind may get a religious tincture, be fortified against temptations, and be better prepared for the duties and trials of the day. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: in the morn-

“ing will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will
“look up.”

3. I would take the most proper time to call my family together and worship God with them; thankfully acknowledging the mercy of God in their preservation, and recommending my household to the divine conduct and blessing.

4. I would apply myself with diligence to the duties of my particular calling, and endeavour that religion may go hand in hand with me in all, and that I may be as useful as I can in the station which Providence has assigned me. I resolve to be upright in all my dealings, and not to defraud or go beyond any man; remembering “that God requires a just weight and measure.” I would take care not to encumber myself with too great a multiplicity of business, lest it should not leave either time or heart for the service of God. Considering *One thing is needful*, I desire to “seek first the kingdom of God: to labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endures to everlasting life.” Religion, and what concerns another world, is my great business, which I would mainly intend, and only submit to the services of this world in compliance with the appointment of God, to whom I would consecrate them all, and would undertake and manage the business of my calling in his name and fear. Sensible of the snares and temptations which attend it, I would ever guard against them; and it shall be my endeavor to intermix serious thoughts with my secular business; often looking up to heaven and refreshing myself with something heavenly, while I am engaged in the affairs of this earth.—If I am favored with more leisure than others, I would improve it for spiritual purposes; spending more time in reading,

meditation and prayer; or in profitable visits, and in works of charity and mercy.

5. Whatever company my affairs may bring me into, I would conduct myself therein according to the laws of religion, being careful not to be the worse for any company, and that no company be the worse for me. To which purpose, "I would take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." I would guard against *much* speaking, *false* speaking, and *vain* speaking. More especially I would abstain from all hurtful conversation; such as defiles the minds of men, or wounds religion; intrenches upon the honour of God, and lessens the veneration due to sacred things: such as is hurtful to the reputation of those who are absent, or the charity due to such as are present. As I would beware of slander and backsliding, so I would take care not to provoke, or grieve those I converse with, by satire and raillery; by exposing their infirmities, or assuming an undue superiority: keeping in mind the Christian rule,—“Love as brethren; be piteous, be courteous.” I would also aim at something profitable, mindful of that advise, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.” Nor would I be ashamed of owning God, and espousing religion, on proper occasions, but would watch opportunities, when in company, for introducing a serious remark, a gentle admonition, or word of reproof. Grant me, O my God, the zeal and prudence which are necessary to do it with advantage.

6. In the refreshment of the day, I would bring my religion along with me, and be still

in the fear of the Lord, so as to observe the rule of temperance and sobriety; to beg a blessing on my food, with thanksgiving for it, and to be serious herein. "Whether I eat or drink, I would do all to the glory of God." Nor would I leave my religion out of my *diversions*. I resolve to be cautious in the choice of them, and avoid not only such as are in themselves sinful, but such as are full of snares, and as do not comport with the gravity of a Christian profession. I would always use them with an eye to their proper end; as a relaxation of the mind from more severe business, that I may return to it with greater life and spirit. I would use them also for the health of the body, and as the means of fitting me for the more cheerful service of God. Nor would I spend more time in them than these ends require. With these precautions I reckon that certain diversions may not only be consistent with religion, but made subservient to it.

7. I would endeavour that my thoughts, affections and passions, be kept under the influence of religion all the day. The fear of God will not only restrain me from gross acts of sin, but suppress sinful desires and inward motions towards whatever is criminal. I would ever remember that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom I have to do." Thou, O my God, art acquainted with all my ways, and understandest my thoughts afar off. The darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; thou searchest the heart and triest the reins of the children of men. Help me therefore always to reverence thy presence, and not only to speak and act, but to think and desire, as under thine eye.

8. I would resolve every night to spend some time in the exercises of religion: to take a review of the actions of the day, with due acknowledgments to God, thanksgiving for mercies, confession of sin, and renewed supplications.— Nor would I be content to close the day without feeling some warmth of devotion. I desire always to commit myself to sleep, with God in my thoughts, and therefore, while preparing for rest, I would employ myself in serious reflections and ejaculations, and would “commune with my own heart upon my bed.” This may probably have a good influence on the imagination in dreams; may make my sleep calm and comfortable, and prepare me, when I awake, to be still with God.

Such a course as this is the way of life and peace; is attended with profit and pleasure.— Nor need the difficulties of it discourage me; for divine grace will help me to surmount them. They are, indeed, less than many submit to in matters of infinitely less moment, and even in such pursuits as are criminal and pernicious.

O, my God, enable me to keep the resolutions I have formed, and give me to experience the pleasure and benefit of reducing them to practice. Help me to meditate in thy precepts, to have respect unto thy ways, and to rejoice in thy testimonies more than in all riches! Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way. Help me to cherish that fear of the Lord which shall effectually preserve me from sin, and shed abroad thy love in my heart, [which shall sweetly constrain me daily to walk with thee here on earth, so as to prepare me for dwelling with thee for ever in heaven.]

MEDITATION XIII.

On Christian Watchfulness.

REV. xvi. 15.—*Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked.*

WATCHING, as it respects the *body*, is opposed to sleeping: as applied to the *mind*, it is used metaphorically, and imports attention, care and caution, in the affairs of our souls and religion: especially a due guard against the enemies and dangers that threaten us. It is a duty of universal concern, often enjoined by our great Lord and Master. It is a duty of great extent; reaches to all times and circumstances. We are to be constantly and every where upon our watch, or we cannot be safe. We have many things to watch against; e. g. the world and its various snares; the devil and his stratagems; the infection of evil company. We are to watch against our friends, lest they become our tempters, as they sometimes do. And we are to watch over ourselves: our words and tongues; our senses and our hearts; our desires and passions; our own corrupt affections, and especially the sins of our constitution.—How important, how difficult the work! Assist me, O my God, by thy grace. “Except the Lord keep the city (or the soul) the watchman waketh but in vain.”

The purpose for which we are to watch is, that we may “keep our garments,”* lest we walk

* This seems to be an allusion to what is said to have been a custom in the Jewish temple, of setting fire to the clothes of any watchman who was found asleep when upon duty.—*Doddridge.*

naked, and expose ourselves to shame. The Christian's graces are represented in scripture as his garments. We are exhorted to be "clothed with humility:" to put on "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit:" and our Lord counsels us to "buy of him white raiment that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear."

Of these graces, which are the clothing and ornament of the soul, we have a catalogue, 2 *Pet.* i. 5. viz. "Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity." Now we may be said to *keep* our garments, when we preserve them whole and pure: i. e. when these graces are retained in due exercise: whereas, when the virtues which should adorn our life and conversation are wanting or defective, and we appear without them, we walk naked and we expose ourselves to reproach. For instance, when the Christian suffers present visible objects to prevail with him, to the neglect of God, of his soul, and another world, his *faith*, that chief ornament, is torn from him, and lost, or miserably rent. So, when he acts cowardly in his profession, and through fear of man, or any temporal inconvenience, he neglects his duty to God and violates conscience, the ornament of *virtue* or *Christian fortitude* is laid aside. How naked and shameful did Peter appear, when, through fear of suffering, he denied his Master! When a Christian betrays gross ignorance in matters of religion, and acts imprudently, contrary to the maxims of wisdom laid down in the gospel, he is destitute of the *knowledge* which he should add to his *virtue*, and so far is naked and exposed to reproach. The same may be said with reference to temperance, patience, brotherly

kindness, &c. When the Christian professor violates the laws of *sobriety*, and exposes himself in the filthy guise of a sensualist; when he frets under the discipline of God, instead of exercising a calm submission to his will; when, forgetting the laws of meekness and charity, he gives way to hatred, variance, strife, clamour, and evil speaking, then he walks naked, and exposes himself to shame and just reproach, both from enemies and friends.

O, my soul! how often hast thou, in one or other of these respects, forgotten thyself, and come forth naked; the garments of faith, patience, sobriety, meekness, or charity, being rent and torn! How frequently hast thou indulged thy appetites and passions, contrary to the rules of reason and religion, and thereby not only laid thy own honour in the dust, but brought reproach upon Christ and the gospel! Be humble, O my soul, on the review of these things, and set a stronger guard on thyself for the future. "Watch and pray that thou enter not into temptation." Lord grant me all the graces of thy spirit, those bright ornaments of the mind, and help me to improve them and live always under their influence. Help me constantly so to watch, as to keep these spiritual garments whole and pure [that I may not only preserve my own character from shame, but do honour to my holy religion, and glorify my God and Saviour.]

Lord, teach me the great lesson of dependence on thyself. I would not lean on my own understanding, nor rely on my own resolution, but remembering that all my springs are in thee, I desire ever to wait and depend upon thee.— "When I am weak, then am I strong." The

more I distrust my own strength, the more reason I have to expect the help of thine.

MEDITATION XIV.

On the excellence of Holiness and good Works.

TITUS iii. 8.—*These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

It is a matter of surprise that any who are acquainted with their Bible, and take that for the rule of their religion, should speak so contemptibly, as many do, of obedience and good works; as if to recommend them were *legalism*, and to practice them were needless. Different reasons may be assigned for this.

Some are led into it from a mistaken notion of humility; as if they could not think meanly of themselves without undervaluing the fruits of divine grace, or condemn themselves for their own deformities, without denying the beauty and excellence of the divine image. True humility consists not in low thoughts of *holiness*, but in just apprehensions of our low attainments in it.

Some seem to think that zeal for good works derogates from the merits of Christ, and the completeness of his righteousness; as if our obedience could safely stand in *no place* unless it be set in the place of *Christ*, and could signify *nothing* at all unless it signify *every thing*.—Christ's righteousness is of a distinct consideration from ours; it has a higher office, belongs to

another covenant, and serves different purposes. He fully accomplished what he undertook; his work is finished and accepted; nor does it need or admit of any supplement from us. Our righteousness is inferior and subordinate; yet equally necessary in the covenant wherein we stand, and for the ends it is designed to answer, with the perfect righteousness of the Mediator in *his* covenant, that of *Redemption*.

Others are betrayed into a disparagement of holiness and good works, from an idea that an obedience so defective as theirs can avail them nothing. They argue, that they dare not appear before a perfectly holy God in any righteousness but what is perfect; and their own being at best very imperfect, they are apt to conclude that it is worthless and useless. Hence, a confident reliance on the righteousness of Christ, passes with them for every thing.

It is true, none are perfect as God is perfect, not even the angels themselves. And no fallen creature has such a righteousness of his own as he can appear in before God, so as to stand *justified* by it in his sight. Nevertheless, real holiness, wherever it is found, must be approved by him. It is said, "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance doth behold the upright." *Psalm xi. 7*. Though none can justly pretend to a *perfect* righteousness, all good men. (having been renewed in the spirit of their minds,) have so much *real* holiness, (which is a likeness to God, a conformity to his nature and will, in rectitude of heart and life) as renders them fit objects of his love and complacency.

Indeed, since "all have sinned and come

“short of the glory of God,” all need the grace of the Mediator, and of the new dispensation of religion established through him. His perfect righteousness is the foundation of that covenant in which they are parties, and of the hopes which they have of acceptance with God. Hence he is said to have “made them accepted in the beloved.” But this doth not set aside the necessity of holiness *in us*; which indeed is the great object of Christ’s mediation. We are told that God hath “chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;” and that Christ “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Other things have contributed to this mistake about good works, and to the disparagement of them; but I reckon them all temptations, and as such would guard against them. I must throw away my Bible, and change my notions of religion, and even of God and heaven, before I can enter into the views of those who represent works of obedience as unnecessary, and holiness as of little worth. I may be humble and vile in my own eyes, and yet maintain a high idea of holiness; and indeed I am so because I have no more of it. I may reserve to the Lord Jesus all the glory of his office, and triumph in his righteousness, and yet not neglect a subordinate inherent righteousness of my own, without which I can have no interest in his, or any title to his salvation. The righteousness of Christ was not designed to supercede ours, nor must it be substituted in its stead. On the contrary, it was intended to be the rule and pattern of our righteousness, and a peculiar excitement to it.

There is an intrinsic value in real holiness even though it be imperfect. "To love God with all our heart and soul; to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world;" as it is the great lesson which the gospel teaches, so it is a duty of unchangeable obligation, arising out of the nature of things. While God is what he is, a being of infinite perfection; and while man continues such a creature as God has made him, he is everlastingly obliged to all the duties of godliness: to fear, love, worship, trust and obey God; to exercise justice and mercy towards his neighbor; and to govern himself by the laws of sobriety, temperance, chastity, &c.—These are duties that have a natural fitness in them, and can never cease to be obligatory upon reasonable creatures. Nor were they ever remitted under any dispensation of religion.

The law, given by Moses to the Jews, which enjoined so many ceremonies, which seemed to have the least of morality in them, not only supposed and included *moral* duties, but the various sacrifices, and other ceremonial observances, were calculated to promote them; and the Jewish people were repeatedly reminded, that when these were neglected, all their zeal for external rites became vain. *Isaiah* 11—20.

And it is evident to a demonstration, that the great design of the gospel was the advancement of holiness both of heart and life. This was the grand object of Christ's life, doctrine, miracles, death and sacrifice; as it is also of his advocacy with the Father; of the ordinances of his gospel, and the promised influence of the spirit.

The apostle exhorted Titus constantly to affirm the doctrines of grace to the end that

believers might be careful to maintain good works; which, says he, *are good and profitable unto men.*—We are said to be “called with an holy calling, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”—“We are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the holy ghost.” The scripture throughout represents the necessity of obedience, or moral righteousness, and comments upon its excellence in the strongest terms, as the image of God restored, the brightest ornament of our nature, our grand preparation for heaven, and, in short, a good measure of heaven itself.

[Accordingly the greatest and best of those divines, who are the farthest removed from what is called a *legal* spirit, have strongly expressed themselves in favour of this doctrine.] Dr. *Owen* writes on this subject as follows: ‘God hath appointed that holiness shall be the means, the way to that eternal life, which, as it is his gift by Jesus Christ, so with regard to his constitution of our obedience, as the means of attaining it, is a *reward*, and God in bestowing it is a *rewarder*. Though it be neither the cause, matter or condition of our justification, yet it is the way appointed of God for us to walk in for the obtaining of salvation; and therefore *he that hath this hope* of eternal life, *purifieth himself as he is pure*. And none shall ever come to that end who walk not in that way, for without holiness it is impossible to see God!’

O, my soul! let nothing tempt thee to entertain low thoughts of that on which so great a stress is laid in the divine oracles, and which is

the greatest excellence of a rational being; which should therefore be the constant object of thy ambition. O, my God! teach me thy statutes, and hide not thy commandments from me, nor suffer me to overlook or undervalue any of them. Guide me in the way that I should chuse. May the excellency and beauty of holiness raise my esteem, attract my desires, and quicken my pursuits. May a sense of my own imperfections lead me to admire the provisions of thy grace, and while I depend on the righteousness, and plead the merit of my Redeemer, doing every thing in the name of Christ, and acting faith in his blood, may I never forget the necessity of personal righteousness and universal obedience to his commands. Lord form and fashion me according to thy gospel, that I may “perfect holiness in thy fear, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!”

MEDITATION XV.

On habitual Repentance.

ISA. lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty one— I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

REPENTANCE, in the scripture sense of the term, as it respects an ungodly sinner, is his return to God and his duty. The word, literally, signifies, *a change of mind*; the consequence of which is, a change of *life*, and is the same thing with *conversion*, which begins in a godly sorrow for sin. So the apostle speaks 2 Cor. vii. 10. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation.”—

But besides this, there is an *habitual* repentance, which concerns every one *after* his conversion, and will be the duty of every good man as long as he is in a state of sin and imperfection. This is what our Lord calls "poverty of spirit," which consists in lowliness of mind, and self-abasement, which becomes the most righteous person upon earth, and is an ornament in the sight of God of great price." "To this man (says he) I will look, and with him I will dwell, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

The foundation of this habitual repentance is laid in the first work of grace upon the soul.—The Christian is at first laid low, and in some measure emptied of self; though ordinarily he is exercised with a variety of humbling providences before he is brought to a confirmed humility.—Saul, the Pharisee, had the root of his pride cut up when God first touched his heart, though he needed farther discipline. Being afterwards in danger of being "exalted above measure he had the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him." Deep humility belongs to Christians of the highest form in religion, and in the result of much experience. It arises from near views of the divine excellencies; from a due consideration of the purity and perfection of the divine law, from the Christian's growing sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, compared with the purity of the divine nature. Those infirmities which others overlook, excite in *him* the deepest self abasement; such as the first motions of disorderly appetites and passions; the want of devotion in divine worship, &c. The remembrance also of former sins, which frequently recur to his thoughts, greatly contributes to this

habitual repentance. Thus it was with the apostle: "I was *before*," says he, "a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious;" on which account he styles himself *the chief of sinners*, though he had "obtained mercy." So David: though God had put away his sin, yet he himself leaves it on record, in a penitential Psalm, which doubtless was often the subject of a humbling meditation to him.

The real Christian aims high; even at the entire conquest of his corruptions, a complete rectitude of heart, a readiness to every good work, faithfulness in all duties both towards God and man. But, alas! how far does he fall short! How often does he find cause to complain of "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind; the flesh lusting against the spirit, so that he cannot do the things that he would." He cannot reach the mark he aims at; though he is still pressing forward, he seems to have done nothing. This lays him low, and keeps him low. If not now the chief of sinners he esteems himself "less than the least of all saints." He is ready to express himself in unaffected strains of self-abasement towards his fellow-creatures, but more especially in his addresses to God. Words can but faintly represent the humility with which persons of this spirit approach the most high. Like the publican, they scarcely dare lift up their eyes to heaven, but standing afar off, smiting on the breast, they cry "God be merciful to me a sinner."

This contrite spirit also shows itself in a meek and quiet submission under the afflicting hand of God; and likewise under the oppressing injurious hand of man. It also shews itself in admiration of the divine bounty, both in common providen-

ces, and in special instances of divine favour.— Thus Jacob: “I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies shewed unto thy servant.”— Thus David: “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” And thus the apostle Paul: “To me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given,” &c. He that is of a humble and contrite spirit sets a higher value upon mercies than pride will agree to. When God punishes, he owns it is “less than sin deserves;” and when he confers blessings he celebrates rich and sovereign grace.

Bp. *Leighton*, that bright example of humility, in a letter to a friend, expresses himself thus: ‘I have nothing to say of the affairs [which had been referred to] and I am beaten back, if I had a mind to speak, by the sense of so great deficiency in doing those things that the most ignorant among Christians cannot but know. I think them the greatest heroes and most excellent persons in the world, that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and divine love; but, next to these, them who, falling short of *that*, fall down into deep humility and self-contempt,’ &c.

True humility farther shews itself in an habitual gravity and composure of mind. It must not be thought that it excludes cheerfulness; for, as in the midst of mirth the heart of the sinner is sad, so in the midst of this seriousness, there is often a joy unspeakable. Such a temper, however, excludes frothiness and levity, and will form the ordinary converse, deportment and countenance, into gravity. It is said of bishop *Leighton*, by one who knew him best, ‘that in a course of many years acquaintance, he scarcely ever saw him out of that deeply serious frame in

‘ which he himself wished to be found in his last moments.’

Once more: this temper shews itself in a weariness of this world. A state of so much vanity, such low attainments, such frequent disappointments in the best pursuits; where there is such a constant warfare, and yet comparatively so little victory; while it humbles the Christian, it also excites his ardent breathings after God and heaven, and makes him groan for deliverance.— ‘ I find’ (says the same pious man) ‘ daily reason without me, and yet within me much more, to pant and long to be gone. *Hei, hei mihi, quia prolongatus est incolatus meus!* I am grown exceedingly restive to writing and speaking, yea, almost to thinking, when I [consider] how cloudy our clearest thoughts are: But, what else can we do till the day-break, and the shadows flee away? As one that lieth awake in the night must be thinking, one thought that will likely oftenest return (when by all the other he finds little relief) is,—*When will it be day?**

O, my soul! study and pray for more of this divine temper! an humility that answers the lowness of thy state. I desire to remember what I once was, when a child of wrath, and to retain a constant sense of what I still am; a mass of folly impurity and sin. To be proud of, or with, such a heart is shameful stupidity. How often have I acted unworthy a man! ‘ So ignorant and foolish was I, I was as a beast before thee.’ But though

* This truly great man, who thought himself neither fit to speak nor write, took care, we are told, so far as he could, that nothing of his should remain.— It was, therefore, great injustice to publish some things which have appeared under his name.

I have been exceedingly vile, God has been exceedingly gracious. How kind, how tender, the course of his providence towards me! how many, how great, his salvations! O, my God, what shall I render? In heaven, I shall praise thee better. I shall there cast down my crown before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy," *not I: Grace, grace,* will be my song for ever. In the mean time, Lord make me humble, and take thy own wise methods to keep me so. I would live and die repenting.—Only grant me thy favour, and give me to experience the truth of thy gracious promise, "that to this man thou wilt look, and with him thou wilt dwell, that is poor, and of a contrite spirit," to revive *my* heart, and cheer *my* spirit, under a consciousness of my own unworthiness. Be it unto thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word!

MEDITATION XVI.

Christ the Christian's Master.

MATT. xxiii. 8.—*One is your Master, even Christ.*

SUCH veneration have some paid their teachers, as to resign themselves absolutely to their dictates, and follow them even with a slavery of understanding. It is said to have been the advice of *Gamaliel*, 'That the ignorant should get themselves rabbies, that they might no longer doubt of any thing.' In the school of *Pythagoras*, his authority was absolute. *Ipsè dixit*, "the master hath said it," put an end to all debates among his disciples.

How much more reason has the Christian for the like subjection to *his* great master, *JESUS*.

CHRIST, who has all those qualifications that demand reverence and submission. They were weak and fallible men, who often blundered in the dark : [nor are the wisest and best of Christian teachers more worthy of an implicit faith.] But he is "*a teacher come from God,*" fully acquainted with the Father's will, and with every thing that concerns our salvation. He is infallible in his doctrine, for he "received not the spirit by measure." He is "the true and faithful witness" to the church cloathed with the highest authority; for the Father hath said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him."

O, my soul, resign thyself to him as thy master. Thou mayest safely receive his dictates, and shalt not be misled by them. This is what thy profession, as a Christian, obliges thee to. Thou wast in thy baptism placed at his feet as his disciple; entered into his school as a student, to learn his doctrines and laws; and upon thy fidelity herein thy everlasting welfare depends.— By my Christian profession I have virtually taken him for my teacher, master, and Lord, and have put myself under his direction and government; and so far only, as I am subject to him, am I worthy the Christian name. Resign thyself, therefore, O my soul, to his conduct without reserve. An implicit faith and obedience here, is thy duty, thy honour, and thy safety.

Own him as thy ONLY master. He himself requires this, for he hath said "ONE is your Master, even Christ." Hear him and him alone.— Hear none in opposition to him, or to the neglect of him. The office of *other* teachers is to help me to understand the doctrine of *Christ* my master, but not to dictate to me in his stead. He is "the author and finisher of our faith." His au-

thority must make and bound our CREEDS; and therefore we are to "look unto Jesus;" looking off from all others, when they would set up an authority of their own, and fix our eyes only upon Him.

Own him as thy master in ALL things. Though thou shouldest not fully understand some of his doctrines, let not that hinder thy assent to them. The authority of *this* teacher is sufficient to determine thy faith in whatever he has revealed as the object of it, with whatever difficulties it may be attended. Whatever he hath said, acquiesce in, without cavilling or dispute.

But do not pretend to be "wise above what is written," nor to know and believe farther than he has revealed. As he has given pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, thankfully receive them, and be subject to them, in obedience to him, while they act in his name, and pursue the great ends of their office, [in the way he has enjoined; but no farther; for he hath bidden us to "call no man *Father* or *Master* upon earth, and charged us not to receive for doctrines the commandments of men."]

Submit to him in all his prescriptions and laws. The Bible contains the Christian's institutes: the New Testament particularly is his book of lessons. Endeavour, O my soul, to learn them; *all* of them; and to learn them more perfectly. As they refer to practice, and are designed to govern both the heart and life, study and apply them for that purpose. Bring thy thoughts, affections and desires, thy words and thy actions, to the standard of the GOSPEL; submitting them to its correction in all things.

A text of scripture, opposing this or that practice, or enjoining this or the other duty, should be of the same authority with a Christian, as a statute of the realm with a lawyer, and should in like manner be pleaded by Christians with one another.

O, my God; grant me this true Christian temper. Influence my mind to this reverence and absolute submission which is due to my great master! May his word ever be with me reason enough for my faith and practice! May his will controul and govern me in all things! I would deny myself, because he hath enjoined it. I would crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts: I would cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, because he hath made it to be my duty, and necessary to my salvation. I would learn of him to be "meek and lowly in heart; to love my enemies, bless them that curse me, do good to them that hate me, and pray for them that despitefully use me." This is the doctrine and law of my great master; O, for a heart more filled with love and loyalty to him! Help me, Lord, to sit at his feet, receiving his commands and waiting for his salvation.

MEDITATION XVII.

On resolute virtue.

1 COR. XV. 58. *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable—in the work of the Lord.*

THIS is no easy or very common attainment; but it is a highly important one, and I would be earnestly seeking after it. Lord assist and succeed me herein! Let nothing divert me from

the path of duty, or interrupt me in the prosecution of it, but help me to hold on my way, through all discouragements, and sacrifice every thing to a good conscience.

In order to acquire stedfastness in religion it is necessary that I be well informed concerning the duties of it. If I be ignorant or doubting, not having "*proved* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," I shall be tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation, and may become a captive to the humours, fancies and follies of men. [Let me therefore seek to "be wise and understanding what the will of the Lord is," and for this purpose diligently consult his written word.]

In order to be stedfast and unmoveable, I must be willing to undergo not only the censure of the unthinking part of mankind, but that of the more serious, and even of some of my Christian friends. Perhaps I must sometimes stand alone, in what appears to me the path of duty. In which case I would consider, that the sentiments and examples even of good men are not my rule, as the best are liable to err. It is a poor argument for any opinion or practice: 'That it is maintained by such and such persons, and they are very good men:' this may be true, and yet he that implicitly follows them, may plunge himself into error and sin. If a wise and good man comes to me with a temptation to what my conscience condemns as evil, I must say, as our Lord did to Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan."

I must be mortified to human applause, and treat the opinions of others concerning me with contempt, in comparison with the approbation

of God and my own conscience. Esteeming it "a small matter to be judge of any man's judgment," I must seek "the honour that cometh from God only." The breath that endeavours to blast me, and that which extols me, will both be shortly stopped, and neither can affect my future state; they should not, therefore, divert me from my present duty. 'He is not just' (says *Seneca*) 'that will not do justice without praise; but he is a righteous man who does it when so doing is made infamous: and he is a wise man who is pleased with an ill name that is well gotten.'—May I always consider that every man standeth or falleth to his own master, and accordingly keep my eye to my great master's applause; saying "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In order to be immoveable I must get the world under my feet: I must be "crucified to the world, and the world to me," looking down upon present things with contempt, as scarcely worth a solicitous thought; accounting no interest essentially important, but what respects another world. O, may it be thus with me! May I live in the constant view of eternity, as just ready to take place; then shall I be prepared to suffer the loss of all things here rather than deviate from the path of duty.

Finally; in order to be kept stedfast and immoveable in the work of the Lord, I must not only endeavour to invigorate my resolution by proper considerations and serious reflections, but I must also often look up to heaven for help, and continually wait on God for the supply of his spirit, for the renewing of my strength; remembering that without this, "the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men

“ shall utterly fall ;” whereas it is promised that
 “ they that wait on the Lord shall renew their
 “ strength; shall mount up as on the wings of
 “ eagles, shall run and not be weary, shall walk
 “ and not faint.”

O, my God! as thou hast called me to thy kingdom and glory by Jesus Christ, “ make me perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle me.”— Help me to add to my faith *virtue*, that I may act with suitable firmness and fortitude in my Christian profession; so that whatever tribulations, reproaches or persecutions, I may meet with in it, I may be able to say,—“ None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me so that I may finish my course with joy.” May I fear nothing but SIN, and against that do thou defend me by thy grace, and amidst all the assaults of my spiritual enemies, the allurements of professed friends, the smiles and the frowns of the world, may I hold on my way, and “ be kept by thy mighty power, through faith unto salvation.”

MEDITATION XVIII.

On Death.

HEB. ix. 27. *It is appointed unto men once to die.*

WHAT death is, my senses in a great measure inform me. It is a dissolution of the union between the soul and the body. This the scripture confirms. *Eccles. xii. 7.* “ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it.” Its consequences with respect to the *body* are,—the privation of life, sense

and motion: it takes down the earthly tabernacle, and leaves it a cold, lifeless, loathsome carcase, to be buried out of sight, and to lie rotting in the dust. Such is the change that death will shortly produce in this body of mine, which is fearfully and wonderfully made, and which I am apt to pamper so much. At death I shall use its members and organs no more: I shall see with these eyes, hear with these ears, speak with this tongue, no more for ever; nor any more enjoy the pleasures, or taste the gratifications of the present state. *Post mortem nulla voluptas.* "After death there is no pleasure." Nor shall I at death quit the body only, but this world and all things in it. I shall then go hence and no more see or be seen. As Hezekiah said, "I shall behold man no more, nor any of the inhabitants of the world," nor shall I be concerned with any thing in it. My business, my possessions, my friends, must all be left behind. All my employments, civil and religious, will be at an end, and I shall "know nothing of all that is done under the sun."

And as at death I must leave this world, so I shall enter upon another, a new and an unknown state. Death carries us from a world of bodies to a world of spirits, changes the manner of our acting and the objects of our enjoyment. And as that is a *new* state, so it is an unchangeable and *eternal* one. My condition will be then fixed in happiness or woe, according as my character has been here, and that for ever. O, my soul! how awful a thing is dying! How surprising the change which death will make, and how much does it demand my serious thoughts and care!

This great change is absolutely unavoidable, for it is *appointed* to men, i. e. to *all* men, once to

die. Had not man sinned, he would have been immortal; but sin has brought the curse of mortality upon the whole world. "In Adam all die." The grave is "the house appointed for all the living." I need no arguments to convince me of this, as my own observation and my senses convince me of this truth. I see one generation passeth away, as another cometh, and thus it has been from the beginning. "Our fathers, where are they?" Gone for ever off the stage! The places that once knew them, know them no more.—How many of my relations and acquaintance, within the compass of a few years, are gone the way by which they shall not return! Should I search the parish register, it is not likely that I should find one of those now alive whose names were entered a hundred years ago, and very few at the distance of fourscore. Were I to look through the kingdom, yea, through the whole earth, and ask what are become of its inhabitants, who at that period were acting their parts on the stage of life, I should find they were all, excepting a few individuals, swept away into eternity, and most of them totally forgotten.

Nor is it only certain that I must follow them, but that very *soon*. Though I should attain to the years of my fathers, death cannot be a great way off. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days;" human life is justly compared to "a vapour which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away."—Nor have I any rational ground to expect that my life will be protracted to a longer period than that of others. Death is hastening on a pace, and how constant, how quick the motion! "My days" (as Job speaks) "are swifter than a post, they flee away as a shadow." How many of them are already gone! how few in all

probability yet remain! The summons of death may be to me as sudden as I know it has been to many others, and the sentence passed on the rich fool in the parable, who presumed on the enjoyment of goods laid up for many years, may, for aught I know, be gone forth against me, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee." O, how startling a message! how amazing a disappointment! May this never be my case; but let me watch and pray always, so that "that day may not come upon me unawares," or find me unprepared to obey the summons. My soul, "boast not thyself of tomorrow, since thou knowest not what a day or a night may bring forth." Since death is so certain and so near, let me realize it to my mind, and often represent it to myself. Think what will be thy sensations and thy views, when thou shalt find thyself in the arms of death; a cold sweat bedewing thy languishing body, thy breath and pulse faltering, and thy soul taking its flight into an unknown region. Then place thyself among the dead, the slain that lie in the grave, where thy flesh must see corruption. Thus, by realizing death, learn to "die daily."

Let me also remember that it is appointed to men but *once* to die. "If a man die, shall he live again?" No: "he lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more." Thou hast, O my soul, but one cast for eternity. There is no *Tabula post naufragium*; no plank on which to swim to shore, if thou art ship-wrecked. No return to life; no work in the grave; no repentance after death. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Therefore "whatsoever thy hand findeth thee to do, do it with all thy might." Now or never.

MEDITATION XIX.

On Death—Continued.

AND now, O my soul, review this momentous subject and receive instruction. Must I die, and that soon? Must this body be reduced to dust? Let me learn to esteem it as a fading, perishing thing. "The earthly house of this 'tabernacle,'" (says the apostle) "shall be dissolved;" or taken down; pulled to pieces; alluding to the taking down the Jewish tabernacle, in order to its removal, when the curtains were folded up, the boards and all the several parts were separated. This I shall shortly experience in my own frame. Death draws the pins of the fleshly tabernacle, and then the whole falls to pieces. The curious machine of the body will then be broken. Its symmetry and beauty, which are the idol of vain minds, will then be utterly destroyed. Why then so much ado about it? Why so much care and anxiety in adorning and pampering a poor corruptible carcase? The scripture calls it a "vile body," and so death will make it. Let me learn then to moderate my affections to it, and not be greatly concerned about "what I shall eat or drink, or wherewith I shall be clothed."

Must I die, and leave this body rotting in the grave? How little account should I make of these enjoyments which are confined to the body, and which entirely depend upon its precarious life. When Solomon had consigned all mankind to the dust, he repeats the main argument of his book—"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity." And indeed, whatever value there may be in any earthly ob-

jects in themselves, they must needs be vanity to dying creatures, who must part with them all.—The whole circle of fleshly gratifications are but temporary conveniences for a perishing body, which must all perish with it. O, my soul, look from the grave upon the pleasures of the deluded sensualist, and say, What are they? Never chuse that for thy happiness which terminates in death. Were the things of this life a thousand times more valuable than they are, what will they be to ME, when I am just ready to depart, and leave them all behind me? Why should I be so fond of what I cannot long enjoy, and may at any moment be deprived of forever? Why should I pursue a shadow that is flying from me? Our Lord calls present things “another man’s,” and distinguishes them from what is “our own.” *Luke xvi. 12.* Upon which the Psalmist’s words are a comment. *Psal. xliv. 16.* “Be not afraid,” or disturbed, “when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is increased; for, when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: No, he leaves his wealth to others.” O, may I chiefly value *my own* things; “the true riches,” and use this world as one that is leaving it.

Must I die, and enter upon another, and a new and different state? Let me now acquaint myself with that state, and abstract myself from the body and the things of this life, as much as I can, and thus begin to live that life, which is most suited to my rational nature. Were the present my only existence, there would be some reason for the epicure’s language, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” They who expect no other life, may well make the best of this. But that is not my case: I believe in a world to come, where flesh and blood can have no place, and where consequently the pleasures of flesh and sense can-

not be any longer enjoyed; but all the happiness of it will be pure and spiritual. How wretched then shall I be, if I can relish no pleasures but those which are derived through my bodily senses.

Must I die and that but *once*? Endeavour, O my soul, to make sure work for eternity, that I may die *well*. An error here is fatal, and can never be corrected. It was a good answer to one who asked, Why the Lacedemonians were so slow in pronouncing capital judgment? “Be-
“ cause a mistake in the case is incorrigible.”—
When the sentence of death is executed it cannot be reversed: my state is then determined for ever. Help me, therefore, O my God, to secure the main point! to get ready for death, that I may die with safety and comfort!

What cause have I for censure and self-reproach, that I have so much indulged my bodily appetites in the pleasures of a brute! that I have pursued with so much eagerness this perishing world: a world that I am just dying out of!—that I have talked and acted like one that dreams of an earthly immortality. Lord, pardon my folly and stupidity, and teach me “so to number my
“ days as to apply my heart unto wisdom.”

O, my soul! immediately change thy course, and act more consistently with thy condition in the present world, and thy belief of that which is to come. Particularly resolve to “mortify the
“ flesh with the lusts thereof.” This is necessary to fit thee for the happiness of the unbodied state. *Austin* supposed, that such as die with sensual desires unmortified, retain them in the other world, and feel the uneasiness of them where they cannot be gratified. This will not

be the case with holy souls; for, when the fleshly house is pulled down, the leprosy of sin will be perfectly cured. But without some progress in mortification, no heaven can be expected: "the pure in heart only shall see God."

I would also resolve to esteem this world suitably to my condition in it, considering myself as a stranger and passenger, who must shortly leave it. When *Chrysostom* was banished, and his friend *Siriacuse*, in a letter lamented his case, he wrote back to him thus: 'You now begin to bewail my banishment, but I have done so for a long time; for since I knew that heaven was my country, I have esteemed the whole earth but as a place of exile: Constantinople, from whence I am expelled, is as far from Paradise as the desert they have sent me to.' Thus it is with me; I am here an exile, far from home. O, my soul! look to thy own country. "Set thy affections on things above, and not on things upon earth. Having food and raiment, therewith be content. Never seek great things for thyself here, where there is no abiding. If riches encrease set not thy heart upon them. Buy as if thou possessedst not, and use the world as not abusing it, since the fashion of the world passeth away."

I would resolve and endeavour to have a meetness for the other world, and to be conversant with it; often ascending thither in my thoughts and desires; following my departed friends in my meditations, and trying to join them in singing the songs of Zion. It will render the thoughts of death easy to me to reflect, That I am going to a word and a work that I in some measure know: and, with the dying martyr, 'That though I change my place, yet not my company.'—I

would transact all my affairs, civil and religious, with a reference to my dying hour, and ask myself, How this and that will look when I come to die?

Lastly, I resolve by the grace of God, to hasten my preparation for that solemn period, that I may be able to say, as my Lord and Master did, when it arrives, "Father I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." I would leave nothing undone that is necessary to be done, but would do it speedily, lest that day come upon me unawares; and not indulge in any thing which would make a death-bed uneasy.

Such are my purposes and resolutions. And now, O my God, I turn myself to thee. I want wisdom, courage, resolution and zeal, for the work before me. To thee I seek for those supplies of grace which I need. O Lord, I beseech thee impart them to me. Raise me above this animal life. Help me to regulate and govern my passions; to overcome my carnal inclinations, and to resist the allurements of corporeal objects. Lord strengthen my faith; enable me to look beyond this inch of time, and give me realizing views of eternity. O, that I may now be in earnest, and trifle no more in the concerns of my soul! May I now wisely redeem my time, and improve my talents, as becomes a dying creature! Lord help me by thy grace. To thee I resign myself: On thee I depend. Be thou with me in every scene of life, and when I come to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death, let thy rod and thy staff comfort me."

MEDITATION XX.

On the IMMORTALITY of the SOUL.

ECCLES. xii. 7.—*Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

THIS plainly implies, that the soul doth not die with the body. Let me consider the evidence of this doctrine. The arguments which I have found to have the greatest weight are these.

The soul hath nothing in its own nature that tends to a dissolution; being a pure, spiritual immaterial substance.—Its excellence and dignity is also an argument for its immortality. We know indeed very little of ourselves; but I clearly perceive that I am not mere *body*, and feel in myself a principle distinct from matter and superior to sense. How noble a power is that of the *understanding*, which can reason, reflect, and carry on a long chain of thought: can survey the whole creation, and contemplate the glorious author of all.—The *Will* is another excellent faculty, which is the principle of liberty, which can chuse or refuse, and can control the most impetuous inclinations of the sensitive appetite.—The *conscience* and the *memory* also are wonderful powers of the human soul. Consider man with all these mental endowments, together with his views, desires and hopes of futurity; and how admirable a creature doth he appear. And can we reasonably imagine such a creature made only for a day, and to exist only during the life of the body?

How much of our short time on earth is spent

in infancy, when we can relish little but the animal life? How much is afterwards passed away in childish toys? How long it is before we understand what it is to be men; and how much longer it often is before we know what it is to be Christians? We are almost ready to leave the world, ere we rightly apprehend our errand into it. Can we then suppose that we are designed for no after existence? Is it consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, to frame so excellent a creature to take a few turns upon the stage of the world; to taste of its vanity and curse; to view some scenes of joy and sorrow; to laugh and weep for a while, and then pass away and be no more? To suppose that he should be furnished with such powers and endowments only for this, were (as one observes) 'just as if a person should be clothed in scarlet to go to plow, or instructed in arts and sciences only to attend a herd of swine.' From the excellent capacities of the rational spirit, it is most reasonable to infer, that it is made for immortality.

Accordingly, all mankind have discovered an apprehension of a future state. The books of the ancient philosophers, both Greeks and Romans, are full of it. And the wiser and better any part of mankind have been, the more lively their sense of immortality, and the more vigorous their desires after it. And can we think God will frustrate the expectations of his creatures?

I may further argue the certainty of another state from the justice of God. Rewards and punishments are the sanctions of the divine law.—A righteous God will surely make a distinction "between them that serve him and them that serve him not." But this is far from being

done in the present world. There is (as Solomon observes) "a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness." The natural inference from which is, that there is a future state of retribution.

But I, as a Christian, have more decisive evidence of this truth. It confirms my belief of the Immortality of the soul, that the son of God thought not his own precious blood too great a price for its redemption. To suppose that in all his labours and sufferings he had no object beyond this life of vanity, would be to blaspheme my Redeemer. If in this life only we had hope, Christ died in vain, and the work of redemption is a jest.—But my Bible puts this matter out of all doubt. Here I am expressly told that when the body returns to the earth, "the spirit returns to God that gave it." Christ, the faithful witness, bids us "not fear them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," and the dead who die in the Lord are pronounced *blessed*.—Nor do we want what may be called a sensible evidence of a future state of existence. The scriptures afford instances of departed spirits returning back again into our world, as that of the Shunamite's son, Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow, and Lazarus. I read also of the appearing of Moses and Elias with Christ at his transfiguration.—Here, O my soul, is sufficient proof of thy immortality; let it establish thee in the belief of it.

How grateful should this doctrine of immortality be to me! Did this life limit my duration and bound my hopes, I might justly take up the Psalmist's complaint, "how short my time is! wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" Our

duration here hardly deserves to be called *life*; for in the midst of life we are in death. As it is short, so it is often "full of trouble." How little "is here to be attained worthy the name of happiness! If I taste of any enjoyment that is agreeable, it hath such a mixture of bitter ingredients, that it is hard to say whether good or the evil be most predominant. Or, if I find some little rest, something that looks like happiness, how transient, how changeable, how short-lived! If I have a few bright days, presently the clouds gather again, and my horizon is filled with darkness. If to-day I put off my sackcloth and gird me with gladness to-morrow the sable garb is put on again, and thus tears and joy mutually succeed each other.

How vain, how wretched a creature should I be, had I no future prospect! How cruel and inhuman are the attempts of those who would deprive me of it, who endeavor to degrade their own species, and set them upon a level with the beasts that perish! "O, my soul! come not thou into their secret." Resolve never to quit a doctrine that is the great support and dignity of thy nature. Were it only *probable*, no wise man would willingly part with it. This doctrine affords a noble relief against the fear of death. To die is not to lose thy being; it is to be set at liberty from thy bonds and fetters; to be discharged from thy prison, and properly to LIVE. The grave is the passage to immortality. So that in the view of it, we should not "sorrow as those that have no hope" beyond it. We should represent death to ourselves not as a destructive enemy, but as a friend, doing us the kindest office. *Pythagoras's* fancy of the transmigration of souls, passing at

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death into other bodies, and so enjoying life again, made his disciples fearless of dying; but here is a firmer ground of courage and comfort. We have not only another, but a better life in view, and a surer evidence of it. Let me then learn to think of death with calmness and composure. I need not, I ought not, "through fear of death to be all my life time subject to bondage." 'Death' (as another philosopher says) 'is only terrible to those who, with life, lose their ALL.'

The comfort of this doctrine, however, is limited. A future existence speaks not consolation to all. It is like the pillar of fire and cloud, that was light to the Israelites, but darkness to the Egyptians. To the ungodly, who have their hope and happiness in this life only it is "the savour of death." It would be melancholy enough were death only to put an end to their present gratifications: to have all their pleasing imaginations at once destroyed, and to be torn away from all their dear enjoyments for ever. But this is not the worst. "After death there is a judgment," and verily there is a reward for the *wicked* as well as for the righteous. When the rich man in the parable died, he was not only deprived of his purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare, but he is represented as "lifting up his eyes in hell, and as being tormented in flames." And thus it will be with all who, like him, believe not Moses and the prophets, and who spend their time in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. Death is to them "the king of terrors." Let me then carefully shun that course of life which would render the prospect of futurity so terrible.

MEDITATION XXI.

On the IMMORTALITY of the SOUL,—continued.

SINCE the soul is immortal, let me learn to value things by their reference to immortality.—The present subject affords a sure rule to direct me what to chuse and prefer. It is plain, the things which are confined to my present state and situation can be of but little account compared with eternity. *Seneca*, contemplating the greatness and beauty of those orbs of light above, casts down his eyes to find out the earth, hardly visible at that distance, and breaks forth into a philosophical exclamation: ‘Is it to this that the great designs and vast desires of men are confined? Is it for this that there is such disturbance of nations, wars and shedding of blood?—O the folly; O the fury of deceived man! to imagine great kingdoms in the compass of an atom! to raise armies to divide a point of earth with their swords! It is just as if the ants should conceive a field to be several kingdoms, and fiercely contend to enlarge their borders, and celebrate a triumph in gaining a foot of earth as a new province to their empire.’

Earthly things are so little and mean, compared with the things of the other world, that they scarcely deserve a thought, especially when the inequality of their duration is considered. Justly therefore does the same philosopher observe, ‘It would not be worth while for a man to be born and live, did he not study heavenly things. How contemptible a thing is that which we call MAN, unless he raise himself above earthly and bodily enjoyments!’ O my soul! compare thy present with thy future existence; and never call

any thing great or good that reaches no further than this moment of time; that will not accompany thee beyond the grave, and has no connection with immortality. “ We look not (says the apostle) “ at the things which are seen, but at the “ things which are not seen;” and the reason he gives was, that the one are only *temporal*, but the other *eternal*. O may I always be affected to this world and that which is to come, according to their real value, and their importance to myself. This is a point of the greatest wisdom; a mistake in which is the main cause of ruin to those that perish. ‘ Nothing is more characteristic of a fool than to be transported with trifles. ‘ A rational dominion over ones self must be maintained, that we never be so affected with any ‘ thing, but the object may warrant it. Consequently we shall rarely meet with any temporal concerns that ought greatly to move us, ‘ both for the littleness of such things themselves, ‘ and that we have such unspeakably greater in ‘ view. How contemptible should we look upon ‘ that empty vanity of *being rich*. The pursuit ‘ of so despicable a trifle, with violent and peremptory desires, so as thereby to suffer a diversion from our designs, for another world, is to ‘ make our eternal hopes less than nothing.— ‘ And with the like neglect should all sensual ‘ pleasures, secular honours, dignities, &c. be ‘ treated. We are to manifest it to all, by a uniform course of action, that we are *strangers and ‘ pilgrims on the earth, and declare plainly that ‘ we are seeking a better country*. That lofty ‘ soul which bears about with it the apprehension ‘ of being made for an everlasting state, so earnestly attends to it, that it is condescension if it ‘ allow itself to take notice of what mortals are ‘ doing in their grand negotiations here below.

‘ *We of this academy* (said the philosopher to the
‘ *jealous tyrant)* *are not at leisure to mind so*
‘ *mean things,* (viz. as the concerns of his court)
‘ we have something else to do than to talk of
‘ you.’ With how much more reason may the
‘ Christian say this, who sees this world vanish-
‘ ing away, and the other, with its everlasting
‘ concerns, even now ready to take place.’* O
may the affairs of immortality thus fill my mind,
and those of this moment of life shrink, and lie as
dust at my feet. Remember “one thing is need-
“ ful,” and adopt the resolution of the pious mar-
tyr, who, when advised to take care of himself, re-
plied—*So I will of my BEST SELF*; meaning the
immortal spirit.

But, O my soul, how hast thou forgotten thy-
self, and thy relation to eternity. How have the
vanities and amusements of this short moment
of being engrossed thy thoughts and cares. How
have I wasted my affections upon dreams and sha-
dows, rejoicing and weeping over a clod of earth.
I cannot but sometimes think how the angels must
pity us when they look down upon our laborious
and solicitous pursuits of such minute things.—
O, wretch that I am, to suffer my mind to be so
much drawn down to this earth, that I can no
better extend my views into the regions of immor-
tality. Lord grant me that “faith which is the
substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of
things not seen.” I would henceforth live for
eternity. In order to which I resolve (Lord help
me by thy grace) to have my eye more constantly
fixed on the future world, and in all my designs,
undertakings and actions, to maintain a constant
reference to it. I would esteem every thing as
little, yea, as *nothing*, comparatively, that is cal-

* *Howe's Vanity of man as mortal.*

culated only for the meridian of time, and would chuse, prefer and pursue things as they stand related to eternity.

I resolve to be often returning my spirit before hand to God that gave it, committing it to him to keep it against that day, and dedicating it to him in solemn devotion; delighting in him, conversing with him, and refreshing myself with his presence, that at my final return to him at death, I may not go to a God to whom I have been a stranger. I would resolve to get my heart formed for a blessed immortality, by making it the business of my life to cultivate my mind, and improve in that spirit and temper by which I shall be made meet for the happiness of the immortal state. Particularly by a weanedness from the body, a refinedness from earth, a thorough purgation of sensual affections, an aptitude to spiritual exercises, a high complacency in God, a worshipping posture of soul, formed to the veneration of the eternal power, wisdom, holiness and goodness; profound humility and abnegation of self; a prayerful, thankful frame of spirit; a large and universal love; imitating, as much as possible, the love of God; a steady composure and serenity of temper, every way suited to the blissful region above, where nothing but purity, devotedness to God, love, goodness, benignity, order and peace shall have place forever.

O my God, the father of spirits, who hast formed and fashioned them, and who hast the immediate government of them, visit this soul of mine, and so enlighten, purify and sanctify me throughout, as to fit me for thine embrace. Help me to breathe after immortality; to press forward towards it, and to long for admittance into it. Lord assist me by thy grace, that I may be dying daily, and begin, while on earth, to live the life of hea-

ven; that so when I leave this poor dying world, I may be fully "meet for the inheritance of the "saints in light."

MEDITATION XXII.

On the RESURRECTION of the BODY.

LUKE xiv. 14. *Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

THE important period here referred to is that of the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ at the last day. The event here mentioned is the general resurrection of the dead, and more particularly of the *saints*, who are denominated "the just" or righteous, which is their distinguishing character. The proper meaning of the word *Resurrection* (*Anastasis*;) is *rising again*; which can only be of that which *fell*, viz. the body; which is often expressly mentioned. Thus, *Rom. vii. 11.* "He shall quicken our mortal body;" that is, make it to live again.

As I expect then to have a body, so I expect the *same* body: that to which my soul is now united. What constitutes the same body we cannot be certain, and therefore can have no determinate faith. Its sameness does not consist in having just the same numerical particles of matter that it ever had, for they are continually changing: nor all the same that were laid in the grave. It is sufficient that such particles are raised as to make up the integrant or necessary parts of the body.

There have been various hypotheses on this subject, which I consider as curious speculations, not as matters of faith. I would not pretend to be

wise above what is written. As this doctrine depends entirely upon revelation, I will confine myself in all my reasoning within its limits. It is enough for me to know that I shall have a body in some respects the same. This the scripture sufficiently intimates. And further, that this body and this soul shall be again united in the same person, and the union shall be dissolved no more. "The children of the resurrection," I am told, "neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, but are as the angels of God."

Let me more particularly notice the *properties* of the resurrection body. I am assured it will not be such as it is at present, but far more excellent; for it will undergo a very important change.—"Flesh and blood," says the apostle, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God,—but we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." What that change will be, the apostle there tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 35—45. where he brings in the philosophic infidel, proposing his objection. "But some will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?" He answers the scoffer with a due severity,—"Thou fool," &c. q. d. Thou thinkest to baffle a doctrine that stands upon a sure foundation, by an objection that may be solved by a familiar instance which every one is acquainted with. Dost not thou know, "that which thou sowest in the field is not quickened except it die? Suppose e. g. it be wheat or any other grain," it must be dissolved in the earth before it springs up; and then "God giveth it a body," a stalk and an ear, "as it hath pleased him, but to every seed its own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead."

Where it seems to be implied, that our pre-

sent body is a kind of seed of the resurrection body, out of which it springs. So that is in some respects the same with the body that is at death laid in the grave. Yet it undergoes a considerable change; as is the case with the seed cast into the ground, whether it be wheat or any other sort of grain. It is sown *mere grain*, but when it springs up, it wears a different appearance. Thus will the body, though, in fact, the same, be greatly changed.

“It is sown in corruption.” It is a dying, perishing thing, having the principles of death and corruption in it. But “it shall be raised in incorruption,” having no principle of death remaining. “It is sown in dishonour.” It is a “vile body:” a body of humiliation, suited to the present lapsed state of the soul: subject to pains and weakness, and often humbled by deformity; and no sooner deserted by the vital principle than it becomes a loathsome carcase, only fit to be buried out of sight. But “it is raised in glory.” At the resurrection the righteous shall “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.” Christ shall transform the vile body, when he raiseth it again, “into a likeness to his own glorious body.” And what the glory of that is, we may learn in some measure from its appearance on the mount of transfiguration, when “his face shined as the sun, and his raiment was bright as the light.”

“It is sown in weakness;” in a state of great infirmity, easily fatigued, soon decayed and spent. “But it is raised in power;” full of life and vigour, so that it shall move without weariness, subsist without the demands of food, and without decay for ever. How soon am I now weary in the service of God. If the spirit is willing, I quickly

find the flesh is weak, so that I cannot watch with my Lord many hours; nature demands a pause, to recruit its strength.—But the resurrection body will languish no more, but will be all life and activity. “It is sown a natural, or animal body,” with affections, passions and appetites, gross and sensual, like those of the brutes. But “it shall be raised a spiritual body,” refined from corporeal grossness, and attuned to the pure spiritual operations of the mind. All its members will be instruments of righteousness, which will be under entire subjection to the soul, and will neither tempt nor divert it any more.—O glorious day! O transporting scene! “The trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed. This corruptible body shall then put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death, shall be swallowed up in victory.” With what pleasure, O my soul, shouldst thou think of that blessed period, and with what solicitous care shouldst thou prepare for it! Lord grant me a part in that better resurrection.

But is it certain that I shall have my body again in this improved state? Let me examine on what foundation my faith is built. This doctrine belongs not to the articles of natural religion.—The philosophers of old thought it impossible and ridiculous. When Paul preached at Athens the resurrection of the dead, the Epicureans mocked. But I find that this doctrine has always been held in the church of God. The patriarchs appear to have had some knowledge of it. Job professed his faith in it with great assurance, *Chap. xix. 25.* “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.—“Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”

In the Jewish church it was certainly an article of faith. Ezekiel grounds upon it his parable of the dry bones being made to live. That it prevailed in the time of the *Maccabees* is evident from their history, *2 Mac.* vii. 9—14. Nor did the Jews in their most degenerate state give up this doctrine, as appears from Paul's apology before Felix, *Acts* xxiv. 14. "I have hope towards God, as they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." And how readily did Martha profess her faith in it, when Christ told her that her brother should rise again. "I know, (says she) he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

This is a doctrine which entirely depends on divine revelation, and is there most clearly asserted. The heresy of the pharisees concerning it Christ imputed to their ignorance of the sacred books. "Ye do err, (says he,) not knowing the scriptures:" viz. those of the Old Testament. Besides the passages before referred to, I find the psalmist expressing his faith in it. *Psal.* xvi. 9. "My flesh also shall rest in hope," and *Psal.* xvii. 15. "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Daniel speaks of it in the most express terms. *Ch.* xii. 2. "Many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake," &c.

But in the New Testament this doctrine is taught in a yet stronger and clearer manner. e. g. *John*, v. 28. "The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth." *Rev.* xx. 13, and many other passages.

But the grand proof of this doctrine, of the final resurrection of the body is, the resurrection of

Christ from the dead. This the apostle argues at length. 1 *Cor.* xv. "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruit of them that slept." Christ rose not only as first in order, but his resurrection was a figure and a pledge of ours. He rose as our head; and his mystical body was virtually raised with him, as the apostle intimates. *Eph.* ii. 6. "He hath raised us up together with Christ."

O, my soul! what a ground of faith, and even of triumph, hast thou in this great event, the resurrection of thy Redeemer. It is some additional confirmation of my faith, that my great Lord and Master has given proof of his power in the actual resurrection of some of his followers. Besides that of Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, of Lazarus and of Tabitha, I am informed that after the Saviour's resurrection, "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." These first fruits were a token and earnest of a full harvest. O, my soul! commit thy body into his hands who is able to save unto the uttermost. He will rescue it from the power of the grave, though it must there see corruption, and he will shew thee the path of life.— "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and then death itself the last enemy shall be destroyed." Thou must indeed, submit a while to this tyrant; but thanks be to God who will give thee the victory thro' "Jesus Christ our Lord."

MEDITATION XXIII.

The Resurrection of the Body, improved.

NOTWITHSTANDING such full and clear evidence for this doctrine, it is not without its difficulties. The early adversaries of the Christian faith thought it “*incredible* that God should raise the dead,” and even pronounce the thing itself impossible.—Learned writers have set themselves to examine and answer the various objections which have been urged against a resurrection of the same body.—But I need not puzzle myself with things of this nature. I may with safety retreat to the divine power and promise. If God be omnipotent, he certainly can restore the body and unite the scattered dust. He has moreover said that he will; and there I rest. Say not, “Can these dry bones live?” O Lord, thou knowest that they *can*, and thou hast declared they *shall*. I will therefore dismiss all suspicions, and not stagger at the promise through unbelief. Instead of attending to the disputes which have been raised on this subject, let me improve the important doctrine of scripture for my instruction, comfort and quickening.

1. I cannot but infer from it the excellence of the Christian religion, and the happiness of those that are brought to the knowledge of it. The heathen world knew but little of a future state, and nothing of a resurrection. Nor indeed was it fully revealed till the glorious author of it brought life and immortality to light. O, my soul! bless God for that dispensation of light and grace which thou art under; that thou art “begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

2. It is plain from this doctrine that it is no reproach to a Christian that he professes to believe the reality of some things, the manner and circumstances of which he doth not understand.— Though all, who duly consider, must allow that where there is no distinct knowledge there is no distinct faith (for we cannot believe any thing without ideas) yet we all believe many things the precise mode and nature of which we are ignorant of. I believe that the dead shall be raised on the divine authority, though I know not “with what bodies they shall come.” On the same principle I ought to admit whatever is clearly matter of divine revelation. Let me never question what God has said, nor presume to ask, by way of objection, “How can these things be?”— Let divine revelation regulate and limit my faith. Be not wise above what is written.

3. From the present subject I may account for, and justify, that respect which, in the church of God, has always been paid to the dead bodies of the saints. Abraham, when a sojourner among the children of Heth, was solicitous to procure a burying place for his family, and especially for the precious remains of pious Sarah. Devout men carried Stephen to his grave and made great lamentation over him. It was the custom of the Jews to embalm the dead, as well as to use much ceremony at their funerals: witness the preparation made for our Saviour’s burial. The like was practised among the primitive Christians. This was (as *Prudentius* tells us in his hymn) *to testify their belief of the resurrection of the dead*. Some solemnity in this affair is, doubtless becoming, if superstition be avoided. There is a regard due to the dead bodies of those who die in the Lord, as they have been “the temples of the Holy Ghost;” and though at present laid in ruins,

shall be built up again in greater glory. We bury them in the hope of a resurrection, and therefore they should not be laid in the grave like the beasts which perish. Let me improve every occasion of this kind for exercising my faith and hope, and let my respect shewn to the body of a friend, whom I follow to the grave, be founded chiefly on the pleasing prospect of its being ere long raised to life and glory.

4. How glorious and happy will the resurrection day be to all good men! How grand will be the solemnities of it, when Christ shall descend from heaven "in the glory of his father, with all the holy angels," and when "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth." And how glorious will be the change which will then take place in the bodies of his people, when he will transform them into a likeness to his own. Indeed I can have but very imperfect ideas of the resurrection-body, and the speculations in which some have indulged on this subject are so precarious, that I can lay no stress upon them. It is enough for me to have the assurance that the glorified bodies of the saints will be such as highly to administer to the happiness of their perfected spirits.—O, my soul! look forward with joy to that blessed hope; diligently prepare for that glorious day, and "wait for the adoption, even the redemption of the body" from the dark prison of the grave.

5. In the mean time let the prospect of the glorious state of the resurrection-body support and comfort thee under all the troubles and inconveniences to which the present frailties of the flesh expose thee. "We that are in this tabernacle groan being burdened:" and how many and how great our burdens are! The body itself is a bur-

den, and is the occasion of many of the sins, and most of the sorrows of life. "In my flesh," says the apostle, "dwelleth no good thing." He calls it a *body of death*. The best saints on earth know and feel something of what he complains of, as "a law in the members warring against the law of the mind;" nor can they be free from the influence of it till they are delivered out of the body.—Sin that dwelleth in us has, like the leprosy, so infected the house that there is no cure till it is pulled down. But here is the consolation, that when it is built up again, it will be without any pollution, or any evil thing: a pure spiritual body, that shall annoy thee no more for ever. Solace thyself, O my soul, in this blessed hope.

The present body is liable to a variety of painful diseases, so that sometimes (as David says) we "water our couch with tears." Wearisome nights and days, yea, months of vanity are appointed to us. And these often prove a great hinderance in religion, to a devout mind, which is like a skilful musician who has a broken instrument. Well—at the resurrection this grievance will be removed. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem shall not say *I am sick*: their bodies shall be in health, and prosper even as their souls prosper. Every one shall enjoy what the philosopher pronounced the greatest felicity which man was capable of—a sound mind "in a sound body."*

The present body is feeble, soon weary, needs constant replenishing by food, rest and diversion, which are great hinderances in the duties of life; and a large proportion of our time is consumed in necessary sleep, which is a kind of temporary death. But the resurrection-body will have none

* *Mens sano in corpore sano.*

of these infirmities. "We shall hunger and thirst no more," nor any more need relaxation of any kind, but remain in a constant state of vigour, activity and life; capable of the joys and the business of heaven, without fainting or cessation for ever.

Once more: the present body is a snare to the soul, tempting, deluding, enslaving it to sensible things, and sometimes to grossly sensual and impure objects. Even good men, in whom the flesh is not the governing principle, too often in this view suffer by their connexion with it. How doth it taint the soul by its imaginations, as well as distract it by its cares. But, O my soul, reflect for thy comfort, that thy resurrection-body will be of a purer constitution: it will have dropt its passions and lusts, so that it will tempt and ensnare thee no more. "The flesh will no longer lust against the spirit," but there will be a full concord between them. O, blessedness supreme! O, joyful day! when the conflict with carnal appetites and fleshly lusts shall for ever cease. Blessed be God, as I look for "new heavens and a new earth." So also for a *new body*, "wherein dwelleth righteousness."

MEDITATION XXIV.

The Resurrection of the Body farther improved.

"THE trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. All that are in their graves shall come forth." May I be found prepared for that solemn, awful day! There will be "a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." To the latter it will be far from a desirable event: with respect to them it will be like a jail delivery,

when the unhappy prisoners are brought forth to execution. They shall "awake to everlasting shame and contempt." Their bodies will doubtless appear with extraordinary marks of horror, for they shall come forth "to the resurrection of damnation." Glad would they be to have "the rocks and mountains fall on them," to hide them from the presence of their Judge.— O my soul! endeavour that thou mayest "stand in a good lot" at that day. So act, while now in the body, that thou mayest not be ashamed or afraid to appear in it again.

I would resolve through divine grace, to attain the principles, and endeavour after the improvement, of the spiritual and divine life. Such is the depravity of human nature, that we are become earthly and sensual; enemies to God in our minds: yea, *dead* in trespasses and sins. "To be carnally minded is *death*." Out of this death-state there must now be a resurrection. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" must make me "free from the law of sin and death," which will otherwise issue in death eternal. Let it then be my concern to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Lord quicken me by thy spirit; raise me up together with Christ, and help me to aspire after higher and higher attainments in the spiritual and divine life. "Blessed are they that have part in this first resurrection; over them the second death hath no power."

I would resolve to dedicate my body as a "temple of the holy ghost," and use it as a holy, consecrated thing. Lord come and take possession of me by thy spirit! O prepare me for thyself as an habitation; fit me for thy presence and vouchsafe to dwell in me. Set open, O my soul, the everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in,

“ If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the
“ dead, dwell in thee, he that raised up Christ
“ from the dead will quicken thy mortal body,
“ by his spirit that dwelleth in thee.” Lord let
me never defile thy temple, but possess my ves-
sel in sanctification and honor. May *holiness to
the Lord* be inscribed on every member. O,
my soul! learn to use and govern thy body, so
that thou mayest hope to return to it with comfort.
Pray to be sanctified throughout in body, soul and
spirit, and to be preserved blameless to the coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ. Labour to “ keep un-
“ der the body, and bring it into subjection,”
that it may neither cloud nor tempt the mind.
“ If, through the spirit, we mortify the deeds of
“ the body, we shall live.”—“ Holiness is the on-
“ ly principle of immortality, both to soul and
“ body. Those love their bodies the best, and
“ honor them the most, who endeavour to refine and
“ spiritualize them, and make them the instru-
“ ments of virtue : this is *offering up our bodies as
“ living sacrifices*. The less of flesh they carry
“ with them to the grave, the more glorious will
“ they rise again.*”

O, my soul! herein exercise thyself continu-
ally, to subjugate the senses, and all sensual
inclinations. Think how inglorious it is that this
noble inhabitant, the immortal spirit, should serve
the vile body, and fulfil its lusts. The philoso-
pher could say, ‘ He is unworthy the name of a
‘ man that would live one day in bodily plea-
‘ sures.’ How much more unworthy the name of
a Christian! whose professed business is to pre-
pare for a glorious resurrection and a future im-
mortality! O, my soul, learn of pagans how to es-
teem and employ the body. Be not fond of it or

* Sherlock on Death.

its pleasures. Labour to live above it, and keep it in a state of subserviency to the mind. Consecrate it wholly to God, and thereby to immortality.

O, my God! assist me in this great and difficult work. I apply myself to thee, from whom cometh my help. Confirm me more and more in the belief of this important article, the resurrection of the dead, and give me to feel more of its influence! Help me to be “looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.” May I *know him and the power of his resurrection*, being made conformable unto his death.— May I be pressing forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling, if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the pious dead. Help me diligently to exert myself that I may overcome all evil habits, slothfulness, love of ease, sensual pleasures, and all undue desires and carnal appetites. Lord assist me in this warfare with the flesh. Strengthen me with all might by the spirit in the inner man. Amidst the many temptations and dangers of this embodied state, I commit myself to thy tuition and defence.— Fortify me against the impressions of sensible things. Animate me to “strive for the mastery, and to be temperate in all things,” that so I may not fail of the recompence at the resurrection of the just. O, may the sound of the last trumpet be to me a joyful sound! a jubilee proclaiming my release from the bondage of corruption, and the beginning of a new and glorious triumph.— “When Christ, who is my life, shall appear, may I appear with him in glory, and so be forever with the Lord!”

MEDITATION XXV.

On the final state of Happiness.

2 COR. xii. 2—4. *I knew a man in Christ above 14 years ago, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth: such an one caught up to the third heaven.....into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

THE person concerned in this rapture was undoubtedly Paul himself. The time of it, and of the visions that ensued, was above fourteen years before he wrote this epistle. Probably it was now that he was (as he tells us, *Gal. i. 12.*) “taught: the gospel by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The place to which he was caught up he calls *the third heaven* and *paradise*. Whether both these terms mean the same or different regions is disputed; but this is of no great importance, and it is not suitable to my present design to adjust this debate, though I think the supposition of two distinct places of blessedness, is not well supported. The apostle tells us, that he heard “unspeakable words.” which he might not, or rather *could not* utter. The surprise which he felt at the time was such, that “he knew not whether he was in the body or out of it.” Perhaps he was so ravished with the words he heard; and with the glories of paradise, that he quite forgot the body, and all its little concerns.

From the apostle’s words I observe two things: the one is, the reality of the heavenly state. Here is a sensible evidence of it, for behold here is one caught up to it.—The other is,

the nature of that state, as a state of delight and pleasure, therefore called *paradise*, in allusion to the garden of Eden, which was the residence of innocent Adam. Hence that promise, *Rev. ii. 7.* "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God." Heaven is the true paradise: there is the life and blessedness of which the garden of Eden and its symbolical tree were only types.

Though good men enter upon happiness immediately after death, so that the apostle "desired to depart and be with Christ," the joys of paradise are not complete till after the resurrection of the body and the final judgment. Then it is that the servants of Christ most fully enter into the joy of their Lord. But though I am certain that the happiness of the heavenly state is great, I can at present form but very imperfect notions of it: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."—God has seen fit, in a great measure, to veil it from us. The words which the great apostle heard were such as it was not lawful or possible for him to utter. He had learned more by that view of heaven than he had leave to communicate, and probably more than any language could express.—That world is very much to us *Terra incognita*: an unknown country. The glory of it is yet to be revealed.

Learn therefore, O my soul, to think and speak of it with caution and reserve. Do not attempt irreverently to tear aside the veil, and intrude into things which thou hast not seen, nor pretend to know what God hath not seen fit to reveal. Let me be content to know that which is certain concerning heaven, as to its general nature, from divine revelation. It is there represen-

ted by a variety of metaphors ; such for instance, as a city, a kingdom, a crown of glory, everlasting life, &c. all which import that it is a state of distinguished honor, and of exceeding great happiness. We are assured that “ in God’s presence is “ fulness of joy,” and that the spirits of just men are there “ made perfect ;” perfect in their characters, and in their enjoyments. Their desires are filled, so that they neither need nor crave any more. “ When I awake,” says David, “ I shall “ be *satisfied* with thy likeness.” This general account of the heavenly happiness, which we may assuredly depend upon, might suffice.

But the scripture gives us farther intimations concerning its particular nature, which warrant my farther searches into it. The pleasures which constitute heaven, and make it a paradise, include these two particulars : the absence of all evil, and the presence of all good.

First. The happiness of the heavenly state consists in the absence of all EVIL. Our apostacy from God let in a flood of misery, which has overflowed our world. The sentence pronounced in case of disobedience, lies upon all mankind—“ Thou shalt surely die.” Man, since the fall, is in a death state. He is not only liable to a natural death, which he must unavoidably undergo, but there is a vanity and mortality in all his enjoyments. A great variety of sorrows and sufferings attend him through the whole of his course.— Could one view the inhabitants of the world, at once, what a scene of distress would appear. How great a part should we see lying in sackcloth and bathing in tears ! Some afflicted in their bodies ; others in their minds ; others in their estates, names, relations, and some in all. O, the grievances, vexations and troubles of the present state !

Who can number them? And who is entirely free from them? “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” themselves, who are often “weary with their groaning.”

Nor is this death and suffering confined to the things of the *body*; but extends itself to our spiritual affairs. Our apostacy has tainted the *Mind*.—Death has seized our mental faculties, and greatly disabled them from their divine exercises. Even good men find reason to complain of “a law in their members warring against the law of their minds.” Religion is become a warfare, and cannot be carried on without continual watching and striving, labour and pains. And after all, how frequent are our miscarriages and disappointments! There is a languor in our devotions; an “iniquity in our holy things;” an imperfection in our best services; so that in this best estate, even in our religious capacity, we are “altogether vanity.” The whole frame is often disordered, the mind clouded, the heart dead and deceitful, the affections earthly and sensual. “O wretched man! who shall deliver?”

Well—in paradise (O grateful sound!) there shall be deliverance: an entire and eternal deliverance from all these evils. They who dwell there “rest from their labours; God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” There shall “be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.” All former grievances, all troublesome exercises, both of body and mind; all sorrows and sufferings of every kind and degree, shall cease forever: sin shall be fully pardoned and subdued, and all the effects of it abolished. “There shall be no more curse.”—That flood of sorrow which sometimes follows the

Christian to the very gates of heaven, shall then bid him farewell forever, and nothing remain of it but a grateful remembrance, to enhance the pleasure of the deliverance. *Olim mememisse juvabit.* After thou hast long been tossed with tempests, thou shalt there find a quiet harbour, an everlasting rest. This alone, were nothing farther to be expected, is almost enough to make it a paradise. But, besides the absence of all evil, there is,

Secondly, the presence, the confluence of ALL GOOD. The heavenly paradise is a state of positive pleasures, of which the scripture gives me some information.

1. There is the pleasure of the PLACE: which is the New Jerusalem, the palace of the great king, the city of the living God. *Where* it is situated we know not, nor have we a perfect idea what kind of place it is; but from the metaphors used to describe it, we may conclude that it is a place of great glory and magnificence, suitable to the presence that fills it, and the inhabitants that possess it.— It is described as “ a city that hath foundations, “ whose builder and governor* is God.” The apostle John, who had a vision of it, says, “ The “ city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon “ to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlight- “ en it, and the lamb is the light thereof.” It is not improbable that there will be a visible *Shekinah*, some sensible manifestation of the presence of God, similar to that in the tabernacle and temple of old, or that upon the mount of transfiguration.— And, O my soul, how great a pleasure will it afford to behold and to dwell in this glory! When the queen of Sheba saw the magnificence of Solomon’s

* So the word rendered *maker*, signifies.—See *Macknight*.

court, the house he had built, its furniture, retinue, &c. it is said, she was so surprised that "she had no spirit left in her." But how much greater entertainment may we expect the new Jerusalem will afford. What a paradise will that be, where is the throne of God and the Lamb, where the divine majesty appears in the fullest light, and where his glory dwells.

2. There is the pleasure of the COMPANY. That glorious place is suitably inhabited. There is "the general assembly, the church of the first-born, and an innumerable company of angels." There shall we "sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;" with all the patriarchs, apostles, martyrs and confessors in the kingdom of God.—O the ravishing delights of such society! What sweet counsel will the saints take together: how will they mingle hearts and affections. What pleasant lectures will they read on the several providences they passed through, which concerned both the church and themselves. There shall we probably hear Moses and Elias, who talked with Christ in his transfiguration, Noah, Samuel, David, and other ancient believers, as well as New-testament saints and later Christians, reporting with admirable comments, the history of their own lives and experiences.—Nor will the holy angels, we may presume, refuse to admit us to their intimate converse; and, among other topics, about their embassies to our world, and the service they did us and others, in the course of their ministry to the heirs of salvation.

O the happiness of such society! *Socrates*, when he came to die, comforted himself with the thought that he should go to *Homer*, *Hesiod*, and other eminent men, whose characters had endeared them to him. *Tully* also indulged the like pleas-

ing reflection. *O præclarem diem, &c.* ‘O blessed day,’ says he, ‘when I shall go to the assembly of divine souls!’ and particularly, he adds, ‘to my *Cato*; when I shall depart from this sink of mankind to such society,’ &c. But how much more excellent and glorious the college of *Christians*! How much greater satisfaction will *their* society afford; especially as it will consist of *all* the saints, and as they will be altogether saints, without one sinner, to interrupt their joys; and they saints in their *perfect* state, free from all infirmity; among whom there will be no shyness, or distance; no pride or selfishness; no passion or remaining corruption to alienate their minds, or taint their converse.

3. There is the pleasure of the INWARD STATE: a state of consummate grace, and full conformity to God in holiness. None indeed will be perfectly like Him; for even the excellencies of the highest angels are infinitely below those of the divine mind, yet the image of God, now formed in the saints, will be as perfect as their natures will admit.—All will not indeed have the same degrees of perfection, but will differ “as one star differeth from another star in glory,” according to their different improvements in grace, holiness and usefulness, in this world. But all will doubtless be advancing in their conformity to the divine image, and consequently in their degrees of happiness.

More particularly: our *knowledge* will in heaven be perfect. We shall be ignorant of nothing that it is fit for us to know. All those sublime and more difficult points of faith which now puzzle and divide learned men will be cleared up, so far as we have any interest in them: and, doubtless, we shall wonder at our former ignorance, but much more at our former rashness and pre-

sumption. Our knowledge will be extensive. We shall know God in his nature, works, and providences. The meanest saint will then understand more than the greatest philosopher in the present state; and this knowledge will be clear, distinct, and easy. As we now know but little, so it is at great expence that we know what we do. It is with great labour and by slow degrees, that we acquire a small stock of what we have the vanity to call *wisdom* and *profound learning*; though in reality it is often little better than a collection of blunders, compared with the knowledge of the other world; which is the region of pure unclouded light.

And as knowledge, so every *grace* will there be perfect. Love, humility, meekness, resignation, joy and every moral excellence will be complete, without any alloy. Here, after our best attainments, we are but "pressing towards the mark." Our most successful endeavours in religion are but vigorous efforts to throw off a dead weight, a burden of corruption, which, alas! still cleaves to us. In paradise this struggle will be over, as we shall have fully attained, and feel ourselves perfect in holiness and in happiness.— There the heart will be always in tune, and every faculty in its due state and posture. There will be no jar or confusion within; no rebellion in the inferior against the superior powers, but the whole soul will be disposed, as it ought to be, towards God, towards itself, and all around it. This, O my soul, is paradise. There thou wilt find that righteousness which thou art now thirsting after. There thou wilt completely enjoy thy God, and therein wilt enjoy thyself, and thus wilt be happy for ever.

MEDITATION XXVI.

The state of final happiness,—continued.

BESIDES the pleasure of the place, of the society, and of the inward frame, there is in heaven,

4. The pleasure of the EMPLOYMENT. Here, indeed, I find a veil interposing. Though, doubtless, the soul, whose action is essential to its life, will be constantly employed in the future state, with pleasure to itself, *how* and *wherein* it will be employed, we at present rather guess than know.—We may, however, with good reason suppose that the exercise of divine grace will be part of our work in heaven. It is said of those who die in the Lord, that they “rest from their *labours* ;” that is from the toil and trouble attending them on earth ; but not from their active services ; for it is added, “their *works* follow them.” For instance :

Here we *contemplate* God : and this we shall do in heaven, but with more satisfaction and success, when “we shall know as we are known.”—Though there will be no laborious study, there will yet be inquiry ; for, if the angels look and pry into divine things, why should we imagine the saints will be above the like researches ?—It is part of our work below to *resign* ourselves to *God*, and bring our hearts under his authority. The same will doubtless be our employment in heaven ; but performed with more success. And how great a pleasure this will be, devout persons may conjecture from what they feel in the present imperfect degrees of it. ‘A soul formed into an obediential subject frame, what sweet peace does it enjoy !’ It is, as it were, in a new world. But when this

‘ transformation shall be completed, and the will
 ‘ of God shall be no sooner known than rested in,
 ‘ with a complacential approbation, O the incon-
 ‘ ceivable blessedness of this harmony !’—*Howe.*

It is our work here to LOVE GOD, and to exercise delight in him ; and this we are assured will not cease in heaven. Love is a heavenly grace, and the exercise of it will be the business and blessedness of the heavenly region. 1 Cor. xiii. 8.—*Charity*, or love, *never faileth*, but will there be made perfect. That principally will constitute heaven. That “ perfect love of God which casteth out tormenting fear ;” which includes a superlative esteem and reverence of him, steady adherence to him, supreme delight in his perfections and excellencies, an entire approbation of his government, and all his providences ; this will most undoubtedly be the soul’s exercise in heaven : And this, O my soul, will be thy heaven : this will be “ joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

The WORSHIP of God, which is the principal service we are capable of here on earth, will continue to be our work in heaven. The heavenly state is described as a *church* ; and John in his vision, represents the members of it as “ worshipping him “ that liveth for ever, and not resting day or “ night” in their acts of adoration and praise.— And how delightful may we suppose our services to be. There is no pleasure on earth like that of divine worship, when the heart is in frame ; which *there* it will always be. and the object ever present. There the soul will be filled with the glories of his presence, and all its faculties properly exerted in the inward acts of veneration, love, resignation, &c. which will probably be outwardly expressed in a way suitable to that perfect state ; while such services as in this life imply imperfection shall cease :

for there will be no confession or contrition; no humiliation for sin, or prayer for the pardon of it, in the heavenly paradise; nor any supplication for those spiritual supplies which our present state of sin and sorrow require, because they will be needed no more. Our present complaints will be turned into songs of praise, and our notes of grief into triumphant hallelujahs.

Besides these acts of worship, we have reason to suppose that the saints in heaven will be employed in other active services in obedience to the will of God, and in subserving his glory. What pleasure do we now sometimes find in the work of God; in any little service which we have reason to think is accepted of him, and in which we have the testimony of conscience that it was designed for his honour. If God “touch our tongue with a coal from his altar,” we are ready to cry out, with the prophet, “Here am I, send me.” But O the superior pleasure of the heavenly life! How great the joy and delight of our work there! when every service will be performed with perfect ease, and without weariness of body or mind; with perfect integrity and all suitable affections; without any mixture of sinful infirmity, or any danger of miscarrying and failing of success; and God himself will be present with us, to encourage our efforts, and crown all with his favour and smiles.— This suggests a

5th ingredient in the heavenly happiness: there will be enjoyed the beatific vision: the sight and enjoyment of God himself. “Blessed” says our Saviour, “are the pure in heart, for they shall SEE GOD.” Though we know not the full import of this language, we learn from scripture that we shall have such a view of the Divine Being as will transform the soul into his image. In this

prospect the pious Psalmist triumphed : *Psal. xvii. 15.*—" I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake *in thy likeness.*" When Moses had that interview with God on the mount, it is said that " his face shone," so that he was obliged to put on a veil when he conversed with the people. And probably this manifestation of the divine presence was the means of supporting him through his fast of forty days. He had then " meat to eat which the world knew not of ; the joy of the Lord was his strength." And, O my soul, will not the presence of God in heaven, more fully and constantly enjoyed, have a yet more glorious influence ? How delightful is that short-taste of the divine presence which holy men are now and then favoured with here on earth ! If he lift up the light of his countenance they pity the poor worldling, though his corn and wine be ever so much increased. O how transporting then the pleasures of paradise, where we shall dwell in his immediate presence for ever, without an intervening cloud. " In his presence is fulness of joy."

6. And there will be the additional pleasure of being *with Christ*, our glorified Redeemer. This was the matter of his dying prayer. " Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." We shall then " see him as he is," in his exalted state, receiving all the distinguished honours due to him as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. And who can duly estimate the pleasure of this ? When the disciples saw his glory on the mount of transfiguration, Peter cried out in a transport of joy, " Lord it is good to be here." But how much better will it be to behold his brighter glory in heaven, and to converse with him there, yea to be glorified

with him. For he hath promised every faithful servant of his, that he “shall sit down with him on “the throne of his glory.”

7. There is the pleasure of reviewing the former state. This will doubtless be an ingredient in the happiness of heaven. In the other world all will remember past transactions in this, which will increase their sorrow or joy. “Son remember,” says Abraham to the rich man in hell, “how in thy *life time* thou hadst thy good things :” surely then the saints in heaven will remember *their* former things, with lively affections and devout sentiments : e. g. The sin, folly and danger of their unconverted state : the methods of divine providence and grace in recovering them to God : the admonitions, warnings, and convictions they had, and the blessed issue of all. With what transport will they say, with the apostle, “I was “before a blasphemers, injurious,” carnal, sensual, &c. “but I obtained mercy.” O how will the reflection excite their admiration and joy, their love, gratitude, and praise !

They will remember also, the difficulties and dangers that they passed through ; the temptations and trials that befel them ; their weeping, praying and fasting ; their conflicts and fears, their supports and deliverances ; the precipices from whence they were seasonably rescued ; and their being snatched as fire brands out of the burning, and will forever adore the wisdom and mercy of providence in the whole of its conduct towards them. In short, all the scenes of past life will lie open before their eyes. O my soul ! how grateful, how entertaining, will this remembrance be to thee ! It will not only supply matter for thy songs of praise, but will increase thy joys, and give relish to the other delights of paradise.

The comparison between the former condition on earth, and the present happy state and frame, will doubtless enhance the felicity? The comparison of present light with former darkness; present purity with former corruption; present rest and felicity with former troubles and sorrows; at the same time surveying the conduct of divine wisdom, power and grace; approving every step of providence, and recalling former rash censures of it because of its mysterious nature. ‘Now I see the kind design of my God and father in his severest dispensations towards me: I now find that he was true to his word, and that all things have worked together as he said, for my good. What he was doing I once understood not, but now I know to my full satisfaction and joy. Now to the king eternal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever.’

Lastly; all this felicity is ETERNAL. Here our joys are but short and transient. If we have a little taste of light and comfort, how soon is it over. If we get upon the mount we must presently come down again, mingle with the world, and feel its vanity. But in heaven there will be no vicissitudes; no change of state or frame; no loss or diminution of happiness. “At God’s right hand are pleasures for evermore.” The inheritance there “is undefiled, incorruptible, and such as fadeth not away.” There the saints will possess “a far more exceeding and *eternal* weight of glory.” This, O my soul, is heaven. This is a part, and but a *small* part, of the blessedness thou art hoping and waiting for. If thou art so happy as to arrive there at last, thou wilt feel such surprise as to have reason to say, with the Queen of Sheba, “It was a true report that I heard in my own land, but behold the half was not told me.”

Lord help me to believe thy word, and grant that I may at last come and see with my own eyes.

MEDITATION XXVII.

On the evidence of future happiness.

How glorious and blessed a state is that which I have been contemplating! Who that believes the reality of it would not say, "Let now thy servant depart in peace and see thy salvation." But let me examine a little the EVIDENCES of it.—These things are not trifles they are my life.—Herein is my hope, my happiness, my all. It therefore infinitely concerns me to be on sure grounds.—That there is such a state of future blessedness, appears from three sorts of arguments, rational, divine and sensible. The two former have been touched upon already. I would here particularly attend to the last.

We have the testimony of one of the inhabitants of heaven, who came from thence. "He was in the beginning with God," and he himself tells us that he came down from heaven; and when he was leaving our world, "that he was going thither again, to prepare a place there," for his disciples. [Accordingly, after having given the most satisfactory proofs of his *Resurrection*] "he was taken up into heaven in the presence of many witnesses."*—Several in our world have had interviews with those that inhabit that world above. The apostle John saw Jesus there, after his ascension, Paul saw him in the way to Damascus, and

* On this unanswerable argument, the worthy author should have laid more stress, and might have enlarged with advantage.—ED.

heard his voice. Stephen also, "as he looked stedfastly up to heaven saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." The apostle Peter, James and John, saw Moses and Elias, talking with their master on the mount of transfiguration.—Some have been visibly taken up from our earth into paradise, as Enoch and Elijah. And the apostle Paul tells us that he "was caught up himself into the third heavens, into paradise, where he heard things unutterable."—We have also had frequent messengers from that world to our's.—The ministry of angels is an instance of this kind, who on various occasions have appeared to men and conversed with them. And God has been pleased to manifest something of heaven in the souls of devout men as a foretaste of the joys of paradise. Heaven has been, as it were, brought down to them on earth. Thus it was in the case of Mr. *John Janeway*, who on his death bed exclaimed, 'O that I could shew you what I now see! I would not for a world live any longer: the thought of the possibility of a recovery makes me tremble. I now see something of the invisible world,' &c. Mr. *John Flavel* in a journey, fell into such a train of meditation, that at length, such was the intenseness of his mind, and such the ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, that he lost all sense of this world and its concerns, so that for some hours he knew not where he was, and seemed to be an inhabitant of another world. For many years afterwards he used to call that day, *one of the days of heaven*; and he professed that he understood more of the life of heaven by that holy rapture, than by all the books he had ever read, or all the discourse he had ever heard about it.

These facts amount to a kind of sensible evidence of the reality of the heavenly state, and a

strong confirmation of what the scripture teaches concerning it. All sorts of arguments concur to the evidence of a life to come. O, my soul! how sure is the foundation of thy faith: alas! that it is yet so weak! "Lord help my unbelief." O favour me with more of the blessed prelibations of that world. May I, by inward sensations of a heavenly temper, know and feel more of heaven, and be growing more meet for it.

The strong and various evidence of a future life shews the unreasonableness of infidelity.— There are some that deny, and others that question, the reality of a future existence, under the pretence of acting with more caution and greater reason than other persons. How shameful the pretence, and how injurious the insinuation; as if the Christian had no evidence or reason to support his faith; when, in fact, they themselves are the persons who are chargeable with believing without reason. Infidels are in truth the most implicit believers, and their system is attended with greater difficulties than any that they charge upon the Christian faith. This might easily be made to appear, by comparing their creed* with that of the Christian.

Whatever they pretend, it is not *reason* that governs them: there is another cause of their infidelity than what they are willing to own. It is not the want of *evidence* that there is a God, a providence, and a future state, but the want of *inclination* to admit the truth. The common case with these men is, they have no hope of heaven, and consequently they can think of another world

* The Author gives a specimen of the creed of an Atheist, v. g. that the world was eternal, or formed by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, &c. &c.

only as a place of punishment, and therefore they would run down the notion of it as a mere fiction. *Lucretius* says, ‘The fear of after punishment must be utterly abolished, or it will disturb the pleasures of life.’ This is the true secret of infidelity; otherwise the belief of immortality is so agreeable to the rational nature, and the evidence of it so strong, that it would be a greater difficulty to reject than to receive it. A *good* man can never wish there were no future state, and a *bad* man disbelieves it only because he dislikes it. O, my soul! live so as that a future eternal state may be thy hope, and not thy dread. If thou desirest it, thou wilt never want sufficient reason to believe it.

Since I have so much certainty that there is such a happy region as that I have been contemplating, how willing should I be to leave this world and remove thither, “desiring,” with the apostle, “to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.” Death indeed is not in itself desirable: it is contrary to the original law and tendency of nature. But seeing it is now the only way to heaven, the state of things in the present evil world, and the perfect glory and blessedness of the other, should reconcile thee to the passage. Why so fond of earth, when such a heaven is in view? A heathen could say, ‘If God should permit him, after he had run his race, to begin it again, he would earnestly refuse it; for,’ says he, ‘what profit hath this life, and how much toil?’—How imperfect and sinful a state is this at best, and how uncomfortable our distance from God!—“While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” Well may the prospect of that better state above make the devout Christian wish “for the wings of a dove, that he might flee away and be at rest.” Death comes to such an one

with an angel's wings, to carry him where he shall neither sin nor suffer any more, but shall be introduced into the immediate presence of his God, where "his joy shall be full." As I profess to believe this, let me learn to think and speak of death more agreeably to Christian principles. How common is it when even a Christian dies, to lament him by saying, *Poor man! he is dead and gone!* But why call him *poor*, when his death is his perfection, his life and glory? O God, strengthen my faith, and help me to be more conversant in the land of promise and of rest! then I shall grow out of love with this wilderness, and not fear the waters of Jordan. A good man should only need *leave to die.*

I infer from this subject, how great is the folly and madness of those who, for the shadow and dream of an earthly happiness, deprive themselves of the substantial and lasting joys of the heavenly state. "The world and the fashion of it passeth away." In a few years at most, they that possessed the largest treasures must resign them all, and then "whose shall these things be?" How deplorable will be the situation of those who will then have no better portion! Then will their infatuation, who preferred earth to heaven, appear in its proper light, and their reflection upon it, will be one chief ingredient in their future misery.— 'For how short a pleasure have I parted with a kingdom,' said one who sold it in his extremity for a draught of water. Lord save me from making so foolish a bargain, and help me to chuse now what I shall approve hereafter!

Since there is so certain a prospect of such glory and blessedness, let me now solace myself therein, and let the hope set before me silence my complaints under all my present bur-

dens and sorrows. "Let not your hearts be troubled," said our Lord to his disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions." And he applied his own doctrine for the same purpose.— "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." Let my faith look "within the veil, whither Jesus the fore-runner is entered," and let me exercise that *hope* in eternal things which "is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast," amidst the storms of this tempestuous world. "I reckon," says the apostle, "that not all the sufferings of the present time are worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." Such a comparison will tend to make me not only patient but *joyful* in tribulation. It was thought an indecency not comporting with the relation of a *king's son*, "to look lean from day to day;" and shall the children of the king of heaven, the appointed heirs of an eternal kingdom, suffer every little grievance to ruffle and discompose them? How unworthy this of thy true dignity. 'What thoughts,' said the martyr, 'shall we have of the sufferings of this life, when we shall have reigned thousands of years with Christ in glory?' May I have somewhat the like thoughts now!

MEDITATION XXVIII.

On Preparation for Heaven.

WHAT cause is there to lament the common neglect of true happiness, and the fatal mistake of seeking it here below, even in professed Christians, who have admitted *life everlasting* into their creed, as an article of their faith. How few are there who seem to have any true regard to that blessed state! The generality, as was said of the Jews, in respect to Canaan, "despise the pleasant

“land,” and *mind earthly things*; still pursuing happiness in and from the creature, after all former disappointments. Strange infatuation! ‘The ‘experience of almost six thousand years,’ (says a worthy person,) ‘one would think sufficient to ‘prove the incompetency of every worldly thing ‘to make men happy, yet they are still unsatisfied: every age repeats the enquiry after an ‘earthly felicity, as if none had been defeated in ‘it before, and every one must be trying again ‘for himself, as if he was likely to succeed better.’ “This, their way, is their folly, yet their posterity “approve their sayings;” and after so many frustrated attempts, so much time and labour lost, men are still as eagerly and vainly busy as ever; and this to the neglect and contempt of the only possible happiness clearly set before them, and freely tendered to them; dashing against the same rock on which such myriads have split.

Bewail, O my soul, this woeful stupidity, but especially bewail thy own. How little hast thou minded that heaven which thou pretendest to have chosen! how much estranged from it hast thou been in thy thoughts, desires and affections.—From the accounts we have of the first Christians, they were so taken up with the expectation of the heavenly kingdom, that they could scarcely speak or think of any thing else; and some of them (not indeed without fault) even courted martyrdom, that they might enjoy it. How different is the spirit to be found among the Christians of our day! We are for treasures here on earth, on any terms; but how coldly do we pursue treasure in heaven. O my soul, lament thy own carnality. How languid are thy affections, how slow thy motions towards the heavenly region. Lord give me a stronger bias towards thyself and the blessed mansions above.

“ Having a promise left us of entering into “ rest” let me “ *fear* lest I should come short “ of it” and labour to put this matter beyond all reasonable doubt. In order hereunto, I resolve to study the evidence of a life to come, and of my own title to it. I would labour after that “ faith “ which is the substance of things hoped for, and “ the evidence of things not seen.” I would realize heaven to my mind, and get all suspicions concerning the reality of it, and of my meetness for it removed. “ We know,” saith the apostle, “ that we have a building of God, eternal in the “ heavens.” The like attainment is worthy thy most diligent pursuits.

As there are in scripture undoubted marks of exclusion, it shall be my care to avoid them, and keep at the greatest distance from whatever would exclude me from the hope of the heavenly kingdom. The unrighteous of all characters are expressly excluded. “ Neither fornicators, nor adul- “ terers, nor any unclean person, nor drunkards, “ nor covetous, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Guard, therefore, O my soul, against all approaches towards either of these characters: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but *follow after holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heaven must be begun here: the seeds of a blessed immortality must be sown in this life: the principles of it must be laid in the disposition of the mind. Endeavour, O my soul, to experience this, in order to be made “ meet for “ the inheritance of the saints in light.” Such as are strangers to this, want a capacity to relish the work, the company, and the enjoyments of that estate. Lord restore thy likeness in this soul of mine, and thus fit me for the service and enjoyment of thyself.

Subject thyself, O my soul, to the authority of thy great Lord and Master. Study and live by his gospel. Observe what he has taught in his excellent sermon on the mount, concerning poverty of spirit, meekness, mercifulness, purity of heart, forgiving and loving of enemies: concerning prayer, alms, fasting; and against anxious care about this life, and laying up treasures on earth. I would be possessed of every Christian grace; nor would I rest in low attainments in any, but be pressing forwards towards the mark, adding one degree of grace to another, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Lord strengthen me with all might by thy spirit in the inner man.

I would also resolve diligently to improve the talents committed to me. I find the sentence in the future judgment will be according to that improvement. *Matt. xxv.* Consider, O my soul, the nature of thy trust, and endeavor to approve thyself "a faithful steward of the manifold gifts of God,"—the gifts of nature, reason, judgment, conscience, will, memory; the senses of the body, and the affections of the mind: the talents of providence; wealth, learning, reputation, interest in the world, power and authority, health, time, &c. As also all the talents of *grace*: the holy scriptures, the ministry of the word, the institutions of the gospel, the influences of the holy spirit. I wish to be found "faithful over a few things."—Lord help me to improve all which thou hast given, to thy honour, that I may at last "receive a full reward."

That I may be the more fit for the other world, I would resolve to be more weaned from this; more disengaged from its concerns, more indifferent to its pleasures, and more upon my guard against its temptations. How often has it cheated

me in time past, by appearing in false colours!— Its objects were inviting at a distance, but when I have come near and touched them, they have, like the sensitive plant, contracted into a small compass. Let me not henceforward “love the world,” “nor the things of the world,” but get “crucified to it by the cross of Christ.” Lord enlighten my eyes, that I may see more clearly that world which is afar off, and the emptiness of this, so that I may be more willing to leave it whenever thou shalt call me hence.

I would henceforward be more resolute in securing my interest in the heavenly inheritance, and in preparing for it, considering this as the “one thing needful;” the grand work of a Christian, to which every thing else must be subservient. “Strive,” says our Lord, “to enter in at the strait gate.” And Peter exhorts, “Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Let me never rest in a lukewarm frame, but do thou, O God, quicken me in thy good way. May I “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

I resolve, by divine grace, frequently to examine my heart and conduct with peculiar solemnity and faithfulness, that I may not live a stranger to myself, but may know upon what terms I stand with God, and what is the foundation of my hope of heaven, and what meetness I have for it; so that if I should die this year, or month, or week, I may be satisfied that I should *die in the Lord*, and enter into joy. Whatever matter of uneasiness and fear I find in me concerning my spiritual state, I resolve not to cease making diligent search, till I discover the ground of it. If I perceive any head-strong lust and corruption, I will resolutely endeavour its mortification. If I

find the want or weakness of any grace, if I am conscious of any criminal neglects, omission of duty, or aversion to my Christian work, or unsuitableness of heart to the heavenly life, it shall be my immediate care, in the use of all proper means, to rectify what is amiss. In order to which I will set apart some special time for meditation, self-examination, humiliation and prayer. Lord dispose me more to such spiritual employment, and assist me in it, that I may enjoy more of the pleasure of religion, and therein the foretaste of the heavenly blessedness.

Finally; as the mediation of Christ is the grand foundation of all my hope for eternity, I would constantly depend thereon, and be daily "looking to Jesus" for pardon, peace, and final acceptance.—These, O my God, are the humble purposes of my soul: Be thou pleased to establish and confirm them. O keep these things forever upon my heart. I resign myself to the conduct of thy grace and spirit. Grant me thy presence and favour here, and thy heaven hereafter; and as to every thing else, the lesser things of this little lower world, *What thou wilt, and as thou wilt.*

DEVOUT MEDITATIONS.

—
PART THE THIRD.
—

ON VARIOUS RELIGIOUS TOPICS.



MEDITATION I.

On a devotional temper.

RELIGION, in general, consists in a sincere and constant respect to the divine commands, and in an endeavour to “stand complete in all the will of God.” But the particular manifestations of it are various; and in nothing does a religious turn of mind more appear than in an habitual acknowledgment of God in all his providences, and a devout intercourse with him therein. Here lies the distinction between the devout and the carnal.—The former see God, and have their hearts affected towards Him, in *every thing*; the latter in *nothing*. The greatest part of mankind live “without God in the world.” They have no sense of Him on their minds, in whom they live, and move, and have their being; but pass whole

days, and months and years without one serious thought of God; and even when signal events of providence happen to them, whether favourable or threatening, their insensibility still remains the same.

A pious man, in an account of his former sinful life* remarks, how utterly he neglected to acknowledge the hand of God in all his dangers and deliverances at sea, for many years, so as never to implore his protection, or offer his thanksgiving for it, though some instances of both were very remarkable. This is but one example among thousands. It is the common case of irreligious minds. They eat and drink, lie down and rise up; pass through dangerous diseases; perils by land and by sea; are in deaths often; yet they never own God in any thing. If they use a few good expressions which they have learned by rote, in a time of danger, or upon a deliverance, such as "Lord have mercy, or Thank God," &c. there is nothing of devotion in them, but they are mere matters of form. Whereas on the contrary, when religion takes place in the souls of men, and they are brought under the influence of it by the divine spirit, a sense of God prevails, and they are brought to acknowledge him in his providences, and to converse with him therein. And they are more or less religious in proportion as this temper prevails.

I bless thee, O my God, for any experience I have of thy grace in this respect; that thou hast opened mine eyes to see thee, and disposed my heart to own and honor thee, in all thy dispensations. Help me to do it more and more, may I have a deeper sense of thy perfections and excellencies,

* Mr. George Trosse.

and more clearly discern the traces of them in all thy works and ways.

I would own and adore thy hand in the *common enjoyments* of life : in daily safety and supplies.—Of thee I would, day by day, ask my daily bread, depending on thee for thy blessing with it.—I would own thy providence in my outward prosperity, and bless thee for any success in my worldly affairs.—I desire also to own thy providence in my *adversity* ; knowing that no affliction cometh by chance, but that all is thy wise appointment ; that thou hast the management of every trial, as to the matter, the measure and continuance of it ; and that “ all things shall work together for good.” If thou sendest a thorn in the flesh, and triest me in any of my dearest enjoyments, I would submit to thy will, and adore the wisdom and the grace of thy dispensations. “ Blessed is the man whom “ thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy “ law.”

I would acknowledge thy providence also in *public affairs* ; in all the troubles and revolutions of kingdoms ; knowing that whatever projects men may form for themselves, the Almighty sovereign of the world is still carrying on his wise and great designs. “ Thy counsel, Lord, shall stand, and “ thou wilt do all thy pleasure.” I will not therefore be afraid, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, but will wait for thy salvation.

In the affairs of the *Church* also, I would eye thy hand : in its oppressions, persecutions and declensions, as well as in its deliverances, enlargement and prosperity. I would view all these things respecting the public, as well as the affairs of my family and relations, with a calm composed

mind; endeavouring to attend to my own part, to discharge my duty, and to leave the rest with thee, who art "righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works."

Thus, O my soul, employ thy devotion: thus *walk with God*, and maintain a holy intercourse with him in all his providential dispensations; exercising such graces as are answerable to them, that thou mayest be essentially benefited by them all. Lord form my mind to this happy temper.— Teach me an habitual dependence upon thee; a cheerful submission to thee; a holy complacency in all thy ways; believing that whether I receive good or evil, thou wilt order all for the best. And I would ever esteem that to be the best, which is best for the SOUL, best for ETERNITY.

MEDITATION II.

On the improvement of Time.

THE due improvement of time is a matter of high importance, in various views, and is a great point of religion. I have many arguments that press upon me great caution and care in this matter.

Time is short, uncertain, continually passing away, and can never be recalled. It ought to have peculiar weight with me, that the time allotted me in this world is my day of grace and trial for an eternal state. If therefore I entirely lose my time, I lose eternity. If I lose part of it, even *that* is an eternal loss in its consequences.— A day lost on earth, may I not say, is an age lost in heaven?

"As a man soweth, so shall he also reap. He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly;

“but he that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully.” Now is my seed-time: my opportunity of preparing for futurity. The more I fill it up with duty, the fuller harvest of joy and blessedness shall I hereafter reap. Help me, O my God, so to believe this as to live for eternity. Enable me so to redeem my time, that my review of it at death, and my account of it after death, may be with joy, and not with grief. In order to this I propose to myself the following expedients.

1. I would endeavor to get my mind affected with a just sense of the narrow limits of my life, and of that time in which I may properly be said to live.* I will allow threescore years and ten to be, as is commonly reckoned, the life of man. But out of this sum I must make a deduction of fourteen years for infancy and childhood; for few comparatively begin to live to any good purpose before that age, and most not till long after; which will reduce the seventy years to fifty-six. One fourth part at least of this sum must be allowed for sleep, in which all action and thought are suspended; so that only forty-two years remain for active life, including business, recreation and necessary refreshment; for the two last of which one-tenth part of the whole will not be thought too much, and then the remainder will be little more than thirty-six years, to be employed in all the serious business of life, including the duties of devotion and religion.

If but a small deduction be made for occasional interruptions, one HALF of human life, calculated at seventy years, will be all the time remaining, in which we can be properly said to LIVE.

* A small variation is made in the author's calculation.

And now let me seriously recollect, how much of that scanty period is already gone! and how large a proportion of it has been absolutely wasted in immoderate sleep, in unprofitable visits, in unnecessary recreations, and in mere idleness.— Consider this, O my soul, and be humbled, awakened and quickened. Be up and doing: trifle no more: work while it is day. “ Lord teach me so
“ to number my days that I may apply my heart
“ unto wisdom!”

2. I would consecrate all my remaining time to God, and endeavour that it may be sacred to him. By this means I may correct the former calculation and in some measure retrieve the time that has been lost. I would make all my duration properly LIFE, whether I eat and drink, or sleep or trade, by “ doing all to the glory of God,” managing all according to the rules he has prescribed, and being solicitous to please him in every thing. Thus, common actions will receive a religious stamp, and be a sort of homage paid to God: for (as one observes*) ‘ God hath not only permitted
‘ us to serve the necessities of our nature, but
‘ hath made this to become part of our *duty*; so
‘ that if we, by directing these actions to the glo-
‘ ry of God, intend them as instruments to con-
‘ tinue our persons on his service, he, by adopting
‘ them into religion, may turn them into *grace*,
‘ and accept our natural actions as acts of reli-
‘ gion. And there is no minute of our lives, after
‘ we are come to the age of reason, but we may
‘ be doing *the work of God*, even when we most
‘ of all serve ourselves?’—Teach me, O Lord, this divine art! may my whole time be employed as a sacred, devoted thing; and may my natural acti-

* Taylor’s Holy Living.

ons and common business have *Holiness to the Lord* inscribed upon them.

3. I resolve to watch against such things as would rob me of my time. I would take care particularly that I do not waste it in bed by unnecessary sleep. I would guard against idleness of every kind, through the day: either living without business, slothfulness in business, or engaging in foreign and useless business: for I may lose my time and my life though I be *very busy*, if that business be out of my proper calling, and interrupts that service which providence has appointed me. I would also avoid unprofitable *visits*, as well as needless *diversions* and entertainments, in which much precious time is often wasted, and resolve to spend no more of it in these things than will answer some valuable end to myself or others.

4. I propose to divide the time of every day into parts; allotting a due proportion to its several businesses. It was the practice of a certain pious Christian to distribute his twenty-four hours into three parts, allowing one portion of eight hours for sleep, meals, company and relaxation: another for the work of his particular calling; and the remaining eight hours for the special service of God and religion; reading, meditation and prayer.—It is said of *Grotius*, who spent his days in an insatiable pursuit of learning, that on his death-bed he wished himself in the place of this his devout neighbour, exclaiming *Heu vitam perdidit operose nihil agendo!* “Alas! I have wasted my life in laborious trifling.”

Though the same division of time may not suit *me*, and I would not be scrupulously exact in such matters, yet some rules of this sort will be expedient, that one employment may not engross

too much of my time, nor encroach too much upon the just demands of another. A certain number of hours I would allow for sleep, refreshment, company and exercise; and as many for the duties of my calling as, upon a due consideration of my circumstances, they appear to require. And I would resolve to leave a due proportion of my time every day for the exercises of devotion, [private and social; as also for doing good to others.]— I would also resolve to improve the time appropriated to religion with the greatest care and diligence; especially on the Lord's day. I would wholly exclude the world out of that sacred time, and make the best use of it I can for another world.

5. I would be careful not to lose the short *intervals* of business or devotion, but employ these remnants of time for some useful purpose. Betwixt the 'more stated employments of human life,' says the excellent Mr. *Boyle*, 'there usually happen to be certain intervals of time, which, though they are wont to be neglected, as being singly inconsiderable, yet, in a man's whole life, amount to no inconsiderable portion of it. Now these parentheses, or interludes, are wont to be lost by most men, for want of a right value for them, and even by good men for want of skill to preserve them. Goldsmiths and refiners are wont carefully to save the very sweepings of their shops, because they contain some filings or dust of those rich metals, gold and silver. I see not why a Christian should not be as careful not to lose the fragments of *Time*, a thing incomparably more precious; the improvements of which may redeem so many portions of our life, and turn them to pious uses, particularly to the great advantage of devotion.'

O my soul! study this frugality. Time is short: do not throw any of it away. "Walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise; *re-deeming the time.*" Fix thy rules, and quicken thyself to the observation of them, by a frequent and near view of eternity. Often call thyself to an account for thy time: enquire how it passes, how much of it thou hast lost, and by what means; and contrive in the best manner thou canst how to save and improve what remains. Lord be thou my guide and instructor herein. Make me *wise to consider my latter end*, remember that on my TIME depends my ETERNITY.

MEDITATION III.

On the Christian's Ambition.

MOST men have in them something of ambition; which is an intense desire of rising in the world; of being more honourable or more happy. This, in different persons, is different according to their different notions of things. The ambition of most is directed to mere worldly objects: how to raise or encrease an estate; to aggrandize themselves and their families; to get preferments, titles, honour and reputation among men; to enrich their posterity, and raise them to stations of grandeur and affluence. For these purposes they are ever forming projects, and are unwearied in the prosecution of them. We often see them sell their children's souls, as well as their own, for a little earthly grandeur or wealth, and advantageous connexions in the world. The generality indeed seem as if they thought that all there is in the world, and all they have to mind, is gratifying "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." Thus blind and besotted are the multi-

tude of rational creatures: they are pursuing vanity and shadows; and according to their success they applaud themselves, and are applauded by others. "Men will praise thee, when thou doest well for thyself."

But the Christian's ambition is of another kind. It is said of *Luther*, 'That he knew of no ambition but what concerned the service of God.' The true Christian has nobler views than the man of the world: he has chosen another sort of happiness, and is breathing after higher and more excellent things. He is in some measure "crucified to the world, and the world to him." His affections are set on things above, and his ambition is employed about the attainment of them. In order to this he is anxious to please God to be accepted of him. This is the one thing his soul desires, and that he is resolved to seek after all the days of his life. In comparison with this all other things are cyphers and vanity.

More particularly: the Christian is ambitious to obtain a more complete conquest over his sinful passions and irregular desires. He is desirous that pride, envy, malice, and all the vices of the flesh and spirit, may be wholly rooted out of his nature, and that he may "perfect holiness in the fear of God."—That he may be strengthened with all might by the spirit in the inner man, so as to have ability and readiness for every good work: for the services of religion in general, for the duties of his special office and relations in particular, and for all the works of piety and charity to which he is called. In short, that he may be fitted to do or to suffer; to converse with God and man agreeably to his sacred profession.

He is ambitious always to keep possession of

himself: to preserve serenity and composure of mind under all events: neither to be elated by prosperity, nor depressed by adversity; but to pass through every state with indifference; bearing either applause or reproach with an undisturbed mind, under a lively sense of the hand of God in every thing, and the eye of God continually upon him. He is ambitious to be like Christ his Master, who was the same when the multitude hailed him, with her hosannahs, as when they reviled and insulted him. Glorious attainment! Could the Christian acquire this equanimity, he would triumph in it more than *Alexander* in all his victories.

Again: the Christian is ambitious to live in a constant acknowledgment of God, and submission to his will, in all his providential dispensations, and in communion with him in his ordinances; to preserve an habitual devout frame of mind; to taste the pleasures of divine worship, secret and public, as the season for it returns: to enjoy the divine presence in it, and maintain lively intercourse with his God: “to see his power and glory in the sanctuary,” [and to experience the happy practical effects of all the instrumental duties of religion.] He is ambitious that he may have his love increased both towards God and man: that he may possess a more extensive, catholic, divine charity: a heart to love enemies, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good.

The true Christian is further ambitious, if he be a *Parent*, that “his children and household after him may keep the way of the Lord;” may have “Christ formed in them;” may be found walking in the truth, and may partake of the high honour and dignity of being useful members of the Christian church. How doth he “travail in birth” for

this purpose, beseeching the Lord day and night with tears ! and how doth he rejoice and triumph if, in any instances, he sees the success of his prayers and labours !

These and the like are the objects of the Christian's ambition. While the men of the world are intent only upon some earthly good, his heart is supremely fixed upon nobler objects : such as are spiritual, divine and heavenly. If he can succeed in these, all is well and nothing can come amiss to him. Let the world revile him, let friends forsake him, let relations disown him, if heaven smile and God lift up the light of his countenance upon him ; this puts gladness into his heart, and gives him a triumph over all adversity.

Thus it is with Christians of eminency, [and thus it ought to be with all. Thus may it be with me !] O my God ! regulate my affections and direct them to their proper objects. If my soul be but in health and prosper, and my religious affairs succeed well ; as to *other* things, estate, reputation, outward comforts, &c. I have nothing to say : they may be good or evil, and will be so, according as they suit me, or as they are used by me, and therefore I leave it in a wiser hand than my own, either to give or deny them. Lord chuse thou for me *what* thou wilt, and *as* thou wilt. Only grant me thy presence and favour, and it is enough. *Deus meus et omnia.* " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth that I desire besides Thee."

MEDITATION IV.

On the religious education of children.

FATAL are the mistakes which multitudes run into in this momentous affair. The common methods of education seem to have nothing of God or religion in them. How different was that of Abraham, concerning whom God said, "I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Let this be my solicitous care, my constant and faithful endeavour. It is true, I cannot give my children grace, and make them religious; but as God has appointed me my duty to use the means, so he has encouraged my hope of success. A religious education, if it be truly such, in all its branches, is often followed with his blessing, and that blessing may ordinarily be expected; according to *Prov. xxii. 5.*—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old" [i. e. when he is grown up] "he will not depart from it." Lord help me to attend to my duty herein, and leave the event with thee.—In this great concern, I propose to myself the following rules.

1. To be serious and solemn in devoting my children to God in baptism.* Many seem to consider baptism as only giving a name to their children, and make it merely a season of feasting and merriment; or at best a matter of form; a compliance with an established custom, leaving out what is most essential to the ordinance; which I con-

* Those who do not approve of *Infant Baptism* may apply this to that *Dedication* of children which may be, and often is made, independent of it.

sider to be the solemnizing a family covenant; that is, the Christian covenant made with believers and their families; owing their relation to God the Father, to his Son and Holy Spirit; inserting as it were, the names of their children into God's covenant, and dedicating them to his service. How important a business is this! and with what seriousness should we go about it! I desire to be humbled for past remissness, and to be more serious and devout in future transactions of this kind.

2. I purpose to be early and constant in the proper methods of instruction: particularly to inculcate and impress upon the minds of my children a deep conviction of the worth of the soul; the certainty of a future state; the importance of eternal things, and the vanity of this world and all things temporal. I would instil into them a high veneration for the holy scriptures, recommending it to them to make the Bible their chief study and delight, as it has been with good people in all ages. The Jews were commanded, *Deut. vi. 7*, diligently to *teach the words of the law* to their children: and, however defective they were in other things, their zeal in this was very commendable. *Josephus* tells us, 'their children were trained up in the knowledge of the law from their infancy, and were so expert, that they knew every thing therein as perfectly as their own names.' Accordingly we are told, that Timothy "knew the holy scriptures from a child." Nor were the primitive Christians less careful in this matter. The Bible, especially the New Testament, was the grammar of their religion, in which their young catechumens were well grounded. *Jerom*, in one of his epistles, giving directions for the education of a young lady of noble family, advises, 'that as soon as she was capable,

‘ she should learn the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes ; next, be taught the four gospels, and have them always in her hand ; then get the Acts and Epistles by heart, and after this pass on to the reading of the Prophets.’ How little is there like this in the present discipline of most families ! Music, dancing, plays, novels, light poetry, &c. are looked upon as forming the chief accomplishments of young persons : which doubtless is one great cause of that degeneracy of which we so much complain in the professors of religion.— Consider, O my soul, that in baptism thou enterest thy children in the school of Christ, and layest thyself under obligations to teach them his doctrine. Endeavour to do this with constancy and care. Put his book into their hands and help them to understand the important lessons which it contains.

3. I purpose and resolve to watch their tempers, and guard their manners. I would constantly recommend to them all divine and social virtues :—love to God and man in all its branches : sobriety, modesty and humility ; the government of their passions and appetites ; diffidence of themselves ; reverence of their superiors, especially their parents, ministers and instructors ; justice, truth and charity in their words and actions. When any symptoms of immoral, vicious inclinations begin to appear, I would set myself with resolution to suppress them, and by all the methods I can, to secure the distempers of their minds. For this purpose I would carefully observe and note down their more remarkable miscarriages, and not only give them suitable admonitions, but direct them to such texts of scripture where they may see themselves censured and corrected, [and where the opposite virtues are re-

commended.] To enforce all, I would add the sanction of my own authority, and with Abraham, *command* my children and household to attend to these things; restraining them by threats and punishments from what is evil, and encouraging them by proper rewards in well doing.

4. I purpose, at particular times, to address them in a more solemn manner about the affairs of their souls; to warn them of the dangers to which I may see them exposed, and recommend a serious regard to religion in all its branches, by the most cogent motives. I would particularly urge upon them a personal covenanting with God, at the table of the Lord, and afford them all proper helps and encouragements in this important service.

5. I purpose to exercise the greatest possible care in disposing of my children in the world.— I would direct them in the choice of their callings, of their masters, of their conjugal relations, and the whole of their affairs, with an entire subserviency to their religious interests. O, that I may not, by carelessness in these matters, destroy what I have been building; and after having devoted my children to God, sacrifice them to mammon, as is too commonly the case, and barter away their souls for a little worldly advantage. What is this but to imitate those wretched idolaters spoken of, *Jer.* xxxii. 35. “ who caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch.”

6. I will endeavour to enforce all my instructions by my example. I would take great care, while I inculcate on my children a regard to religion, not to neglect it myself, and thereby prevent the efficacy of my doctrine. While I talk to them of moderation, humility, self-denial, &c.

I would be careful that I do not indulge the contrary vices. While I recommend to them the government of their passions, I would see to it that I do not give a loose to my own. If I indulge myself in reviling and backbiting others, or take a liberty in doing before them any thing which I warn them against, this can have no other tendency but to defeat all my instructions and make the young pupils despise them as words of course, and religious cant, or to make them hypocrites. Parents should be able to say to their children, as the apostle did to his converts, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you. Those things which ye have heard and seen in me do."

I resolve to look up to God in daily fervent prayer, for his instruction to accompany and succeed mine. And I would set some particular times apart for more solemn intercession on the behalf of my children; begging of God to direct me in my conduct towards them, especially when I am about to give them any special advice or admonition, that he would prepare their hearts to receive it, and make it effectual. The more we acknowledge and depend upon God in these, as well as all other affairs, the more success we are likely to find. *Ambrose* told *Monica*, the mother of *Austin*, who had been so importunate for his conversion, 'that a son of so many prayers could not miscarry.' It is true, the most fervent prayers for children are not always successful; but sometimes they have been answered [when accompanied with other suitable means] in very glorious fruits, which have proved the best inheritance to children, after their pious parents have been laid in the dust.

Help me, O my God, with wisdom, zeal and patience, to attend to every part of my parental

duty! May I “walk within my house with a perfect heart.” While so many are seeking great things for themselves and their families in this world, I would seek for me and mine, things of a more excellent and durable nature. While they project how (as they express it) *to make a man* of this or that child, I would be solicitous to make every one of mine a *Christian*. Lord grant me to see the travail of my soul herein, and I am satisfied. I have nothing greater to ask for them.

MEDITATION V.

On glorifying God.

It is agreed among Christians, that the ultimate end of man is God himself, and that “whatever we do, we should do all to his glory.” But though this is often talked of, few comparatively seem to have a just and distinct notion of the thing—what it is to glorify God. It certainly is not to make him more glorious than he is: this neither men nor angels can do. But it is to conceive and express a just sense of his excellency, and to maintain a conduct answerable to the several perfections which we acknowledge in him.—For instance,

We glorify his *power*, when we celebrate the displays of it in the works of creation and providence, and when we rely upon it for the performance of all that he hath promised. Thus Abraham did, when “against hope he believed in hope,” respecting the birth of a son. He staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, believing that he who had promised was *able* to perform, and herein he is spoken of as *giving glory to God*. Thus the three Jewish youths glo-

rified the divine power when they set it against the threats of the haughty monarch, saying "the God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us out of thy hand."

We glorify his *wisdom* when we attentively notice the various manifestations of it, and when we implicitly acquiesce in his providences, even though we do not understand the design of them; believing that all which God doth is well done, and cheerfully resigning ourselves to his conduct in all things.

We glorify his *mercy* when we make that one refuge under a sense of guilt, believing that it is sufficient to pardon the greatest transgressions, that he will do this according to the scheme of the gospel covenant.

We glorify his *omniscience* and *omnipresence*, when we set him always before us, and live "as seeing him that is invisible;" when we are as attentive to those parts of religion which are concealed from the view of man, as if all was transacted upon the open theatre of the world, and when the thought of his presence restrains us from those sins which have the temptation of privacy.

We glorify his *holiness* when we behave ourselves with becoming lowliness and self-abasement before him, under a sense of our impurity, and at the same time feel and express an earnest desire to be conformed to his image, and to be holy as our Father in heaven is holy.

[We glorify his *faithfulness*, when we trust in his promises, firmly relying upon the accomplishment of them, and at the same time imitate Him by our strict regard to truth in our words and actions.]

Further: we glorify God in his *providences*, when we eye his hand, own his sovereignty and justice, his wisdom and goodness in every dispensation, and dutifully submit to his will, whatever he appoints for us.

We glorify him as the moral *governor* of the world, when we are attentive to his laws, as contained in his written word, when we esteem them according to their excellency, as holy, wise, just and good; when we make them our study and delightful meditation, our monitors, and the rules of conduct; submitting to his authority therein at all times and in all things.

In short, we then glorify him as God, as the most excellent of all beings, when our greatest ambition and constant endeavor is, to love him, to serve him, and to be like unto him.—When we are solicitous above all things to obtain his favour, esteeming “his loving kindness better than life;” when we are more concerned to please God than to secure any interest in the world; when we receive all our outward comforts as his gifts, and consecrate them all to him; desiring to improve them to his honour, and in all our common transactions, study to approve ourselves in his sight as those who are accountable to him, we then glorify God *inwardly*.

And we glorify him *outwardly*, when we give others occasion to praise and honour him. When we shew our esteem and reverence for God, not only in our words, but in a uniform course of actions; publicly worshipping him in a reverent and devout manner, expressing a warm but discreet zeal for his name and his cause; a readiness to vindicate his honour at all times, and to imitate him in acts of justice and mercy; in these in-

stances we “let our lights shine before men, and “thus we glorify God,” by occasioning them “who behold our good works, to glorify our Father who is in heaven.”

O, my soul, let this be thy care and ambition, thus to honour God in thy thoughts, words and actions: to maintain a due sense of his excellencies thyself, and to make a just representation of them to the world. In all my ways and understandings let me acknowledge him, and “whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, let me do all to the glory of God.” Nor let me neglect to offer him that tribute of praise and thanksgiving which is justly his due, and by which he esteems himself honoured; for he hath said, “He that offereth praise glorifieth me.” To him would I give the glory of all that he hath done for the world and for the church: for his people in general, and for me in particular; for “by the grace of God I am what I am.”

In short, let me make GOD my ALL, and his glory my end in all. In order to this I need not disregard my own interest; for that is always consistent with God’s glory. He that truly honours God will most effectually serve himself, and secure his own salvation. Lord assist me in this great concern. Fill my mind with a sense of thy excellencies, and enable me to walk worthy of thee; by my lips and in my life, “shewing forth the virtues of him who hath called me; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever.” Amen.

MEDITATION VI.

On the several ages of life.

I WAS in company the other night, when it was debated,—What age of life is the most desirable? Such a question is indeed with most persons easily resolved, who can think of no age with any satisfaction but the vigour of youth. One person was mentioned, who has scarcely reached forty years, and yet has been heard to express his concern that he was so far advanced, as to be likely soon to suffer an abatement of his pleasures.—*I am on the wrong side Fifty*, is a common expression with persons past that age, which, though sometimes uttered with an air of jesting, shews the inward sense of the speaker. The thought of approaching old age is terrible to most: And indeed, were bodily pleasures the proper happiness of a reasonable creature, there would be some reason for it; because, as the body grows old and decays, the pleasures of it must of course decay also. On which account there cannot be a more deplorable case than that of a poor old sensualist, who knows no life but the animal.

The conversation led me to consider with myself, what age of life ought to be esteemed by a wise and good man as the most valuable; for in different periods there is certainly a great diversity. We do not come into the world in our full stature and capacity, and die in the same state; but pass through the different stages of infancy, childhood, youth, manhood and old age. How to fix the precise limits of each is not easy, nor of much consequence.—*Infancy* is the first and shortest stage of life, to which we may allow four or five years.—*Childhood* may be extended to twelve; at

which time, according to the Jewish doctors, persons begin to be *sui juris*, capable of making vows, [and coming under the yoke of the law, &c.]—*Youth* reaches to about twenty years,—and *manhood* extends to the time when the vigour of nature begins to be impaired; which is most commonly the case before sixty, and from thence *old age* creeps on us.

The question is, Which of these periods ought to have the preference? *Infancy* has certainly no claim to it; the *man* can scarcely be said then to live, though the animal doth. In the next stage, *childhood*, reason begins to blossom, and the mind to open. In the following, that of *youth*, the mental faculties gradually exert themselves. But how low is our reason, and how weak our judgment! “When I was a child,” says Paul, “I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child;” and with how much infirmity that is attended, they who have passed that state and “put away childish things,” well know. And though youth has a little more of the rational than childhood, yet innumerable are the follies and dangers which attend it. So few get through this stage without ruin, or at least great injury, that no wise man, when he looks back upon it, would desire to return to it again. The paths of youth are slippery paths. Whatever young persons may think of themselves, their thoughtful friends cannot but observe them with pity and fear. They generally esteem themselves very wise, though they are without experience, rash in their judgments, peremptory in their resolutions, impetuous in their desires, and eager in their pursuits; so that they do little which will afford matter of pleasing reflection in more mature age, and much that will require repentance. Often we see them take such steps as lay the foundation of many sorrows in

after life. So that we must approve Solomon's censure, "Childhood and youth are vanity."

The next period, that of *manhood*, may be thought the best of our time; and it is granted that it has many advantages above the preceding; but not without much alloy. Great part of it is usually spent before we get rid of that foolish dream of an earthly happiness. We busy ourselves a great while in realizing the fine scenes which we had painted in our imaginations, or in pursuing other objects equally vain: for what difference is there between him that dotes upon a bag of money, [or a title of honour] and him that plays upon a hobby-horse?—save that the grown child is the more childish. So that on the whole, (a religious temper being supposed, which the former years best serve to introduce) I cannot but reckon the latter stage of manhood, between *fifty* and *sixty*, preferable to any other, and the most important period of life. Youthful heat is long since spent; the judgment is come to full maturity; the world has shewn itself an impostor in all its forms. By this time, if ever, we shall be convinced how little it can contribute to true happiness. Some more eminent degree of mortification, and of experience in religion may now be expected, as well as a greater stock of knowledge. On these and some other accounts, I must disapprove the common saying, That a person turned of fifty years is on the *wrong side* of that age. I should call it the *right side*; not only as he is nearer heaven, but as he is in his most improving age of life.

As by the good providence of God I am now brought to this period, I would endeavour to take the advantage of it, and improve it as my best opportunity for religion, and for preparing for another

world. Lord direct and assist me by thy grace!
In order to this I purpose,

1. Seriously to review the former stages of my life: to consider my dangers, my mercies, and my sins. I thank God that I have not religion now to begin, and that I have hitherto been kept in the practice of it. I have indeed taken many false and foolish steps, in every age, which I have reason to weep over; but blessed be God, I have not "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience."— Though much has been amiss, and I now see might have been mended, I desire to be thankful that things are no worse. It is a pleasure to me to think that I have got so far through life, with some comfortable hope of heaven. Adored be divine grace! I should be loth to go back again, unless I were sure to escape the follies I have run into; much less would I desire it for the sake of youthful pleasures. I know by woeful experience, how vain and deceitful they are, and am thankful that I am delivered from them. I am not inclined to cry out with the poor old sensualist, *O that I were young!* I have a nobler prize: may I constantly press forwards towards it.

2. I would endeavour to disengage myself from the world, to withdraw my affections from it, and to be getting it out of my hands as much as my circumstances will allow, but especially out of my heart. I leave others to pursue projects for this world; it becomes me to be taking my leave of it, and to be turning my thoughts another way, towards "a better country, that is the heavenly."

3. I purpose to correct, as far as I can, my former mistakes; to mark and avoid the rocks upon which I have split, or have been in danger of

being wrecked. If I ought to learn wisdom and caution by the experience of others, how much more by my own.

4. I would regard this period of life as more especially due to religion. Let my juniors mind this world; my care should be chiefly about another. Life is short and hastening to a close. The present time is my harvest for eternity. Let me be up and doing before it is over. Let me now at last remember, "One thing is needful." I would be careful not to lose my time either by doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose, but employ it in such things as most directly concern my high calling, and will turn to the best account at last.— Lord direct me to my duty, and succeed me in it! —If I should live to old age, may it be a *good* old age, full of the fruits of righteousness. Save me from the common infirmity and disgrace of the aged, that of *covetousness*. Why should I pursue and hug the world when I am just ready to leave it? Nothing can be more incongruous. Keep me, O my God, from apostacy and declension. Take me under thy special conduct through the remaining part of my journey. May my path be that "of the just, which as the light of the sun, shineth more and more unto the perfect day." May my future time be wholly set apart for God, that I may have the comfort of it in old age, and review it with pleasure on a death-bed, and to all eternity. Amen.

MEDITATION VII.

On human Friendship.

SEVERAL late incidents have led me to reflect on the nature, principles and instability of human

friendship. When I consider the grounds upon which the generality proceed, and the motives by which they are actuated, I cease to wonder that friendship is often so uncomortable and so precarious. The foundation upon which it stands is often not only humour, whim, and fancy, but downright iniquity. Persons frequently recommend themselves to others by their vices. Many chuse the wicked of various descriptions as their chief companions, for no other reasons but because they are like themselves. How rare, alas! is virtuous friendship! founded upon real merit and goodness, cultivated and improved according to the rules of religion. How seldom is mutual and intimate acquaintance conducted according to the laws, and in subserviency to the ends of true friendship.

And how nice and fickle a thing friendship is, even where there appeared to be something right and commendable in the beginning of it. Sometimes our friends will desert us upon a very slight occasion, and if rightly understood, would appear none at all, but out of mere humour, and we can never learn why. Sometimes when we are intending the best offices of kindness towards them, and we are discharging our duty, according to the conviction of their consciences, as well as with the testimony of our own. If what we say or do interfere with any little interest of theirs, or the manner of it be not quite agreeable to their taste, there is an end of their friendship, and not only coolness, but enmity succeeds.

Let me learn wisdom and gain instruction by such instances as these, which so frequently occur, and especially by those which I have recently experienced. Lord be thou my teacher! As the best improvement of such events I would learn,—1. To

lessen my dependence upon men: according to that divine admonition. "Cease from man."—David once said, "All men are liars," i. e. defective, changeable and liable to deceive.—2. To be faithful in *my* friendships. From the resentment I feel at the unsteadiness and treachery I have experienced from others, I would be careful not to occasion the same in any.—3. To bear with as much calmness as I can, mortifications and disappointments of this kind. Such is the frailty of human nature, that I must expect them, and therefore should provide against them.—4. To make God my friend, who will never forsake or disappoint me.—5. To secure the testimony and rejoicing of my own conscience; and in order to that,—6. To keep on in the way of duty, with a generous neglect of the opinions, favour or frowns of others. Truth and duty should be dearer to me than the friendship of all the world.—7. To wait for the state of perfect love and friendship above. Lord assist me herein and teach me to expect less from the creature, and more from thyself. Thy acceptance and thy smiles are enough. If my friends approve and stand by me in the way of my duty, it is well, and I would be thankful. If not I desire to make myself easy. "My eyes are ever to the Lord: there is none on earth I desire besides thee. Thy loving kindness is better than life."

MEDITATION VIII.

On a singular instance of diligence in worldly affairs.

THE practice of a certain gentleman, who had raised a large estate by his own industry, was mentioned the other night in company, not without such

praises as are generally bestowed on those that "do well for themselves." He would be in his counting house by *three* o'clock in the morning, and abroad about his business by *six*, even on the coldest day in winter. But with me it lessened the value of such industry to consider, that it respected only the concerns of this world. Had this labour been "not for the meat which perisheth alone, but for that also which endureth to everlasting life," it had been something; but as it was, it appeared *magno conatu nihil agere*: taking a great deal of pains for nothing.

But, canst not thou, O my soul, learn something from it? How do such examples reproach my coldness, sloth and indifference, in the momentous concerns of another world! Shall men of business be thus resolute in the pursuit of this world? Shall they thus sacrifice their ease, and abridge their rest, to settle their accounts and manage their trades, and shall I feel no ardour in my work when I have infinitely greater things in view, even "the true riches," that perish not? that eternal weight of glory which is the prize of our high calling? Not only does this infinitely surpass all the gain of the worldling, but even the present improvement of one grace is far preferable to it. "The trial of *faith* is more precious than gold which perisheth." And communion with God is unspeakably more excellent, delightful and profitable than any thing about which the men of the world are employed. Shall the merchant leave his bed so early for the low work of casting up figures, &c. and shall I grudge redeeming a few minutes from sleep of diversions for conversing with heaven? At *three* o'clock in the morning in the counting-house! —but when in the ORATORY?

Think, O my soul, of the example of thy Lord and Master, who rose up a great while before day, and departed into a secret place and prayed.— Lord make me as wise for my soul as others are for their bodies, and when the account comes to be cast up at last, I know who will be the greatest gainer.

MEDITATION IX.

On candour towards the failings of good men.

AMONG the many trials which attend us in this state of imperfection and vanity, the failings of those I converse with, especially of good men, are not the least; and I think that I find a stronger sense of them, and feel myself more affected by them of late than I formerly did. Whether this be owing to *them* or to *myself*: whether they are more apt to shew their faults, or I to discern them, I wish to enquire. Possibly I may have acquired a quicker apprehension of what is good and what is culpable than I formerly had; and in this case among others, as Solomon says, “He that increaseth knowledge encreaseth sorrow.” But for my own relief, and in justice to my friends, I think myself obliged to ask myself—May I not often be mistaken, and carry my censure of some things in them too far? Possibly what I esteem a fault may really be none; or at least they may not apprehend it to be so. If it be a fault, they may not often be guilty of it: I may take them at a disadvantage, and see them in one of their worst moods. That way of speaking and acting may not be what they allow themselves in, and I do not know the resentment they have of it. I see the *folly*, but I do not see how they bewail it, and condemn themselves; possibly it may be

with more severity than I condemn them. We are very imperfect judges of the character of other persons, not being able to take in these and the like circumstances in their case, and therefore should not be forward to pass an uncharitable judgment.

Besides; if the persons whom I am apt to censure have their *infirmities*, have they not their *excellencies* too? And ought I not to look at the one as well as the other? which perhaps, if duly weighed, would by far preponderate.

It behoves me further to ask, Have not *I* my infirmities as well as others? Am not I conscious to as bad things in myself, as those I so much complain of in them? If not the very same, yet others equally culpable; perhaps more so. And why should I be so severe on the infirmities of other people, and so indulgent towards my own? I expected, in such and such persons, more wisdom and prudence, more gentleness and meekness, more charity and zeal for usefulness; more devotion of temper, and a greater decorum in their conduct: But, alas! how defective am I in these and many other things myself! Let me take myself to task, and apply our Lord's admonition:—"First cast the beam out of thy own eye, then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

I may not have been sufficiently apprised how much evil there is in resenting so severely the infirmities of my brethren. "The wisdom that is from above is gentle, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality," or (as bishop *Leighton* renders the word) *without critical severity*, in judging others. They that have most of this wisdom (says he) are least rigid to those

‘ that have less of it. I know no better evidence
‘ of the strength of grace than to bear with those
‘ that are weak in it.’ To the same purpose
says Fenelon; ‘ It is often our own imperfection
‘ that makes us reprove [uncandidly] the imper-
‘ fections of others. The passions of other men
‘ seem ridiculous and insupportable to him that is
‘ given up to his own. Divine charity makes great
‘ allowances for the weaknesses of others, and
‘ treats them with gentleness. It is never over-
‘ hasty in its proceedings.—Imperfect virtue is
‘ captious, censorious, sour, severe and implacable.
‘ Perfect virtue is always uniform, meek, affable
‘ and compassionate. It takes every burden upon
‘ itself, and thinks of nothing but doing good.’

How just are these sentiments, and how much
am I condemned by them! O for more of this divine
love and charity! I should then judge more favour-
ably of many around me, than I have been wont to
do. Had I more of the gentleness and kindness
of the gospel, I should see less of the infirmities
of other men, or should cast a veil over them, and
turn my resentments chiefly against myself.

O my God, form my heart to a correspondence
with the state of things with me, and around me.
I am compassed about with infirmities; my own
and those of others. The world lieth in wicked-
ness; and as for the church, it is a sort of hospi-
tal, where all are patients, and even the best are
but under cure. Two or three rules I would pro-
pose for the direction of my conduct.

As I would not cherish or overlook my own
infirmities, so I would not pass unnoticed the sins
and follies of others. Charity does not require it,
nor is there either duty or safety in it. Lot was
vexed with the filthy communications of the wick-

ed. David beheld the transgressors and was grieved. Paul mentions "with weeping" those who were "enemies of the cross of Christ, who gloried in their shame and minded earthly things." I am not required to deny or palliate the sins of bad men, or the infirmities of the good, but to maintain a just sense and abhorrence of them, and not think the better of sin and folly because of the characters of those in whom it is found. Nevertheless I would put as favourable a construction as I can upon their actions, and bear their real faults, [and even their offences against me] with patience. I would ever converse with mankind according to the law of charity, and endeavour as far as I can to heal the disorders of my brethren. I would be concerned rather to act the part of a physician than of a censor. At the same time I would carefully avoid or correct the like failings in myself, and patiently wait, and diligently prepare for, that blessed state above, where all imperfections in others and in myself, shall be done away. Lord afford me the influences of thy spirit.

MEDITATION X.

On Fenelon's implicit subjection to Church Authority.

I LATELY met with the life of Mons. de Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray, in which I found several things which shew a Christian grandeur and elevation of mind above what is common. I confess I was surprised to find such a man so wofully enslaved to church power and authority, as to sacrifice his reason and understanding to the dictates

of the pope.* But how hard is it to throw off inveterate prejudices, and the principles of education. There seems however a degree of ingenuity and honesty, even in this part of his conduct, that gives an honourable idea of the man, allowance being made for the notions in which he was brought up. As the Roman catholics believe the infallibility of the church and the Pope, they consequently acknowledge their decisions to be sacred and divine, and a full submission to be due. This is the sense he himself had of the matter. ‘My submission,’ says he, ‘was not a stroke of policy, nor a silence in respect to men, but an act of obedience to God alone. I looked upon the judgment of my superiors as an echo of the supreme will.—I heard God speaking as to Job out of the whirlwind.—“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” and I answered him from the bottom of my heart—“Since I have spoken unadvisedly what can I answer? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.”—And again, ‘I would rather die than defend a book, directly or indirectly, which I have condemned without restriction, in the sincerity of my heart, from a principle of docility and submission to the holy see.’

May not this instance of absolute resignation to the pretended head of the church, admonish me concerning my duty to the *true* head? His doctrines, laws and censures are all pure and divine, without the least mixture of error and infirmity. I know God has spoken by the Lord Jesus; but as for this man, the pope, I know not whence he is. O for a true docility to my great Lord and Master! May I bow my understanding to his authority! I may and should use it to find out the meaning of

* So as to recant all that he had written on a point of doctrinal controversy. ED.

his doctrines and laws, but must not set it up in opposition thereto. If he has taught or commanded any thing, it is enough. I would lay aside all cavils and would resign submit, believe and obey, entirely and without reserve.

How many fine strokes of piety and devotion do I meet with in this writer, among some that I cannot well digest. I am sensible I may borrow hints from him very much to my advantage. May I always be open to conviction and reproof, and ever be ready to receive the precepts of wisdom and virtue wherever I meet with them. Lord be thou my instructor!

END OF THE THIRD PART.

DEVOUT MEDITATIONS.

—:—
PART THE FOURTH.
—:—

ON VARIOUS SEASONS AND OCCASIONS.

—:⊙:—
MEDITATION I.

SATURDAY EVENING : *Reverence in the Worship of
God,*

By the good hand of my God upon me I am brought near the close of another week, and have the prospect of another sabbath. Among the duties that lie before me the ensuing day, those which concern public worship, are not the least considerable. It was, I presume, the chief end of God in the institution of a sabbath, that men might meet together openly to acknowledge Him, and pay their homage to Him. Upon the proper discharge of this duty, the sanctification of the sabbath, and the comfort of it, much depend.

Among other defects of which I have to accuse myself, one is—the want of due reverence in

the house of God, and of sufficiently considering that I am there in his more immediate presence.— O my God, forgive my past negligence, and help me, when I enter into thy courts to realize thy presence, and to behave myself as one under a deep impression of this truth *that thou art there*; reflecting with the patriarch—“How venerable is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”

It was one of the precepts which God gave the Jews, that they should “reverence his sanctuary.” There was doubtless, a peculiar holiness in that place, and a peculiar reverence due to it, founded on reasons peculiar to that dispensation. It was distinguished by the *Shechinah*, the glorious appearance above the ark, by which God manifested himself to his people in a peculiar and sensible manner. Accordingly sundry laws were prescribed to secure such a reverence to that place, as is due to no other.

It is certain that now, under the gospel, there is no such sanctuary, or holy place. That *holiness*, which was purely *relative*, ceased when the symbol of God’s presence was withdrawn. Men may consecrate places by forms and ceremonies, and may call them *holy*, but they can never *make* them so, in the same sense as the Jewish tabernacle and temple were. Nor is it necessary they should be in that sense holy; for we find that since the gospel dispensation commenced, *all* places were used for worship without distinction. So our Saviour has told us it should be, *John iv.* and so we find it was. Christ himself preached in synagogues; on a mountain; by the sea side; in a ship; in a private house. And so did his apostles. Under the gospel, “incense may be offered in every place.”—*Mal. iv. 11.*

But though places of worship are not now holy, there is undoubtedly a reverence due to them, or at least in them. They may still be called houses of God, as places of his special, spiritual presence, where we go to meet with God, and more solemnly to approach him. Where God is worshipped according to his own institution, he still "records his name," and we may expect the accomplishment of his promise, that he will meet his worshippers and *bless* them. Christ has promised "that where two or three are met together in his name he will be in the midst of them." That visible *Shechinah*, or glory, which appeared in the Jewish sanctuary, may be considered as typical of a moral, spiritual presence of God, under the gospel: of that greater measure of light, life and comfort, which devout men are favoured with in gospel worship.

O, my soul! reflect on this matter, and learn to reverence God's sanctuary. Look upon it as the place of God's spiritual presence, and let that consideration compose thee into a grave, decent, reverent behaviour there. Endeavour after a temper and frame that becomes one who is permitted to converse with God; a being of sovereign majesty and infinite purity. I would resolve particularly, to maintain holiness of manners and purity of heart. Under the law, strict orders were given not to approach God while under any bodily defilement, and such as presumed so to do were to be cut off. Let me ever remember that "the Lord our God is holy," and that "holiness becometh his house for ever." If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. If I allow myself in any defilement, my sacrifices will be an abomination to him. Let me therefore "wash my hands in innocence, and so compass his altar."

I would endeavour to get my mind filled with a sense of the greatness and purity of God, when I am going to his house; and when I enter into it I would direct my thoughts to Him as present, imploring his assistance and blessing. In the whole of his worship I would attend diligently and devoutly to the work I am about, keeping my eye fixed on God, and governing my outward deportment suitably to such a presence; carefully guarding against smiling, gazing about, sleeping, and whatever would appear inconsistent with the reverence which his worship requires. I would likewise guard my thoughts and affections, remembering that the God I worship "searcheth the heart" "and trieth the reins."

Lord assist me by thy grace! Favour me with thy presence, and fill me with thy spirit. May I "see thy power and thy glory in thy sanctuary: then shall my soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

MEDITATION II.

SATURDAY EVENING,—*Preparation for the Lord's day.*

TO-MORROW is a day set apart by the appointment of God for the solemn, special work of religion, for which I would now endeavour to prepare myself in the best manner I can. Lord assist me herein! They who object against the morality of the sabbath, and are for laying it common, certainly are not friends to themselves. I cannot but look upon it as a wise and merciful institution. Herein God hath joined our duty and our happiness. However it be with others, I am

sure I need such pauses as these in the pursuits of the world, and desire to be thankful that I am so frequently called off from the distracting business of this earth, to turn my face more directly towards heaven. O for wisdom and grace to improve my sabbaths aright, that every such day may prove a foretaste of my everlasting sabbath, and be as one of the days of heaven!

I purpose on the morrow to pursue the rules which I have prescribed to myself, concerning the several duties of the Lord's day, private and public, the neglect of which it becomes me to remember with self-condemnation. I would take care to lose none of the sacred time of that day, but diligently employ the whole of it in public or sacred devotion, or in works of mercy, so far as my health and strength will admit, and leave no intervals but such as may fit me to return to religious services with more advantage.

I would make a great account of divine worship, and would always have designs and views suitable to such weighty employment as I am called to through the whole of the day. It is a work of great importance I am about, when in the immediate presence of God, and transacting with him the affairs of my soul and eternity; it therefore becomes me to be in good earnest, and very solicitous about success therein.

I would resolve and endeavour duly to prepare myself for the work of every sabbath. With this view I would be early in my closet, striving to get my heart warmed with secret devotion, to awaken my faculties, to fix my attention to divine things, and bespeak the presence of God with me. I would beg his blessing upon the several services of the day, and upon the minister I may hear, whom I

would always affectionately recommend to God, that he may be helped in the delivery of his message, and that a suitable word may be directed to my heart.

I would be careful to join in all the devotions of the congregation, both in the prayers and praises that are offered up; and therefore would always make a point of being present *before* the worship is begun. I would also carefully watch against trifling in it, and not suffer my eyes or my thoughts to rove about, as I have too often done, but keep close to the work in hand, going along with the minister, and not only *hearing his petitions*, but giving my hearty *Amen* to them, and making them my own.

I will endeavour to make some advantage by every sermon I hear; which may be done when it is none of the best. If it be grave, solid and practical, though it have nothing new or extraordinary, I may improve by it, as I wish to relish and feed upon *known truths*. When I go to hear the word of God, I do not always propose new light, and further instruction, much less the entertainment of my *curiosity*, but rather the warming of my heart, and having my mind stirred up by way of remembrance. I would chiefly value such preaching as is fitted to rouse the conscience, and better the heart, rather than tickle the ear. The honourable Mr. *Boyle*, in a reflection upon a looking-glass with a rich frame, observes, ‘ Though the curious frame attracts and pleases the eye, it does not represent the image of the beholder’s face: so the fine expressions which many applaud in sermons have no power, like a good looking-glass to *shew themselves*, but divert them from regarding the more instructive parts of the discourse.’ Consider, O my soul, that devotion in hearing, and

practice afterwards, are the great ends I should have in view. Let me attend to this at all times, so as never to trifle in the house of God, and in the affairs of eternity.

I purpose to employ sometime every Lord's day-evening in reviewing what has passed in the day; in censuring what has been amiss: in impressing upon my heart what I have heard, and following it with suitable confessions, petitions and praises, and with pleasing contemplations on the blessed state above; where sabbath religion, and that essential part of it, *gratitude* and *praise*, will be better understood and better performed. Lord tune my heart more and more for thy worship on earth, and fit me for thy day approaching. Make me glad with thy countenance, and after a few more days attendance in thy outer court, may I be admitted "within the veil," to unite with the rest of thy saints in ascriptions of praise "to him that sits upon the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever!"

MEDITATION III.

SATURDAY NIGHT, before the Lord's Supper.

TO-MORROW is a solemn day: "the great day of the feast." It is a sabbath and a sacramental day. I ought to make it a busy day: O may I find it a good and comfortable one! The circumstances of the present time naturally lead me to some reflections and resolutions.

1. I desire to review the state of things with me. I thank God for the evidence I have of my sincerity in the Christian profession; so that I have not occasion to go through the whole process of self-exam-

ination. O that herein I may not be mistaken! "Search me, O God, and know my heart, and see if there be any evil way in me."—It is not, however, needless to employ some time in looking back on what has passed the last week and month, and since the last sacramental season, enquiring how I have spent my time? how I have improved my sabbaths? how I have managed my secular calling? how I have governed my passions and appetites? how I have performed the duties of worship? What victory have I gained over my infirmities? and particularly that which I have formerly confessed with so much sorrow, and to which I have had a peculiar reference in my prayers and vows at the table of the Lord?

2. I would endeavour to trim my lamp, and get my heart into a serious solemn frame, that in the services of God's house and table I may experience a holy warmth and intenseness of devotion. For which purpose, I would spend a fit proportion of time in suitable exercises of religion this night, and be early in my closet in the morning. Lord grant me thy presence and assist me by thy grace.

3. I would endeavour to preserve a joyful frame of mind through the work of the day, and particularly at the Lord's table. How great a dignity and privilege is it to sit there among thy children; to have the covenant of thy grace sealed and confirmed to me. Infinite grace! I know not which to admire most, the love that made the feast, or that has made me a guest. O, my soul! rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation. O that those woeful infirmities which hang about me were removed! that I could get rid of my sinful imperfections! However, since I know that they are not *allowed*, they need not hinder my gratitude and joy. I am in pursuit of a con-

quest over them, and shortly the victory shall be complete. In the mean time; I have in the ordinance before me no small encouragement. The cup which I there take, is "the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins." Though I am a sinner, I will plead the mercy of thy nature, the grace of thy covenant, and the blood of atonement. With triumph I would lay my hand on the head of the great victim.— "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died."

4. I resolve upon a life of holy obedience, and greater exactness therein. In order to which I would now examine what has been the state of things with me, and what it is at present; and consider how it ought and may be better for the future. Lord assist me herein, and quicken me in the course of my future obedience, that I may be "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And grant me thy presence and blessing in the work of the morrow, at thy table, and in all thy duties of the day; that I may go through them with freedom and cheerfulness, and in all be "accepted in the beloved."

MEDITATION IV.

LORD'S DAY evening.

THIS day I heard a sermon from *Luke xvi. 25.* *Abraham said, son remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.*

After some remarks upon the parable in general, it was observed, that in the text we have,

1. The name which Abraham gives to the rich man. He calls him *Son*. He does not revile him, how wicked soever he had been, nor call him any hard names. Whence it was suggested, how unbecoming it is for Christians to treat any, however unworthy, with terms of bitterness and contempt. Reproachful language never serves a good cause, and ill becomes the lips of a good man. Let me learn instruction from hence.

2. The different *conditions* of the persons spoken of in the parable, both here and in the other world. One had his good things here, and the other his evil things; the one was afterwards comforted, the other tormented.

3. An admonition to the rich man, to call to mind the former state of things both with himself and with Lazarus; and this as one reason of their different states in the other world. He puts him in mind that he had already had the happiness he chose; the good things which he valued most; whereas pious Lazarus had lived in poverty and sorrow. And he appeals to him concerning the equity of that distinction which was now made between them. Now he is comforted and thou art tormented. 'And is it not reasonable,' as if he had said, 'that it should be so?' several things were observed from hence: as,

1. That bad men often have a large measure of good things in this life, and good men a great share of evil things. Some account was given of the nature of both these.

2. That it is but just that a distinction should be made in the condition of both good and bad men hereafter: that the wicked who have received their good things in this life should be tormented in the

other, and that good men who have had their evil things here, should hereafter be comforted. The equity of this was argued, and the providence of God was vindicated against a common objection, grounded on the present prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous. Some notice was then taken of the advantages which good men have at present. With their evil things they have many good things which the wicked have not; but their superior happiness hereafter will be infinite and everlasting.

Let me endeavour a suitable improvement of what I have been hearing on this subject. Never more would I envy the prosperity of the wicked.— Their happiness is but a short blaze, or a dream. It is a poor relief to the rich man in hell that he once lived in pomp and pleasure, which was so soon over, and is now exchanged for torment. Let me cheerfully submit to such evil things as by the providence of God may be allotted as my trial here, believing that there is great wisdom, and even love in the appointment, and that they will soon be over, and then I shall be comforted. Help me, O my God, to bear thy discipline with a calm and cheerful mind, waiting for thy salvation. Direct me in the choice of a happiness that will be lasting. O let me not have my good things here! let not my portion be in this life. I leave the sumptuous fare, the purple and fine linen, to such as know of no better enjoyments. It is enough if I have thy divine supports in the evil things which I may suffer here, and the well-founded hope of a better and more enduring substance hereafter than this world is able to afford.

MEDITATION V.

LORD'S DAY evening.

I THIS day heard a discourse on *John xii. 26.* *If any man serve me let him follow me:* from whence the example of Christ was set before us for our imitation. It was promised, That he being an extraordinary person, there were some things in his conduct in which we cannot imitate him, and others in which we ought not to attempt it. It was then shewn wherein he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

In general it was observed, We are to follow him in his holiness, of which he was a perfect pattern. He was "the holy one and the just:" holy in his thoughts, words, affections and actions, and herein we are to endeavour to be like him.—More particularly,

We are to follow the blessed Jesus in his early piety, and filial obedience:—in his devotion and prayerfulness:—in his constancy, diligence and zeal in the work of God:—in his steady regard to the divine glory in all his actions:—in his contempt of this world, and all its honors and enjoyments. We are to follow him in his humility, patience and meekness:—in his charitable, forgiving temper, even towards his enemies:—in his peaceable deportment in the world:—in his benevolence and readiness to do good, both to the bodies and souls of men:—in his composure and evenness of mind under all occurrences, which prevented his being ruffled by hurry of business, or by ill usage, or elated by applause. We are to follow our blessed Lord in his intire resignation to the will of God:—in the spirituality of his temper, which led him to

improve every occurrence to the purposes of religion:—and finally in his fervent desires after heaven, and his constant pursuit of the glory and blessedness which awaited him there.

The duty, reasonableness, and advantages, of thus following Christ were then proved by various considerations, by which I am fully convinced of my obligations hereunto, and I desire to act accordingly. Lord help me by thy grace to make this the great business of my life. The Christian is *a follower of Christ*, and the more exactly he follows him the better Christian he is. We are “predestinated to be conformed to his image,” and in this conformity our meetness for heaven, and even heaven itself, very much consists, for “when he shall appear we shall be like him.”—O, my soul! frequently contemplate his glorious and beautiful example. Often set it before thee, and examine and govern thy heart and thy actions by it. In any doubtful case, or when under any temptation, ask thyself, How would Christ have acted in such circumstances? and act thou accordingly. Lord I bewail it that I am so unlike my great Master.—Transform me more and more into his image. Bless what I have heard this day, and teach me to profit by it, that “the same mind may be in me that was in Christ Jesus, and that I may walk as he walked.”

MEDITATION VI.

LORD'S-DAY EVENING.—*On an unprofitable Sabbath.*

I HAVE been favored with another sabbath, but, alas! how little improvement have I made by it! How little converse have I had with God in his

worship! how little have I exercised the true spirit of devotion! I have heard a sermon on *Psalms xxxii. 10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, &c.* in which the miseries of a sinful life were displayed! but how little was I affected! I would now recollect what I can, and preach it over again to myself, with deep contrition for my sinful neglects.

I have been much out of frame, and have grievously trifled through the greatest part of the day. I was very dull at prayer, and my attention was often dropped. And I slept several times under the sermon. Was this becoming a worshipper of the living God? Herein I affronted the minister and the whole congregation that observed me. I must have grieved the devout, and set an ill example to the careless, as well as lost my own part of the blessing.

I am not much at a loss to account for this woful miscarriage; for I have of late lost something of my tenderness of conscience, and zeal in religion. I have been more superficial than usual in secret duties, and less serious in my general course. I spent no time last night in preparing for the sabbath, and trifled away some hours, after the business of the day, in useless conversation. I lay in bed much too late this morning; and, though I prayed, I was very short and very cold. I went to the house of God in a careless frame, and talked as I went about mere impertinences. When I came thither I did not realize as I ought the presence of God, nor consider the importance of the work I was about, nor was I upon my guard against what might interrupt me in it. I lament my stupidity and inattention. How often have I smarted for such folly, and yet I am not reclaimed. Lord I would humble myself before thee, and pray, "for thy name's sake pardon the iniquity of my holy

“ things.” I would also rouse my resolution for greater care and watchfulness for the future. Lord afford me the powerful influences of thy grace, that I may for the time to come take more pains to prepare my heart for thy worship, and may wait upon thee without distraction, that I may “ see thy power and glory in thy sanctuary, and be made joyful in thy house of prayer.”

MEDITATION VII.

Thursday Evening.

I HAVE been hearing a sermon on *Psalm xv. 2.* — *And speaketh the truth in his heart.* The words were considered as an answer to the question, — “ Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?” Whence it was observed, That it is the necessary character of an approved worshipper of God, that he maintains an inviolable regard to truth : that there be a correspondence between his inward sentiments and outward expressions. Many things were urged to shew the evil of falsehood and deceit, and to recommend sincerity in the whole of our conversation, which I desire now to review and always to keep in mind.

O my soul ! receive the admonitions which have this day been given thee, and cultivate truth in the inward part. “ Let integrity and uprightness ever preserve me.” I am thankful for the conviction I have of the evil of violating truth ; Lord encrease my abhorrence of falsehood in every form, and ever guard me against all temptation to it. As a farther preservation against this mean, pernicious vice, I would resolve to mortify those passions from whence it ordinarily flows. As out of the heart proceed evil *thoughts*, so from the same fountain

proceed all evil *words*, and among the rest falsehoods. I would set myself against *pride*, which often indites our speech; and likewise against envy, malice and covetousness, which coin many a lie.— If I love the world inordinately I shall be in danger of exceeding the bounds of truth to promote my worldly interest; and if I hate my brother I shall be tempted to accuse him falsely.

I would resolve to do nothing that may need a falsehood to conceal or excuse it. If Gehazi's covetousness had not shamed him he would not have needed a lie to exculpate him. "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely." Let me never do any thing that is mean and dishonourable, nothing that will not bear the light, and then I shall have little temptation to lie, or prevaricate. I would maintain a lively sense of the eye of God as ever upon me, and always speak and act as in his presence. Lord I desire to set thee always before me, who understandest my thoughts as perfectly as others do my words. I would also learn to *think* before I speak, and resolve not to speak rashly, or much, since "in many words there wanteth not sin." I would likewise often think of the solemnity of a future judgment, when every secret shall be made manifest, and the liar and hypocrite shall be exposed before men and angels.

Lastly; I would frequently beg divine assistance herein. O my God, "remove from me the way of lying," and let the law of truth and kindness ever be on my lips. Help me to "take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." I lament my past miscarriages in this respect, and flee to thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Bless to me the instructions that have this day been given. "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, and cleanse me from secret faults." May I ever

think and act in thy fear, and always "speak the truth in my heart!"

MEDITATION VIII.

Thursday Evening.

I THIS day attended public worship, when the minister preached on *Matt. vii. 12.* *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.* As I found myself touched by the discourse, I desire now to recollect what I can, and make application of it to myself. The words were considered as an admirable rule, prescribed by our Saviour, for the due ordering of our conduct towards our neighbour. It was observed, that it is agreeable to the law of nature. It seems to be written upon the hearts and consciences of men; for every one that duly considers it, assents to it at once. Some of the heathen moralists discovered the equity of this maxim and recommended it. *Aristotle* being asked how men should demean themselves towards their friends? answered—'as they would wish their friends to carry it towards them.' *Isocrates*, among his admonitions to young men, gives this as one: 'manage thy anger towards those that offend thee, as thou wouldst judge becoming in others towards thyself offending.' However men may practise, they cannot but agree, that they ought to do as they would be done by.

It was farther observed, that this rule comprehends all the duty we owe to our neighbor, and therefore our Saviour says, "this is the law and the prophets." Whatever the law and the prophets have enjoined respecting social duty, is contained in this compend. In explaining the rule

it was suggested, that it is not to be understood, that our desire and will, however debased and depraved, is to be the measure of our acting towards others; but that whatever we desire them to do to us according to *right reason*, equity and charity, that we should do to them. So that in all our intercourse with our neighbor, we should change persons with him; put ourselves in his stead, and then act towards him as we would desire he should act towards us.

Many cases were mentioned wherein we should apply this rule. Persons should conduct themselves by it in their respective relations in life, as parents and children, masters and servants, &c. By this rule we should conduct ourselves in *judging* of other persons, and not to be more severe upon their faults than we should like them to be upon our own. We should treat their characters with as much tenderness as we would have them treat ours. We should exercise the same kindness towards others, and especially those in circumstances of want and affliction, that we could reasonably wish them to exercise towards ourselves, if we were in their condition and they in ours.— In all our transactions with others, in a way of *trade*, we should act with the same equity and honor that we desire and expect from them. And it was observed, that in matters of *religion* we should allow our brethren the same *liberty of judgment* that we claim for ourselves.

O, my soul! apply and approve what was said upon this subject. Study this admirable rule and let it govern thee in all thy department. It is said of the emperor *Severus* that he was so much pleased with this sentence in the gospel, that he caused it to be inscribed over the gates of his palace; and when he saw any of his soldiers com-

mitting spoils in the fields, he would reprove them, quoting this divine passage, and asking them whether they would like to have that done to them which they did to others? This rule is so equitable that I cannot violate it without the reproach of my own conscience, as unbecoming a man, and as a contradiction of my profession as a Christian.—O my God, I am ashamed to think how often I have done so, and how apt I have been to weigh myself and my neighbour in different balances. I would resolve, by thy grace, to exercise more impartial justice towards all mankind and to “love my neighbour as myself.” I would resolve to set this rule constantly before me in my intercourse with mankind, and consider myself *in them*, so as to offer them nothing that I should not like myself, or that I could reasonably object against. In any doubtful action I would have recourse to this great rule of my Lord and Master for my help in the decision. If it be a question whether this or that be just or charitable to my neighbour, I would substitute myself in his stead, and then determine to act according to that judgment. Lord give me wisdom to “judge righteous judgment:” Give me the spirit of love and of a sound mind, and help me to “exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards all men!”

* * The worthy author has added three more specimens of this useful manner of recollecting sermons and remarking upon them; but as there is nothing very distinguishing in them, those already given appear quite sufficient. It may be proper however, here to transcribe a note which he has subjoined, in which he recommends it to the reader to adopt the same method for himself.—“I am

“persuaded,” says he “a few sermons heard in this manner, with such reflections afterwards, and such self-application, will turn to a better account than a thousand heard in the way that I am afraid is common, when we are *like a man that beholds his natural face in a glass, and goeth his way, and forgetteth what man he was;* and therefore I cannot but earnestly recommend this method to the reader.”

MEDITATION IX.

New Year's day: 6 o'clock in the morning.

It having pleased God, in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways, to bring me to the beginning of another year, I desire to employ myself in suitable acts of devotion: To review the last year, and my conduct in it; to state accounts between God and my soul at the beginning of this year; and to lay down rules for my behaviour through it, if it shall please God to spare me this year also.

In the review of the last year, I find a great many mercies to bless God for. Mercy and goodness has followed me all the year; filled up every month and week and day of it. God has graciously preserved an unprofitable and worthless life; which I ought to be the more affected with, as it has been a year of great mortality. Many have fallen at my right hand and at my left, but the arrow of death has not reached me. Persons of various characters and conditions, of every age, old and young; many of my particular acquaintance, have the last year gone into eternity. The pious, judicious, useful Mr. A—, the hopeful young Mr. B—, have been cut off; and yet I, a poor cumberground am,

left. Lord what shall I render to thee for thy sparing mercy? If I should live another year, may I employ it well, chiefly valuing life as the seed-time for eternity.

The same kind providence has extended to my family also, and preserved it in health in the midst of sickness and death. A good measure of prosperity likewise has attended me in my outward affairs. I escaped a very great loss in my concern with * * which would have very much straitened me. I must think it a very kind providence that interposed in my behalf. Some special spiritual blessings also have I received the past year, and I desire now to revive the memory of them. I heard a sermon by Mr. C——, from which I hope I received much advantage. I have enjoyed the means of grace, sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, in an uninterrupted course, and not without some refreshments and consolations. I have also had some comfortable hours in my closet, and hope God has granted me more of the spirit of grace and supplication than I had before experienced. I have had some remarkable answers to prayer, in the course of the year, particularly on occasion of —— as recorded in my diary. And I would humbly hope I have made some advances in religion, having gained some victory over a sin that easily besets me. Nor would I forget the support and comfort I had under a peculiar trial which I met with in the past year.

I have some reason also to hope that I have been useful to others, particularly to * *, and I trust good impressions have been made on the heart of * *, a mercy which I have often sought with tears. Lord what shall I render? I have not words to express the sense I have of thy bounty, condescension and grace. In eternity only shall I

duly praise my God, but I would be attempting something, and do my best now. Lord assist me herein and accept my poor acknowledgments for the series of mercies that has run through the year past. Accept the sacrifices of a grateful heart, and accept my heart itself as the sacrifice.

But, O how many have been the sins of the year just closed! they are more than can be numbered. What might have been expected on my part for such mercies but love, gratitude, devotion and obedience? But I have not rendered unto the Lord according to his benefits. Alas! it has been far otherwise! My diary admonishes me of several miscarriages, and my conscience of more. I desire to set apart a day for self-examination, humiliation and prayer. At present I can notice only a few of the chief particulars. The first is the mispence of time; precious, invaluable time. How much of it has been wasted in sleep! How much of my waking hours has been squandered away in an undue pursuit of the world; in unnecessary idle visits; in unprofitable company and vain amusements! Was this living for eternity? O my soul! bewail thine inadvertency and folly. Weep over lost time, and especially *sacred* time.

How have I trifled in the duties of divine worship! those of the closet, the family and the assembly. How have I neglected my watch! How unguarded have been my thoughts, my affections and my language. I find myself still too much addicted to evil speaking and detraction. I have still cause to complain of pride and vanity. I yet feel too much pleased with the world, and attached to the things of this life; so that the thoughts of dying are ungrateful to me; though I can still say that I would not part with my prospects in another world, for a thousand such worlds as this.

Upon occasions of *trial* the last year, I have woefully failed of that faith, patience and resignation which become the Christian character. Lord pity and relieve a poor distempered creature, that desires now to lie at thy feet, waiting for thy salvation.

If God will please to afford me another year I purpose and resolve, by his grace, to watch against the miscarriages of the past; the temptations which I suffered most by, and the snares into which I have most frequently fallen; to pursue the good rules which I have heretofore set myself, and found to be of no small advantage. These I purpose to revise and reprove as I see occasion.

I purpose to lay by a due proportion of my income, the next year, for charitable uses.—As God has prospered me, and much increased my ability, I must increase my charity in proportion.—As I still find that I often fail in self-government, I resolve to be more upon my guard, and to set myself in the best manner I can, to mortify my own iniquity. O for some farther conquest this year! Lord help me by thy grace! Confirm my purposes, and strengthen me by thy spirit. Forgive the sins of the last year, and let me not bring the guilt of them into this. To thee I resign myself, and all my powers and faculties; my time, my life, my interests; all I have, and all I am. Lord accept me in the beloved.

MEDITATION X.

On returning home from a Journey.

As I have met with a variety of providences in this journey of several weeks, I desire to review them with suitable acknowledgments to God. Besides such mercies as may be reckoned common,

as safety, health, the enjoyment of friends, &c. there are some special favours which call for more particular remarks.

I had a merciful deliverance at * * bridge, a great part of which was under water by a flood—The horse's hinder feet slipt off the causey which leads to it, but he so recovered himself by a sudden spring, that I know not which surprised me most, the greatness of my danger or my deliverance. I could not but think I had help from an invisible hand, and reflected with pleasure and gratitude upon the words of the Psalmist, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." How many kind offices may they do for us, which we are not aware of! I remember I was that morning very particular in my requests for their protection. Blessed be God for the ministry of those benign spirits. But whether any of them were present to my assistance or not, I am sure I ought not to overlook the hand of God in it. "He delivered my soul from death, mine eye from tears and my feet from falling. May I walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

I hope I received some advantage by the different company and conversation I was engaged in, particularly at * * *. I find there are some conscientious men and savoury Christians in most places, though, alas! too few. But I perceive the same infirmities among other people as among my nearer neighbours. Folly, vanity and sin, prevail every where; the observation of which has been of use to me, particularly as it disposes me to bear the infirmities of those I am more constantly conversant with, and gives me some encouragement under a consciousness of my own, from which I shall not get free till I get among the inhabitants of heaven. Lord fit me for that blessed world!

On Lord's day, *June*—I lay at * * *, and there attended public worship. From the character of the preacher I expected something instructive, and took notes of the sermon. I hope I shall not soon forget the warm and serious admonition he gave his auditory against loving the world. Many things came close to my conscience. When I returned to my inn, I retired to my chamber, and found matter for some serious exercise, in which I hope I had the comfortable presence of God.—The next Lord's day I had no opportunity of going to church, unless I had spent too much time on horseback; and therefore I rather chose to keep at my inn, and make the best of my time in private; for I cannot approve the conduct of those who make no scruple to travel on the Lord's day, if they can but get to some church any part of it, and hear a sermon, or sleep while it is delivered. I am afraid this is only a pretence to excuse their real object, viz. getting forward in their journey. I hope my time in my retirement that day, was not wholly lost.

In my road on Thursday, having no company, I endeavoured to employ my thoughts on serious subjects, which God enabled me to do with some comfort and profit. When I came to * * I had the company of some relations, whom I had not seen for a long time. I found them in comfortable circumstances; and, what pleased me most, looking towards heaven. Blessed be God for it. But I am ashamed to think I was no more useful in my conversation with them. I want skill and zeal for discoursing with my friends, as would become me, for their spiritual good. When at * * I met with some men of loose principles, who gave free vent to their folly, and foamed out their own shame; when I had not courage enough to rebuke them, and to plead the cause of religion as I ought. In other instan-

ces I have been far from acting with that circumspection and decorum which became a Christian, but there has been too much levity, and often pride and vanity in my conversation.—My thoughts when riding alone, were frequently vain and idle, and sometimes worse. At * * I took too much liberty at my inn, and was very superficial in my devotion. One Lord's day I spent a great part of my time foolishly in sinful company. Lord forgive my manifold sins and neglect, at home and abroad!

I purpose for the future to act with greater caution. When I have a journey in view, I would spend some time in prayer with reference to it; imploring the divine presence, protection and blessing. I purpose with greater care to guard my thoughts when travelling alone, and improve my time to some valuable purpose. There is some truth in that saying, "*Every man alone is aut angelus aut diabolus: an angel or a devil.*" Lord help me to employ my solitary hours in conversing with thee and myself.—When I come to my inn at night I would soon retire, and acknowledge God in the occurrences of the day. In the company I meet with I would be cheerful and pleasant, but exercise caution against levity, and every thing in my words and actions unbecoming a professor of godliness, ever setting the Lord before me. I would always carry my religion with me, wherever I go, and in all my diversions as well as in my business.—When I return home, I would always review my journey, and take account not only of my expences, but of my sins and my mercies, with due acknowledgments of both, in solemn acts of devotion,

And now, O my God, I would present my grateful acknowledgments to Thee, for the goodness and mercy which have attended me in my late journey; and that when I came home I found all well. "I

“ will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart,
“ and will glorify thy name for ever more.”

MEDITATION XI.

On the Death of several friends.

SEVERAL of my acquaintances, and some of my intimate friends, have lately been removed into the other world; and more than one of them by a very short sickness. It would argue strange stupidity in me to let these events pass without any serious thoughts, many of which naturally present themselves to my mind.

I cannot but reflect on the distinguished happiness of my departed friends, while I lament their loss. They are safely landed and got home, where they are advanced to the services and enjoyments of the church above, while I am left behind, in a world of sin and sorrow, temptations and snares. Had I been as well prepared as they, surely my preferment would not have been delayed. We are apt to speak of departed saints in language of lamentation, as if this world was their chief happiness, and death was their greatest calamity. “ Poor man he is dead!” This is language which I do not understand in the mouth of a Christian. How odd for one to say, with an air of deep concern, when a mariner who had been long tossed at sea, and had just escaped a shipwreck, was safely landed—“ Poor man, he is got into his harbour.” Religion teaches us otherwise. “ Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.” And thus I ought to think of my departed friends. Having fought a good fight and finished their course, they are triumphing with their Lord, while I am yet in

the field of battle. However, I would esteem the continuance of life a mercy, in that I have more opportunity to prepare for eternity. Help me, Lord, to apply myself with diligence to my proper work, and I desire patiently to wait thy time for my dismissal.

The suddenness of the death of some of my friends brought to my mind a question which I have heard debated, viz. "Whether *sudden* death be an *evil*? and whether it be right to pray against it?" I apprehend that it is either desirable or otherwise, according to the state of things with us. To such as are well prepared, death can never be unseasonable, and the suddenness of it may be reckoned a great felicity to them; especially if the thought of dying had been the constant matter of terror to them, as was the case with one of my lately deceased friends. They went through the dark valley, scarcely knowing where they were. They had not time to view the enemy, the thought of whose approach had filled them with so much terror. Death stealing upon them in this manner, they fell without feeling his dart. So calm and easy the death of Moses seems to have been.—"Get thee up," said God, "to mount Nebo and die there:" and he died according to the word of the Lord, free from the violence of any distemper, as well as from any reluctance of his own mind.

This is another advantage of sudden death to good men, that they escape not only the dread, but the pains of dying, as well as the wearisome nights and days that attend a long illness, which are frequently more grievous than death itself—Nor is it any small consideration that they get away without passing through the forms of dying: without suffering the troublesome but fruitless attempts of

physicians and friends to detain them, and their bitter pangs of parting with their beloved kindred. Who would not chuse, if it so please God to pass immediately from action to honor, rather than wear out the poor remainder of a useless life in sighs and groans?

On the other hand, it must be granted, that a little warning may, in some circumstances, be a favour to good men, as it give them an opportunity for such services as may remain to be done, or want to be *better* done: trimming their lamps for the bride-groom's coming; taking a more solemn leave of their friends, and bearing their dying testimony to the excellence of religion. But after all, I desired to be entirely resigned in this matter, leaving myself nothing to chuse, but refer all to the great Lord and sovereign of life. The only thing I would be greatly concerned about is, that I may not be surprised, but be in a constant readiness. having my house and heart in order: that no work necessary for a safe and comfortable death may be left undone; that whenever the summons come I may be able to bid it welcome.

And, O that God would help me to make a right improvement of the late affecting providences. I think myself many ways a loser by the death of my friends; I may also, if it be not my own fault be a *gainer* thereby. In order to which I would follow them in my thoughts into the other world. Sometimes, I find myself, on doing so, ready to utter the wish, "O that I were with them!" I have had many hours of comfortable conversation with them; but how much better company would they be now, were I fit to be joined to their assembly.— Lord when shall it be? I would now contemplate, and endeavour to copy their excellencies.

How pious a man was Mr. A. B. how much mortified to the world, and how spiritually minded! He seemed to have no care but about his soul and eternity. He was so much above the world, that he was almost out of it before he died.—How useful a man was the judicious Mr. C. in the neighbourhood and in the church to which he belonged! He was not one of those that “mind their own things,” to the neglect of “the things of Christ.” He was “a lover of hospitality and of good men:” charitable to his enemies, and always faithful and affectionate to his friends.—How compassionate and devout was good Mrs. D.—How serious in worship, and with what peculiar devotion she used to join in singing the divine praises!—How meek, lowly and contrite was dear Mrs. E.—Every body could see eminent graces in her but herself. Indeed her bodily constitution disposed her to gloominess of mind, but her end was peace.—Other shining examples of all moral and Christian excellence have not long since been cut off, and some of them at an early period, being soon ripe for heaven. Lord pity a poor, worthless creature, thus left every way behind my friends: behind them in a dark sinful world, and behind them in temper and attainments. How unlike am I to some of thy servants whom thou hast taken to thyself! But thou hast “the residue of the Spirit.” Make me more like them, and that will be a good evidence that I am thine, and shall at last be with them. Help me to keep in mind and imitate their graces, and thus be a “follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Amen!

MEDITATION XII.

On meeting with a number of Libertines and profligate Infidels.

A FEW days ago I fell into company with some gentlemen (as they are called) who made a rude attack upon me, and upon religion. They presently began to cry out against *Priestcraft*, and to rail at the clergy as a pack of villains, who pretended to religion, only as a cloak to their pride, domineering spirit and avarice. One of them seemed inclined to accept a few modest and honest men among them; to whom another replied with an oath, 'I hate all priests, of all religions.' A third who would be thought the wisest man in the company, enlarged on the abuses which the common people have suffered by these impostors, 'who turn religion into mystery and nonsense. I am sometimes forced,' says he, 'to hear them, but I relieve myself as soon as I can, by falling asleep.' Then followed a high encomium upon *natural religion*, with some bold reflections upon the scriptures.—I was a little surprised at this conversation, having never heard any thing of the kind before, except by report.

But I thank God, I am not at all staggered by such impotent attacks, which I look upon as the raving of men out of their wits, or the last efforts of Libertines to get rid of a book that has been troublesome to them in the pursuit of their lusts.—I hope I am too well established in the belief of the bible, on a careful examination of its divine evidence, to have my faith at all shaken by a few flashes of wit, or by the most specious arguments of such men as these who, I am satisfied, find fault with the bible chiefly because it finds so much fault

with THEM. Did they but desire to know, [and impartially enquire] they would soon find it to be true. Their professed zeal for natural religion, I cannot but suspect to be mere pretence. They cry up *that*, not because they really value it, or live up to its rules (for then they could not despise the Scripture, where it appears in its greatest lustre) but because they can shape it according to their own inclinations and passions. Natural religion is, with them, just what suits their depraved natures. They think of God as “altogether such an one as themselves,” and would make every thing lawful which they desire to be so. They cannot think that ‘God will damn a man for taking a little pleasure, or that he would have given them such inclinations as they feel, if they might not gratify them.’ Here the word of God rises up against them with a clear light and the highest authority, and stands before them with a drawn sword. This is the true ground of their quarrel with it, and the chief cause of their enmity against the preachers of it. “They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”

Bless God, O my soul, who hath delivered thee from the delusions of these unhappy men, and kept thee out of “the chair of the scorner.” I need nothing more to convince me of the truth and excellence of the bible, than a serious view of the state of those who are without it, [and especially of the characters of those who despise it, and live in a manner contrary to its holy and gracious requirements] I truly pity these poor creatures: their case is indeed deplorable. Their sin seems to come the nearest to that against the Holy Ghost, of any that can now be committed. But I leave them in the hands of God, and recommend them to his mercy, [while I gladly embrace every opportunity that offers, for convincing them of their error,

and bringing them to the acknowledgment of the truth.]



The author gives the above as a specimen, with a few others, of what he calls " extempore meditations," and concludes as follows :

Thus may the Christian employ himself in a sort of extemporary meditation upon any subject he pleases, the advantages of which are not inconsiderable. But though reflections may be made occasionally, without the labour of writing, I reckon it best ordinarily to write them down, though it be with brevity and without any solicitude about style or method.—Any thing we meet with in books, in sermons, or in conversation, that is instructive, may afford a fit subject for such written meditations. And I reckon it would be well worth while for such persons as are intent upon improving in religion, to read the lives of eminent men, with a view to notice their several excellencies, and put down in writing the most remarkable accounts they meet with of sublime virtue, piety and devotion, not only as matter of present reflection but to be consulted afterwards, as they would afford pleasing and useful subjects of contemplation.

EXTRACTS

FROM

*SCOU GAL's***LIFE OF GOD.**

THE exercises of religion, which to others are insipid and tedious, do yield the highest pleasure and delight to souls possessed with divine love; they rejoice when they are called "to go up to the house of the Lord, that they may see his power and his glory, as they have formerly seen it in the sanctuary." They never think themselves so happy, as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noise and hurry of affairs, and silenced all their clamorous passions (those troublesome guests within) they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain fellowship and communion with him: they delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favours, and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburden their hearts in his bosom. Repentance itself is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love; there is a secret sweetness which accompanieth those tears of remorse, those meltings and relentings of a soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

The severities of a holy life, and that constant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts

and ways, are very troublesome to those who are only ruled and acted by an external law, and have no law in their minds inclining them to the performance of their duty; but where divine love possesseth the soul, it stands as centinel to keep out every thing that may offend the beloved, and doth disdainfully repulse those temptations which assault it; it complieth cheerfully, not only with explicit commands, but with the most secret notices of the beloved's pleasure, and is ingenious in discovering what will be most grateful and acceptable unto him: it makes mortification and self-denial change their harsh and dreadful names, and become easy, sweet and delightful things.

The next branch of the divine life is an universal charity and love: the excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble and generous than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interest as its own? he who loveth his neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him: the malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love: he overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good; and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. Is it any wonder that such a person be revered and admired, and accounted the darling of mankind? this inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a certain sweetness and serenity upon the very coun-

tenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: it inspireth the soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprizing and effecting the highest things. Those heroic actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of ones country, or of particular friendships; and certainly, a more extensive and universal affection must be much more powerful and efficacious.

Again, as charity flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure: it delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged, and to be delivered from those disquieting as well as deformed passions, malice, hatred and envy; and become gentle, sweet and benign. Had I my choice of all things that might tend to my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men in the world. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others; their inward endowments and outward prosperity: every thing that did benefit and advantage them, would afford me comfort and pleasure: and though I should frequently meet with occasions of grief and compassion, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration, which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility: and the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom which governs the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it: and the hopes or possibility of mens after-happiness, might moderate their sorrow for their present misfortunes.—Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent charity and affection wherewith blessed souls do embrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above; and did it universally prevail in the world, it would

anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of heaven upon earth.

That which I named as a third branch of religion, was purity; and you may remember I described it to consist in a contempt of sensual pleasures and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now, the naming of this may suffice to recommend it as a most noble and excellent quality. There is no slavery so base, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them. Never can that person be capable of any thing that is noble and worthy, who is sunk in the gross and feculent pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy; but the religious soul is of a more sublime and divine temper; it knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the ways of holiness, for the obtaining any of these.

And this purity is accompanied with a great deal of pleasure; whatsoever defiles the soul, disturbs it too; all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart and trouble behind them.— Excess and intemperance, and all inordinate lusts are so much enemies to the health of the body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score; and if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be looked upon as any violent and uneasy restraint, but as the effect of better choice that their minds are taken up in the pursuit of more sublime and refined delights, so that they cannot be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent and passionate affection, will easily forget

his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the divertisements he was wonted to delight in. No wonder then, if souls overpowered with divine love despise inferior pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they may meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exercise and testify their affections: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honor to suffer for him.

The last branch of religion is humility; and however, to vulgar and carnal eyes, this may appear an abject, base and despicable quality, yet really the soul of man is not capable of a higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride; but humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doating on trifles, or admiring themselves because of some petty attainments. Noble and well educated souls have no such high opinion of riches, beauty and strength, and other such like advantages, as to value themselves for them, or despise those that want them: and as for inward worth and real goodness, the sense they have of the divine perfections, makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attained, and be still endeavouring to surmount themselves, and make nearer approaches to those infinite excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of humility, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous, so that those who are most desirous of

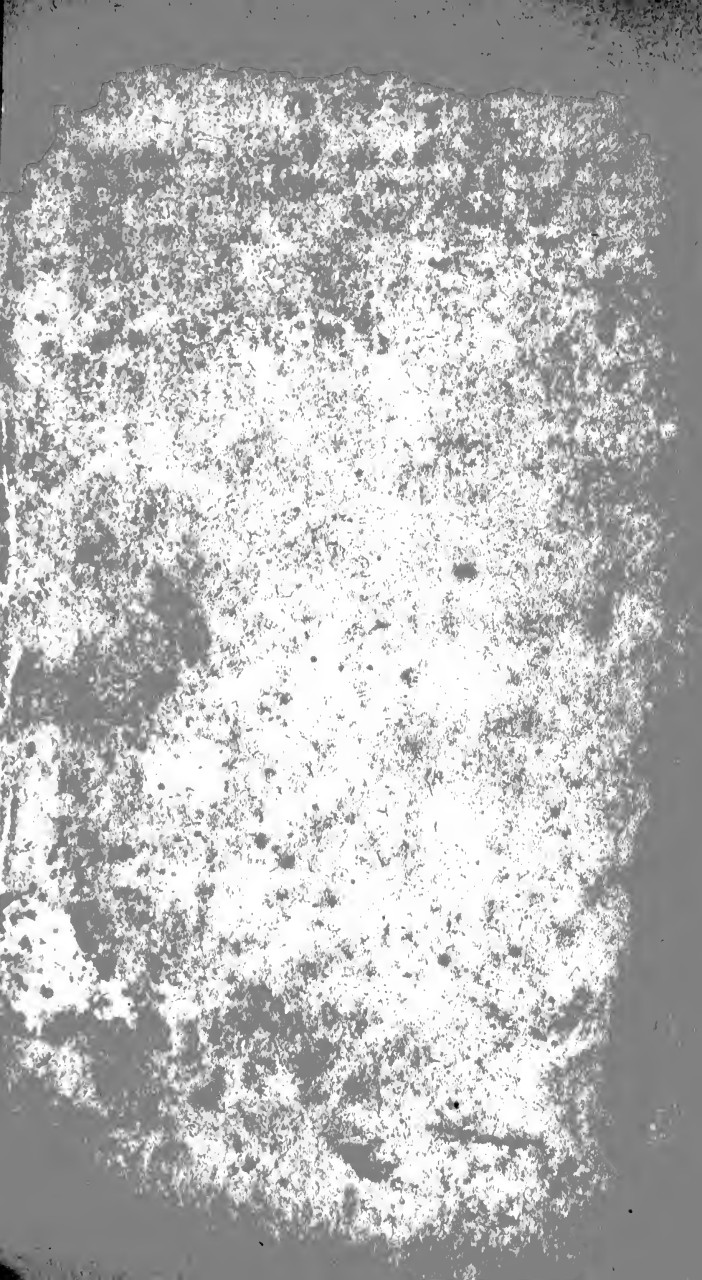
praise will be loth to commend themselves. What are all those compliments and modes of civility, so frequent in our ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others and the low thoughts we have of ourselves? and must not that humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are accounted so necessary a part of good breeding?

Again, this grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness and tranquility; the proud and arrogant person is a trouble to all who converse with him; but most of all unto himself: every thing is enough to vex him: but scarce any thing sufficient to content and please him.—He is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out; as if he himself were such a considerable person, that God Almighty should do every thing to gratify him, and all the creatures of heaven and earth should wait upon him, and obey his will. The leaves of high trees do shake with every blast of wind; and every breath, every evil word will disquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble person hath the advantage, when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth of himself; and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can easily bear those reproaches which wound the other to the soul.—And withal, as he is less affected with injuries so indeed he is less obnoxious unto them: “Contention, which cometh of pride,” betrays a man into a thousand inconveniences, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with—True and genuine humility begetteth both a veneration and love among all wise and discerning persons, while pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honor it makes him pretend to:

But, as the chief exercises of humility are those

which relate unto Almighty God, so these are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and sweetness. It is impossible to express the greatest pleasure and delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostration of their souls before God, when having a deep sense of the divine majesty and glory, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God, by a serious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingness, and the shortness and imperfections of their attainments; when they understand the full sense and emphasis of the Psalmist's exclamation, "Lord, what is man?" and can utter it with the same affection.— Never did any haughty and ambitious person receive the praises and applauses of men with so much pleasure, as the humble and religious do renounce them; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," &c.

THE END.





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Ames.

