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THE REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS:

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS:

CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION:

MAN'S ENMITY TO GOD;

AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

BY

JOHN HOWE, A.M.

WITH LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE REV. W. URWICK, D.D., DUBLIN.

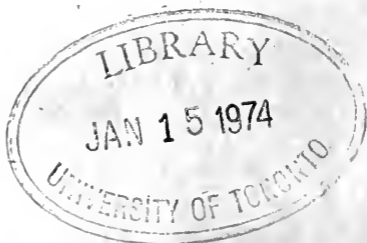


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CONTENTS.



	Page
1. LIFE OF HOWE.	
2. The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls,	1
3. Union among Protestants,	103
4. Carnality of Religious Contention,	149
5. Man's Enmity to God, and Reconciliation between God and Man,	213



LIFE OF JOHN HOWE, A.M.

BY THE REV. W. URWICK, D.D., DUBLIN.

DURING the sixteenth century, the struggles connected with the Reformation stirred European Christendom from the slumber of the "dark ages," and in those great movements England had her share. But the awakening of her mental and moral strength became not general, till her own agitations, during the reigns of her first James and his son Charles, followed by the Commonwealth, rendered inaction of head or heart next to impossible throughout the land.

Lovers of tyranny have been wont to decry that period as one of the most humiliating and disastrous in British history; for the Dagon of their homage was then well-nigh prostrated and broken before the ark of God's providence. And that evils deeply to be deplored existed, is admitted. Unworthy persons and measures are often associated with what is, substantially, the cause of truth and righteousness; it has been so from the beginning with the glorious Gospel itself. But no enlightened and fair man will deny, that at the time we are speaking of, England had never been in higher respect among the nations, or had used her influence for better purposes. She had never been to the same extent enriched with knowledge and adorned with piety,—she had never so appeared—to use the words of Milton—"as a noble and puissant nation rousing herself as a strong man after sleep, or as an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam." At that period the tree of civil and religious freedom, which, now flourishing and bear-

ing fruit, is the blessing and boast of the empire, became firmly rooted in her soil.

If the time was one of fearful political convulsion, it was also one of gracious visitation from the Spirit of God. While "the potsherds of the earth" filled the country with their strivings, the King of Zion was raising up a host of "very able men" for his service,—men whose writings yet survive, and will while the world lasts, monuments of his favour to themselves and to his Church,—men far more worthy of study and veneration than the majority of the so-called "Fathers" among the Greek and Latin ecclesiastics of earlier days.

Important controversies were then afloat; the Gospel had to grapple with antagonists of no common nerve, furniture, and skill. These champions entered the lists, and the truth triumphed. The right of every one to search the scriptures, and his responsibility to God alone for his use of that right, had lately risen as into new existence. These expositors were honourably successful in clearing away obscurities and perversions from the sacred text, and in otherwise assisting the common reader to see profitably for himself, "what is the mind of the Spirit." As theologians they were independent, enlarged, and profound thinkers. Theirs was not the restless habit of some would-be wise ones, busying itself on this punctilio to-day, on another to-morrow, and happy only when carping at or extolling detached and insignificant items. Theirs was the genius of sound philosophy, which, as the lion ranges through his forest and the condor soars above her Andes, sweeps through the earth and the firmament, aiming as far as may be to grasp the knowledge of creation. Nor were these men less distinguished as preachers and pastors. In the study, in the pulpit, and from house to house, with single-eyed purpose they watched for souls.

To their superiority in the respects named, their scholarship doubtless contributed. In learning they were not behind other Rabbis of their day. They had graduated at universities; had become fellows, and some of them heads of colleges, in Cambridge and Oxford; and had, by untiring industry, acquired a habit of energetic action, which accompanied them through life as a second nature. But their crowning excellence—the spring and plastic soul of their greatness—was their *piety*. They brought the fruits of their studies as divines, to bear upon their own hearts as christians. They daily maintained converse with God in private; and kept their seasons of special devotion. Thus

they acquired a calmness and power, a freedom and unction, which no talent, or literary acquirement, or strength of natural character, could impart. Most of them, indeed, had a parentage and a training which prepared for this. They were the offspring of sufferers for the truth. They had been cradled in persecution. The loud and fierce cry of the oppressor had often drowned the soft and soothing tones of their mother's lullaby. The homage of all things to conscience, and of conscience in all things to God, was one of the first lessons given when their minds opened to receive thought. Effeminacy and sentimentalism belonged to another sphere, if not to another age. All their youthful associations combined to cherish masculine honesty and magnanimity, with intrepid though humble resolve. And when arrived at maturity, they were "men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

There were, however, varieties among them. "Star differeth from star in glory," in the firmament of the church, as in that of nature, even when it is most brilliantly lighted up. As an orb of the first magnitude, and with a radiance peculiarly his own, shone JOHN HOWE. By the consent of all to whom superior mind, sanctified by the truth and charity of the gospel, is dear, he ranks among his contemporaries as a prince among chiefs. Even Wood, who can hardly pen a kind or candid expression for a non-conformist, in his *Athenæ Oxonienses*, says that Howe, when in London during the Commonwealth, was "known to the leading men of those times for his frequent and edifying preaching," and adds, "He is a person of neat and polite parts," who "hath applied himself wholly to beneficial and practical subjects, in which undertaking he hath acquitted himself so well. (his books being penned in a fine, smooth, and natural style) that they are much commended and read by very many conformists, who generally have him in great esteem."

For some unassigned cause—perhaps modesty, perhaps prudence, perhaps a combination of the two—Mr Howe, by what appears to have been his last act, deprived his friends of the principal materials for his biography. He had passed through a chequered and eventful course; and he had not neglected to observe, or to put his observations upon record. In reply to enquiries made about his manuscripts after his death, his son, Dr George Howe, stated that his "honoured father" had collected "large memorials of the material passages of his own life, and of the times wherein he lived, which he most industriously concealed till his last illness." The "honoured father,"

however, after he had lost his speech, unexpectedly recovered it, and, to use his son's words, "called me to him, and gave me a key, and ordered me to bring all the papers (which were stitched up in a multitude of small volumes), and made me solemnly promise him, notwithstanding all my reluctance, immediately to destroy them, which I accordingly did." Thus all were at once irrecoverably lost. Seldom has a more precious treasure been sacrificed; or filial obedience to a revered parent's dying injunction, been put to a severer test; or posterity had forced upon them an occasion of more just complaint against a man whom, on every other account, they held in unqualified esteem. Mr Howe's close connexion with Cromwell, and his standing with the leading persons of the religious parties of his day, together with his own integrity and judgment, must have made his statements first-rate authorities for the historian and the biographer. Nor, considering the union of sound sense with devotional feeling which distinguished him throughout, would his "memorials" have been less precious for use in the closet, as helps to spiritual edification. Indeed the more we reflect on the "manner of man he was," the more is our regret increased that a regard to what was due to others did not prevail to spare, in opposition to the fatal sudden impulse to destroy them, "the multitude of small volumes" which he had prepared for the benefit of survivors.

The leading facts to be put down in an account of Mr Howe are contained in his "Life" by Dr Calamy. Nearly the whole of this, with some additional matter and much able and excellent remark, appeared about ten years ago in "The Life and Character of John Howe, M.A., with an Analysis of his Writings. By Henry Rogers." Professor Rogers' volume leaves little further to be hoped for of information respecting Mr Howe. From these sources, with occasional resort to others, the materials for the following sketch have been obtained.

Mr Howe was born May 17, 1630, at Loughborough, in Leicestershire; a place then, as it is still, only second in importance to the county-town. Whether valued or not by its inhabitants, it is no trifling distinction that their town was the birth-place of the author of "The Living Temple." He was named after his father, who was minister of the parish; and he was baptized, according to the entry in the parish-register, yet extant, on the third day after his birth. The father had been appointed to his charge by Archbishop Land. Unfortunately, as some would think, John Howe the senior was "puritanically" inclined, while

Laud's predilections were "papistical." Matters, therefore, soon came to a crisis between the patron and the patronized.

Besides scrupling the prescribed "ceremonies," the worthy minister committed what was, in the arch-prelate's reckoning, a heinous crime. King Charles and his hierarchy required the working clergy to encourage among the people the desecration of the Lord's day, by dancing, archery, may-games, whiston-ales, or morrice-dances, "or any such harmless recreations." But the pastor of Loughborough dared to pray in his pulpit, as Laud himself reported it, "that God would preserve the prince in the true religion, of which there was cause to fear." *This* was a flagrant outrage upon all the loyalty and piety then in vogue. The case was brought into the High-commission court, and on the 6th of November 1634, Mr Howe was sentenced to be "imprisoned during his Majesty's pleasure, suspended from every part of his ministry, fined five hundred pounds, required to make a public recantation before the court, and condemned in costs of suit." Happily he made his escape.

Ireland often became an asylum for the English puritans. Walter Travers, expelled from being joint-lecturer with Hooker at the Temple, and forbidden by Whitgift, archbishop of Canterbury, to preach any where in England, was invited to Ireland. He became provost of Trinity-College, Dublin, and tutor to the afterwards celebrated Archbishop Usher, who probably was much indebted to him for sound views of doctrine and liberal opinions on church order. To this country Mr Howe fled, taking with him his son John, then a child about four years and a half old. When thirty-five years more had rolled by, the son, persecuted for non-conformity, again found a home in Erin. Here the father and the child continued till the breaking out of the Rebellion in 1641. The father does not appear to have exercised his ministry during his stay, which may have been owing to the circumstance that Laud's influence was beginning to be felt there. His place of sojourn is not named; but from the statement that "it was besieged by the rebels for several weeks together, though without success," it appears to have been Drogheda, a considerable sea-port town, about thirty (English) miles north of Dublin, and then a place of strength. When the siege was abandoned, Mr Howe, fearing that he could not longer remain safely in Ireland, returned with his boy to England, and settled in Lancashire.

It is to be presumed that during their exile in the sister-land the

father had not neglected the education of his son. On their coming back to England, it was proceeded with, and young Howe was "trained up in the knowledge of the tongues;" but who were his instructors is unknown. He made such proficiency at school that on May 19, 1647, he entered Christ College, Cambridge, having just completed his seventeenth year. He entered as a "sizar," which implies that his parents were in humble circumstances, but which also indicates their son's respectable attainments, if then, as now, "sizarships" could be had only as the reward of worthily standing a severe examination. At Cambridge young Howe became acquainted with Doctors Cudworth and Henry More, besides other distinguished men. In the year after his entrance he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and then removed to Oxford. Wood states that he became "Bible-clerk" of Brazen-nose College there, in Michaelmas term 1648, and then was made "Demy"—a scholar raised to the rank of "half-Fellow"—in Magdalen College, by the parliamentary visitors. In a short time he was elected Fellow, and in 1652 he "proceeded" Master of Arts. All this bespeaks successful progress. What was his industry in study then and afterwards, may be gathered also from the familiarity which his writings manifest with authors ancient and modern; pagan, infidel, and christian; classics, historians, moralists, critics, philosophers; and both orthodox and heterodox divines of every age and country.

We have no particulars as to when, or by what means, young Howe was brought first under the power of the gospel. His funeral-sermon, by Mr Spademan, mentions "his very early and growing exemplary piety." It is probable that his conversion was the fruit of parental counsels and prayers. The religion prevalent in Oxford, while Howe was there, was Evangelical Protestantism—widely the contrast of its present Puseyism. The "streams that make glad the city of God," then flowed through that "city of colleges," as it is still watered and beautified by the Cherwell and the Isis. Howe drank of the piety of his *alma mater* as deeply as he did of her scholarship. Dr Thomas Goodwin was President of the college (Magdalene) in which Mr Howe was Fellow, and acted as the pastor of a church formed among the students. He was surprised that Howe did not propose to join their communion, whence it is evident that his religious character was well known. The Doctor took an opportunity of speaking to him alone upon the subject. He had supposed that the terms of admission laid too much stress on

some peculiarities of opinion. Discovering his mistake herein, he immediately united himself with the body. This church in Oxford University welcomed to its privileges all who had received Christ, while it knowingly admitted no others. And this was Howe's principle of "church-fellowship" from the outset to the end—a principle nobly affirmed and vindicated in more than one of his pieces republished in this volume. While at Oxford, besides his literary pursuits, he thoroughly studied the sacred scriptures, and compiled therefrom for himself a system of theology, which he said afterwards he had seen little reason to change or modify in consequence of what he met with elsewhere. Doubtless this gave him much of that facility, comprehensiveness, and masterly grasp in discussing religious subjects, displayed to so much advantage in his subsequent career.

In the close of his university course he became a preacher, and went to Lancashire, where his father still resided, for ordination. The ceremony took place at Winwick, the Rev. Charles Hearle, and several neighbouring ministers, uniting in the solemnities of the day. By what is described as an "unexpected conduct of Divine Providence," but is not explained, he was led to Great Torrington in Devonshire, and there engaged as pastor. He entered upon his labours with signal proofs of the Divine favour. The town was not large; by the census of 1831 its population barely exceeded three thousand. The people "received him as an angel of God." Previous breaches in the congregation were healed. Crowds flocked to hear the word. Many found it the power of God unto salvation, and will be Howe's joy and crown of rejoicing at Christ's second coming. Though only about twenty-two years of age, and fresh from college, he seems to have been forthwith at home in his work, and to have brought into play the whole energies of his being. Nor was this arduous temporary excitement, awakened by novel circumstances and followed by collapse. It was an outworking of steadily-sustained, spontaneous, pleasurable, and healthful vitality, fed by the faith of immutable absorbing facts, operating on a renewed heart. Here were preached the sermons of which the substance, re-wrought up and enlarged, was afterwards given to the world in his treatises on "Delighting in God," and the "Blessedness of the Righteous," in reading which we fail not to think the author, so far as mortal can be, kindred with angels in conception, and with seraphs in fervour. From Torrington Howe's affections were never afterwards estranged. Of the people there he could always

say, "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

An impression exists in some quarters that the ministers of Mr Howe's day had less labour than their successors in our own. Nothing can be more erroneous. We have not the knowledge we desire of *his* regular engagements; but let us listen for a few moments to what he says of his friend the Rev. Richard Fairclough, in the noble sermon preached on the occasion of his death—a sermon worthy of being often read by every minister in his closet—"His labours were almost incredible. Besides his usual exercises on the Lord's day, of praying, reading the Scriptures, preaching, catechising, administering the sacraments (as the occasions or stated seasons occurred), he usually five times in the week, betimes in the morning, appeared in public, prayed, and preached an expository lecture upon some portion of the holy scriptures, in course, to such as could then assemble, which so many did, that he always had a considerable congregation; nor did he ever produce in public any thing which did not smell of the lamp. And I know that the most eminent for quality and judgment among his hearers, valued those his morning exercises, for elaborateness, accuracy, instructiveness, equally with his Lord's-day sermons. Yet also he found time, not only to visit the sick (which opportunities he caught at with great eagerness), but also, in a continual course, all the families within his charge; and personally and severally to converse with every one that was capable, labouring to understand the present state of their souls, and applying himself to them in instructions, reproofs, admonitions, exhortations, and encouragements, suitably thereto: and he went through all with the greatest facility and pleasure imaginable; his whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to be up by three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight), when others slept." Howe adds of his friend, and it renders our belief in the foregoing statements more easy, "Few men had ever less hindrance from the body, or more dominion over it; a better habited mind and body have rarely dwelt together."

As proof that Mr Howe never "spared" himself, when he thought that duty, or the edification of his flock, required that he should "spend" himself, we may quote his own account of his engagements on the public fast-days, then frequently observed. "He told me," says Dr Calamy, "it was upon these occasions his common way to begin about nine in the morning, with a prayer

for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day ; and afterwards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three quarters of an hour, then prayed for an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for half-an-hour. After this he retired and took some little refreshment for about a quarter of an hour or more (the people singing all the while), and then came again into the pulpit, prayed for another hour, and gave them another sermon of about an hour's length, and so concluded the service of the day at about four o'clock in the evening, with about half-an-hour or more in prayer." *Seven hours*, with but one trifling interruption of some fifteen minutes, occupied in public praying, expounding, and preaching, by the *same man!* And these days occurred "pretty frequently," in addition to his ordinary pulpit and pastoral work, and were gone through by him "without any help or assistance!" Most readers will wonder how the bodily frame bore up under it. Nor are "the springs of thought and will" less to be admired, that were not soon perfectly exhausted by such demands ; for we may be assured that every opening of Howe's lips would be full of appropriate sentiment and sacred earnestness. What an "abundance of heart" he must have had to supply the requisite *materiel* for ideas and feelings. And of what a lively and hallowed kind must those protracted services have been, that did not wear out the "heart" of the people for them, more than they did that of the minister who presided in and conducted them. If our forefathers had an "enthusiasm" in these things at which our "sobriety" revolts, does not our formality and insipidity, miscalled "sobriety," quite as much revolt their now perfect judgments of bare fittingness in the followers of Him who said, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up?" Let us not "for a *pretence* make long prayers;" but if ever the arm of the Lord is to "awake, and put on strength," for bringing in millennial prosperity in answer to our asking, there must be a perseverance which wrestles "till the day breaketh," and a resolve which says, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

While at Torrington, Mr Howe formed an acquaintance with the ministers of his neighbourhood, of "different persuasions," and a "settled meeting" of them was held in the town for mutual edification and fellowship. This was one of the "associations" of which Baxter may be considered the father, and to which more particular reference will be made presently. Among the

brethren thus brought together was one between whom and Mr Howe general acquaintance quickly ripened into the most cordial and intimate friendship—"the famous Mr George Hughes of Plymouth, who made a greater figure, and had a greater interest and influence than most of the ministers in those parts." He was considerably Mr Howe's senior, having entered at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1619, and then removed to Pembroke College, where he graduated Master of Arts, and took the degree of Bachelor in Divinity. But the disparity in years was nearly lost sight of through the mutual overflowing of holy affection. The connexion thus formed led to another. On March 1st, 1654, Mr Howe was married to Miss Catherine Hughes, the daughter of his friend. Of their children are named—1st, George, already mentioned, who became a respectable physician in London ;—2d, James, who was called to the bar, and acquired considerable property by his profession ;—3d, John, of whom we are told only that he left two sons, John and James ;—4th, Obadiah, who probably died young ;—and 5th, Philippa, who was married to a Mr Collett, of the Bank of England.

It is not known when this Mrs Howe died, but there was a second, for his funeral sermon is inscribed to "*Mrs Margaret Howe* ;" and Dr Doddridge, under date of "Bath, March 2d, 1743," wrote to Mrs Doddridge, "Mrs Howe, widow of the great and pious Mr Howe, died here last week ; a good woman, and full of years, being near ninety." This Mrs Howe, it is not unlikely, was sister to the Rev. Peter Vink, B.D., or rather to his wife ; for Mr Howe, dedicating his funeral sermon "for that faithful, honest, and most worthy minister of the gospel," says to his widow—"My dear and honoured sister ;—The relation I stand in to you, by that union which some years since the good providence of God hath brought about between our families, obliges me, besides what I owe you upon the common Christian account, to partake with you in your sorrows, for this late afflicting loss ; as I have, according to my measure, in the satisfaction of enjoying so pleasant and delectable a relation and friend."

Some of Mr Howe's descendants became respectably connected. A grandson, John, eldest son and heir of James, married the Hon. Caroline Howe, daughter of the Right Hon. Scroop Lord Viscount Howe, Master of the Horse to George I. This lady was consequently sister to Admiral Earl Howe, whose name is so distinguished in the naval annals of his country. But another topic of enquiry is here suggested. What descendants

of Mr Howe are now living? and do they inherit the piety, if not the other greatnesses, of that illustrious man? Posterity should advance beyond their ancestry, especially in that which chiefly ennobles, enriches, and adorns humanity. John Howe, the Puritan, left to his son a name of more than heraldic worth. And that son, John Howe, the Nonconformist, bequeathed the treasure to his house unspeakably enhanced in preciousness and splendour. Let the present generation of the family, at least preserve inviolate the sacred deposit which has been handed down, and see that it has in them a guardianship for their successors worthy of itself.

To resume our narrative. From the commencement of their friendship, Mr Hughes and Mr Howe kept up a correspondence in Latin. Interesting as this would have been, nothing survives of it beyond the fact that in one of his letters Mr Hughes wrote, *Sit ros cœli super habitaculum vestrum*—"May the dew of heaven rest upon your dwelling." And the preservation of this fragment is owing to the coincidence that, on the morning on which the letter reached Mr Howe, his house had been most providentially saved from destruction by fire, through a singularly opportune heavy fall of rain. The prayer had sped its way up to the throne of God, and had descended with its answer large and free, before the knowledge of its having gone could reach Torrington from Plymouth. That answer was not merely the shower of rain, but the experience of the divine favour in the preservation granted, so calculated to have, and which doubtless produced, a richly refreshing and fertilizing influence upon the heart. "Whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear."

Mr Howe "thought of no other than of living and dying with" his affectionate charge in humble Torrington. But a crisis was at hand. In 1656, some business called him to London, where he was detained a Sabbath longer than he intended. Curiosity led him on that day to the chapel at Whitehall, where the Protector and his household attended. His noble form and countenance bespeaking no common man, caught the observant and right-judging eye of Cromwell. At the conclusion of the service, his Highness sent for him, and requested him to preach there on the following Lord's-day. Howe did what he could to excuse himself, but Cromwell would take no denial. A second sermon, and then a third, were pressed for, and given. At length, after much free conversation in private, nothing would satisfy the Protector but that Mr Howe should become

his domestic chaplain. The good pastor of the congregation at Torrington strongly objected, and pleaded, among other matters, the case of his dear people. Cromwell met all his scruples, and promised that the flock, to be deprived of his oversight, should have another shepherd, a man of their own choice. Resistance was vain. Howe was obliged to yield. He, with Mrs Howe and their family, removed from Torrington to Whitehall :—what a transition ! He was soon afterwards appointed to the lectureship of St Margaret in Westminster.

Mr Howe had not entered upon his new and peculiar position, without calculating upon its difficulties ; and he girded up his loins manfully to meet them. In a letter dated “ Whitehall, March 12, 57,” three months after he had come to London, he says to the Rev. Mr Baxter of Kidderminster, “ I should be exceedingly desirous to hear from you, what you understand to be the main evils of the nation that you judge capable of redress by the present government ? What you conceive one in my station obliged to urge upon them as matter of duty in reference to the present state of the nation ? and how far you conceive such an one obliged to bear a public testimony (against their neglects) by preaching, after use of private inducements ; supposing that either they be not convinced that the things persuaded to are duties to them, or else, if they are, that it be from time to time pretended that other affairs of greater moment are before them for the present ; which being secret to themselves, as I cannot certainly know that they are so, so nor can I deny that they may be. Sir, your Lord knows I desire to understand my duty in matters of this nature ; I hope he will give me a heart not to decline it,” &c. This extract shews a diffidence of self, combined with high aims and preparedness to do duty fearless of consequences, all in keeping with the writer. Perhaps it suggests a little too raised an idea of what he was bound to attempt, if not of what he could achieve. It is questionable how far, and in what cases, the “ domestic chaplain” of a ruler is called upon to make the public measures of the government themes of his pulpit ministrations. This point, however, involves topics which are better understood now than they were then—topics too complex, delicate, and secondary, to be discussed here. But in Howe’s day it was almost universally believed to be imperative on civil rulers to exercise authority in the church, and to enforce religious truth by penal statutes—a principle since discovered to be alike unscriptural and unsafe.

Baxter's letter, which seems like a reply to this of Howe, is dated "April 3, 1658," more than a year afterwards. It mentions that in the interval Howe had been at Kidderminster, and had more than once written to Baxter. It speaks of Howe's "famed worth," and "advantageous station for a serviceableness to these churches." It advises him to be "very tender and cautelous in publishing any of the neglects of governors." It also urges "to a very careful (but very secret and silent) observance of the Infidels and Papists, who are very high and busy, under several garbs, especially of Seekers, Vanists, Behmenists." Baxter observes that "the Lord Protector is noted as a man of a catholic spirit, desirous of the unity and peace of all the servants of Christ;" and then suggests measures which he thought it desirable his Highness should adopt towards establishing harmony among Christ's servants of different denominations. Here are two subjects which require some remarks for explanation.

Every one is aware that "Infidels and Papists" were identified with the Royalist cause in the Civil Wars. But the fact above named, that they were "very high and busy, under several garbs," on the Parliamentary side, is not generally known. It is often referred to in subsequent letters of Baxter and Howe, as awakening serious apprehensions. Dr Bramhall, Bishop of Derry, gave full information about it to Archbishop Usher, in a letter dated July 20, 1654. He says, "It plainly appears, that in the year 1646, by order from Rome, above 100 of the Romish clergy were sent into England, consisting of English, Scotch, and Irish, who had been educated in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain," and that "these scholars were taught several handicraft trades and callings, as their ingenuities were most bending, besides their orders, or functions of that church." He further says that these men were taught to argue for atheism, or to personify members of the several Protestant bodies in England; that on arriving there they were to feign themselves Puritans, who had returned from exile "to enjoy their liberty of conscience;" that a registry was kept of them abroad, and intelligence sent by them monthly to the fraternities from which they had come; that most of them became soldiers in the Parliament's army, at the same time daily corresponding with their fellow Romanists in the King's army; that in the year 1647, the two parties had a conference together, where there were produced "secret bulls and licenses" for simulating as they did; that afterwards they wrote to their several convents, and to the Sorbonists, enquiring, "whether it may be

scrupled to make away" the King or his son ? to which the Sorbonists replied, "that it was lawful for Roman Catholics to work changes in governments for the Mother Church's advancement, and chiefly in an heretical kingdom ; and so lawfully make away the King."

The other subject mentioned in the above letter of Baxter is the endeavour to bring about a closer union among the evangelical Protestant bodies. This was a favourite scheme with him. An "Association" among the ministers of the county in which he lived, had been formed by him some years before. In 1653 was published "Christian Concord ; or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire, with Richard Baxter's Explication and Defence of it, and his Exhortations to Unity." Similar "Associations" were formed in many other parts of England, as Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, Hampshire, &c. They embraced Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and, wherever they could be persuaded to it, Episcopalians. Howe's "settled meeting" of the Devonshire ministers at Torrington, included the three bodies. Baxter, in his Life, states that "the Independent Churches also in Ireland, led by Dr Winter, pastor of their Church in Dublin, associated with the moderate Presbyterians there," through the "persuasions" of his "neighbour," Colonel Bridges, and sent to the Worcestershire Association "their desires of correspondency." The articles of the Essex Association were forwarded to Cromwell, who had previously received documents on the subject from Worcestershire. These papers he handed to Howe for perusal, who then, as he tells Baxter, "made such a motion to him," the Protector, "that he would please, once for all, to invite, by some public declaration, the godly ministers of the several counties, and of several parties, to the work of associating upon such common principles as might be found tending to the *general* good, and not cross to the *private* opinions of the several parties." Cromwell, Howe further states, "expressed a great willingness thereto, might he but see any thing in writing, that upon consideration he could judge likely to serve such a purpose." A paper of Howe's is yet extant which is thought to be the draft of a "proclamation" on the subject, prepared for Cromwell's inspection. But events were hastening on that put an end to all such movements.

It speaks not badly for Cromwell that he chose a person of Howe's sterling excellence to be so near him. Courts would be different from what they often are, if sovereigns always had

ministers of his ability and worth, to be their own religious advisers and the pastors of their households. His post, as we can readily imagine, was one most critical and delicate; yet so wisely did he fill it, that "not a dog could move his tongue" against him. He was often employed by the Protector on honourable special services. On a business of this kind, he once rode from London to Oxford in five hours and a quarter—a transit sufficiently expeditious for the roads then, and which would not have discredited even "royal mails" within our own recollection. Cromwell distributed "forty thousand pounds" a year in charity, a sum that would appear immense in our present currency; and it may be presumed that his chaplain was in most cases his almoner. We may be assured that Cromwell's chaplain would second him in all his generous deeds and grand projects for Protestants and Protestantism all over the world. But Howe never used his influence to serve himself. "You have obtained," Cromwell once said to him, "many favours for others; I wonder when the time is to come that you will solicit any thing for yourself or your family." Sectarianism, equally with selfishness, was abhorrent to his nature. Of his good-will towards Episcopal ministers, during his chaplaincy, two instances out of many may be named. When the office of "Principal" in Jesus College, Oxford, was vacant, Dr Seth Ward, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, sought Mr Howe's influence with Cromwell to obtain the appointment for him. Howe introduced him to the Protector, and strongly recommended him to his Highness's favourable consideration. The appointment, however, had been already promised to another person; but so pleased was Cromwell with what Howe told him privately of Dr Ward, that he good-humouredly asked the Doctor how much he supposed the place to be worth? and on being told the sum, he promised him an equivalent annual allowance. The witty Dr Thomas Fuller, author of the "Pisgah Sight of Palestine," "Worthies of England," &c., had to appear before the "Triers," a board for examining ministers before they were inducted to a charge. Fuller was doubtful what might be the result in his case, when they questioned him on a particular point. He came to Howe, saying, "You may observe, Sir, that I am a pretty corpulent man, and I have to go through a passage that is very straight; be so kind as to give me a shove and help me through." Howe gave the desired "shove;" and Fuller, "corpulent" as he was, got safely through the "very straight" passage.

Nothing could induce Howe to compromise truth and con-

science. An opinion prevailed at "court" that the particular thing asked in prayer by the people of God, would be granted, whatever it might be. The chaplain was apprehensive to what this opinion, if persisted in, might lead ; and felt himself bound to preach against it before the Protector. The discourse was on "A Particular Faith in Prayer." After the service a "person of distinction" went to him and intimated that he had irrecoverably lost his Highness's favour. Howe replied that "he had discharged what he considered a duty, and could trust the issue with God." It certainly was an occurrence likely to test Cromwell's patience. But it was taken better than was expected, and better probably than it would have been from any other man. Howe said that Cromwell evidently felt the sermon, "was cooler in his carriage to him than before, and sometimes seemed as if he would have spoken to him on the subject ; but never did." Few "royal chaplains" would have ventured on a like experiment ; or, if they had dared the trial, their fidelity would probably have incurred royal censures much more severe than those with which Howe was visited. If Cromwell's conduct and his household had not been in fair consistency with his religious profession, we may be sure we should have heard more of its improprieties from this observant and plain-speaking censor. The above anecdote was attested to Dr Calamy by Mr Jeremiah White, who had been a Fellow at Cambridge, and was joined with Howe in the chaplaincy of Cromwell's family.

Mr Howe's position, however, became gradually uncomfortable. The unavoidable turmoil, pomp and circumstance of a "palace," must throughout have ill agreed with his tastes and habits ; it had been by constraint, not willingly, that he undertook the chaplaincy. Such a post must always be one of great trial and self-denial to a true minister of Christ. It is likely that Howe had over-rated the opportunities it would give him for serving the christian cause. His dissatisfaction was fast ripening into a resolve to leave Whitehall, and return to his beloved and quiet Torrington. He asked Baxter's advice, expecting to have his proposal confirmed. But Baxter urged against it. On this Howe again wrote to his "dear and honoured brother," and in the second paragraph told him,—“ Here my influence is not like to be much (as it is not to be expected that a raw young man should be very considerable among grandees) ; my work little ; my success hitherto little ; my hopes, considering the temper of this place, very small ; especially coupling it with the temper of my spirit,

which, did you know it, alone would, I think, greatly alter your judgment of this case. I am naturally bashful, pusillanimous, easily browbeaten, solicitous about the fitness or unfitness of speech or silence, afraid (especially having to do with those who are constant in *arcana imperii*) of being accounted uncivil or busy, &c. ; and the distemper being natural (most intrinsically) is less curable." He concludes the letter thus :—" I have devoted myself to serve God in the work of the ministry, and how can I want the pleasure of hearing their cryings and complaints, who have come to me under convictions, &c. ? I shall beseech you to weigh my case again."

The former of these extracts shews that Howe had well-nigh lost all the heart he ever had for the chaplaincy. Both of them afford a tolerably clear insight into the genius of his character. Without disparagement to his dignified intellect and piety, we can understand what he means when he speaks of himself as " naturally bashful, pusillanimous, easily browbeaten," &c. His temperament was too refined, his sense of propriety too delicate, for him to cope, as on a par, with men full of deceit, proud and overbearing, setting at nought and putting down all that differ from them, resolved at all hazards to attain their ends. With " Infidels and Papists" feigning piety and Protestantism, Howe could not be himself ; they would not understand him ; to get rid of him they would treat him with contempt, and do what they could to make him appear contemptible, and to make him *feel* that he was deemed so. Against such men, or any others that were insusceptible of impressions from reason, and propriety, and moral obligation, Howe would have no power. But what man of spiritual discernment does not rise from his chair in admiration, as he reads the concluding portion of the letter ? Rarely, if ever, was there penned a sentence that bespoke, as this does, the mastery of saving mercy, possessing, with its life-giving and glorious presence, an uninspired heart. Howe had been daily familiar with what could dazzle and delight in courtly wealth, splendour, and influence. Thousands would have envied him his place, as domestic chaplain to his Highness the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. But, failing in doing the service he aimed at to God's truth and men's souls, the Palace at Whitehall was no longer to be endured. Let him go where he could hear the cries of minds awakened, distressed, anxious to be set right for eternity—and *there* he was at *home*. Elsewhere he could not exist. Can we wonder that a man so travailing in birth for the

salvation of his fellows, should have been the one further honoured to write a treatise on "The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls?" Oh! would that every pastor and preacher had the memorable sentence inscribed by his heart upon his forehead—*"I have devoted myself to serve God in the work of the ministry; and HOW CAN I WANT THE PLEASURE of hearing their cryings and complaints, who have come to me under convictions, &c.?"*

The letter which closes with this golden sentence, is dated June 1st, 1658. Its object, as we have seen, was to obtain Baxter's consent to the writer's relinquishing his office at Whitehall, and returning to his pastorate in Devonshire. In two days afterwards he followed it by another, suggesting a medium course. The new plan was to procure a person who should reside constantly at the palace, and enjoy all the emoluments which Howe had received, while Howe himself obtained leave to be with his former charge for a quarter of the year, or as much time beyond that as he might be allowed. This proposal, if not made by Cromwell, was agreed to by him, to meet Howe's wishes, for he remained in office till Oliver's death, which occurred on September the 3d following.

Richard, who succeeded his father Oliver in the Protectorate was truly pious, and highly respectable as a private gentleman but was considered wanting in qualifications for his high station perhaps he was more deficient in taste for it, than in capacity Mr Howe continued chaplain as before. About five weeks after Oliver's death, he, with other "younger divines about the Court," attended the conference of upwards of two hundred ministers and messengers of Congregational Churches, held in the Savoy, and from which emanated a "Confession," setting forth the views of doctrine and church order held by the Congregational body. It is thought, that in a few days subsequent to this conference he went to Torrington, pursuant to the plan mentioned just now.

How long he remained in Devonshire on this visit is uncertain but he had returned to London before Richard's resignation about the middle of May, 1659, for on the 21st of that month he wrote to Baxter, giving him an account of the contests between the army and the Parliament, leading to that event. That he regretted the change, and foresaw its consequences better than some others did, we learn from the last paragraph of this letter "Sir, such persons as are now at the head of affairs, will blaspheme religion, if God prevent not. The design you writ me of, some time since, to introduce Infidelity or Popery, they have oppo-

tuity enough to effect. I know some leading men are not *Christians*. Religion is lost out of England, further than as it can creep into corners. Those in power who are friends to it, will no more suspect these persons, than their own selves. I am returning to my old station, being now at liberty beyond dispute." There is something almost prophetic in these statements; so perfectly do the actual results of what had taken place tally with them. They will remind the reader of what has been stated from Baxter's and Howe's correspondence, and Bramhall's letter to Usher, respecting measures taken by Romish agents, feigning themselves Protestants, and entering the Parliamentary army, in order to re-establish Popery in England. Charles the Second had conformed to the Church of Rome some years before his "restoration" to the throne of Great Britain. To serve his purpose of regaining that throne, he had thrice sworn to the "Solemn League and Covenant." To impose on the Presbyterians, who now joined with the army under Monck to bring him back, and whom he afterwards called "God's silly people," he pledged in his proclamation from Breda, "that no man should be disquieted for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which did not disturb the peace of the Kingdom." As if to carry his duplicity to its *ne plus ultra*, he ordered a deputation of their ministers, who went to him in that city, to be kept waiting while he withdrew to perform his private devotions, which were for the occasion so arranged, and in them his "heart was so enlarged," that they distinctly overheard him "devoutly thanking God that he was a covenanted King, and that he hoped the Lord would give him a humble, meek, and forgiving spirit." And the good men *believed* him! To what lengths will not human hypocrisy and credulity go, if not prevented from above.

Howe, once more at Torrington, resumed his much-loved work among his much-loved people. His experience of the publicity, wide survey and sterility, of the storm-girt mountain-top, had not lessened his zest for the quiet and luxuriance of the sequestered valley, as a little paradise, lying in the distance at its feet. He took no part in the changes that were going on in the metropolis; nor could he, consistently with the views he had of their consequences. Time soon began to prove that his calculations were correct. Before the close of 1660, informations were laid against him for having preached sedition and treason, in two sermons from Galatians vi. 7, 8. He was bound over to appear and answer to the charge at the next sessions. On November

14th the trial came on, and he was cleared. For thus clearing him, though by strictly legal process, the mayor, who presided, got into trouble. However, when the cause was reheard at the assizes, the decision of the sessions was affirmed. "One of the informers left the town, and was no more heard of; the other cut his own throat, and was buried in a cross-road." This prosecution was a gentle growl from the beast; he soon began to roar and devour.

On January 14, 1662, "An Act for the Uniformity of public prayers," &c., "in the Church of England," was read a first time in the House of Commons, where it was at length carried by a majority of 136 to 130. After much discussion, it passed the Lords on May 8th; and received the royal assent on the 19th. It was to come into force on August 24th following—a Lord's Day, and the Feast of Saint Bartholomew. By its provisions no man could hold a charge in the Church of England who did not—1st, Submit to be re-ordained, if he had not been episcopally ordained before;—2d, Declare his "unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing prescribed in 'The Book of Common Prayer,' and administration of Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, together with the Psalter, and the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons;"—and 3d, Take the oath of canonical obedience.

It is worthy of remark that, in many cases, the Book of Common Prayer, as then newly constructed, was not forthcoming to the parties concerned, before the day when their decision concerning it was to be declared. Mr Baxter, however, and several other eminent ministers, needed not a sight of it to determine their course; they resigned their charges previously. Altogether, upwards of two thousand declined conformity on the prescribed terms. As one of this "noble army of martyrs" ranked JOHN HOWE. Strong as was the love between him and his flock, and great as had been his success among them, he was not the man to sell the truth, even in what some account things indifferent, for affection or expediency. On that memorable day, August 24th, 1662—thenceforward notable in England, as a previous Bartholomew Day had become in France by the massacre of the Protestants—Howe took leave of his people. He preached two sermons on the occasion. He stated "that he had consulted his conscience, and could not be satisfied with the terms of conformity settled by law;" and he followed this declaration by a

detail of his reasons. Sanctuary upon sanctuary was on that day a "Bochim"—a place of weeping ; such a scene had never been witnessed in the congregation at Torrington, as was that day presented. No vestige of Howe's discourses then preached, is preserved, beyond what has just been mentioned. We are not, however, without information through other channels, as to the grounds of the step he took. They were worthy of himself. His scruples rested on broad general principles, rather than on insulated circumstantialia. Let him explain himself.

Dr Wilkins, afterwards Bishop of Chester, in a conversation with Mr Howe, expressed disappointment that the act of uniformity had been followed by such consequences, intimating especial surprise that Howe himself, so remarkable for the latitude of his opinions on ecclesiastical matters, should have scrupled to conform ; desiring to know his reasons. Howe replied that they had not time then to go into the whole subject, though he would unreservedly do so at a convenient opportunity ; "but one thing he could tell him with assurance, that that *latitude* of his, which Dr Wilkins was pleased to take notice of, was so far from inducing him to conformity, that it was the very thing that made him and kept him a nonconformist." The Doctor then asked him whether it was the *discipline* of the church, to which he chiefly objected ? To which Howe replied, "that he could not by any means be fond of a church that in reality had *no discipline* at all, and that he thought *that* a very considerable objection against the establishment." Wilkins then pressed him to mention some of his principal objections. On this Howe said, "that he could not recognise, in the present constitution, those noble and generous principles of *communion*, which he thought must, sooner or later, characterize every church of Christ ; that, consequently, when that flourishing state of religion should arrive, which he thought he had sufficient warrant from the word of God to expect, a constitution which rested on such an exclusive basis, must fall ; that believing this to be the case, he was no more willing to exercise his ministry under such a system, than he would be to dwell in a house built on an insecure foundation."

Had the non-conforming ministers been mere "idol shepherds," the act which expelled them from their pulpits would have thereby inflicted no great calamity on themselves or their congregations. The latter might have been nearly as well cared for without them ; and they themselves might quite as pleasantly and as profitably have engaged in some secular pursuit. But the wor-

thies of 1662 were "men of God." The "good conscience" which obliged Howe to relinquish his charge rather than conform, obliged him still to labour in the gospel as he had opportunity. To be debarred from *that* must have been to *him* a trial all but insupportable. He continued to preach as he could, privately among his friends. On returning from one engagement of this kind, he found that an officer from the bishop's court had been to arrest him, and had left notice that citations were out against him and the gentleman under whose roof he had been officiating. The bishop, from whose court the process issued, was the Dr Seth Ward who had obtained from Cromwell, through Mr Howe's favourable representation, a gratuitous income equal to the sum arising from a principalship at Oxford. On hearing of the citation, Howe went straight to Exeter, and sent intimation to the palace that he was in the city waiting his lordship's pleasure. The bishop at once desired to see him, received him very courteously; and soon after, with the freedom of an old acquaintance, began to enquire after his reasons for non-conformity, desiring him to mention one of the points on which he hesitated. Howe named re-ordination. "Pray, sir," said the bishop, "what *hurt* is there in being re-ordained?" "*Hurt*, my lord," replied Howe, "it hurts my understanding; the thought is shocking; it is an absurdity; since nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure I am a minister of Christ, and am ready to debate that matter with your lordship, if your lordship pleases; but I cannot begin again to be a minister." The parties then separated, the bishop giving to Mr Howe assurances that he might have considerable preferments if he would conform. Nothing more was heard of the "citation" to the bishop's court, which had occasioned this interview.—What would our modern Exeters say to such a sturdy non-conformist? Yet, sturdy as he was in his non-conformity, John Howe never for a moment lost the courtesy of the gentleman, the dignity of the Christian pastor, or the catholicity of the saint. And, in consequence, though firm to the last in his dissent, he ceased not to be respected even by members of the hierarchy established by law.

The reign of the second Charles, and that of his brother James, form one of the darkest passages in the chronicles of Britain. It is equalled only by the reign of Mary, called "the bloody." At Charles's court, licentiousness that owned no law of God or common decency and justice, exhibited an appalling contrast, marked to every eye, with what had been the state of things in

the nation's high places during the commonwealth. The whole power of the government,—with occasional exceptions, the devices of a self-serving policy—was directed to extirpate the non-conformists and their principles. Act after act was passed against them, and rigorously put in force. It is sickening to read the records of those times. Some ministers had to betake themselves to the work of day-labourers. "Many of them," said Howe, who knew them well as one of themselves, and seems to have more than heard of or seen what he describes—"many of them live upon charity; some of them with difficulty getting, and others (educated to modesty) *with greater difficulty* begging, their bread." It has been stated that nearly eight thousand Dissenters died in gaols; that between the Restoration and the Revolution, penalties for assembling for worship were inflicted to the amount of *two millions*; that sixty thousand persons suffered for dissent; and that, at a moderate calculation, dissenting families lost property by persecution to the extent of *twelve or fourteen millions*—a sum which, recollecting the difference in the currency of that age and the present, shews what a hold non-conformity had upon the wealth of the country, as well as the severity of the measures taken to suppress it.

The Rev. George Hughes, Howe's father-in-law, was imprisoned in the Isle of St Nicholas, in Plymouth Sound; and Mr Obadiah Hughes, the son of George, and Howe's brother-in-law, was incarcerated in Plymouth at the same time. The extracts from the letters of the father to the son while thus confined, given in Palmer's "Memorial," are most affecting. One of them runs thus:—"We have here in this island good lectures read us every day from heaven and earth, from seas and rocks, from storms and calms, enough to teach us much of God's providence in our morals as well as naturals. Fruitful spirits might gather much of God from them. O that mine were so! How might I feel out heaven this way, as well as see it by believing! Lord, help, and I shall do it. The everlasting arms of love and mercy keep you blameless, and safe, to the appearance of our Lord." Mr Hughes, in this correspondence, subscribed himself "your father, endeared by the bonds of nature, grace, and sufferings." It is believed that in 1665, Howe was himself confined in the island, already made sacred as the Patmos of his father-in-law. In this time of trial, Howe wrote to his revered relative—"Blessed be God, that we can have and hear of each other's occasions of thanksgiving, that we may join praises as well as prayers, which I

hope is done daily for one another. Nearer approaches, and constant adherence to God, with the improvement of our interest in each other's heart, must compensate (and I hope will abundantly) the unkindness and instability of a surly treacherous world; that we see still retains its wayward temper, and grows more peevish as it grows older, and more ingenious in inventing ways to torment whom it disaffects. It was, it seems, not enough to kill by one single death, but when that was almost done, to give leave and time to respire, to live again, at least in hope, that it might have the renewed pleasure of putting us to a further pain and torture in dying once more. Spite is natural to her. All her kindness is an artificial disguise; a device to promote and serve the design of the former with the more efficacious and piercing malignity. But patience will elude the design, and blunt its sharpest edge. It is perfectly defeated when nothing is expected from it but mischief; for then the worst it can threaten finds us provided, and the best it can promise, incredulous, and not apt to be imposed upon. This will make it at last despair, and grow hopeless, when it finds that the more it goes about to mock and vex us, the more it teaches and instructs us; and that as it is wicked, we are wiser. If we cannot, God will, outwit it, and carry us safely through to a better world, upon which we may terminate hopes that will never make us ashamed." The extract deserves to be read again.

While, for the most part, silenced as to preaching, and greatly straightened as to his temporalities, Mr Howe's pen was not idle. Probably he was obliged to employ it as a means of procuring subsistence for his family. In 1668, came out his "Blessedness of the Righteous." Unlike some other pieces of extraordinary merit, its worth was recognized as soon as it appeared. Perhaps to this publication may be ascribed a proposal he now received to enter the family of Lord Massarene of Antrim Castle, on the banks of Lough Neagh, in Ireland, as domestic chaplain. Apart from his university education, superadded to his naturally urbane and noble spirit, his residence in the court of Cromwell had prepared him for free association with the highest classes of society. The proposal was recommended to him as one that removed him from the vexatious annoyances he was exposed to in England, surrounded him with all that could minister to his comfort by intercourse or convenience, gave him quietness and leisure to prosecute study, with unrestricted liberty in preaching Christ. These considerations, sustained if not led

by one more cogent still—poverty—moved him to accept the invitation.

He left for Ireland early in 1671. At Holyhead, the port whence he was to "take ship" for that country, he was detained by contrary winds. Delays are sometimes providential. The Sabbath having come, and the day being fine, Mr Howe and his companions went towards the shore to find a convenient place for social worship. On their way they met the clergyman of the parish and his clerk, riding towards the town. Being told who they were, one of Mr Howe's friends asked the clerk whether his master preached that day? "No," replied he, "my master does not use to preach; he only reads prayers." On inquiring further, whether the rector would give leave for a minister who was there to use his pulpit? "Very willingly," was the reply. Howe preached that morning; and again in the afternoon to a great concourse, gathered by the report of the morning's sermon. The wind continued contrary the remainder of the week, and "a prodigious multitude" knowing that the great preacher was still in town, crowded to church on Sunday, expecting that of course he would address them. When the clergyman came as usual to read his prayers, and saw the numbers flocking to hear, he was confounded. He sent his clerk to Mr Howe, with a request that he would come and officiate, declaring "that if he would not come he knew not what to do, for that the country had come in from several miles round in the hope of hearing him." Howe was that morning ill and in bed. But the thought of usefulness to souls nerved his frame for action. He rose, went, and preached, risking all consequences. He afterwards said that he had never preached with greater freedom, or addressed a more attentive audience, and that "if ever his ministry was useful, he thought it must be then." The wind shortly changed, and the vessel, with Howe and others on board, sailed for Dublin. The fruits of his unexpected labours in the gospel at Holyhead are known on high, and will be declared at "the great day." Mr Howe was soon followed to Ireland by his family.

The Lord Massarene, with whom Mr Howe had now gone to reside (previously Sir John Skeffington, Baronet), had acquired his viscounty by his marriage to the daughter of Sir John Plotworthy, who had been raised to the peerage for his services at the Restoration. The former viscount had proved himself a steady friend to the Presbyterians and other nonconformists of Ireland. They were somewhat differently circumstanced from

their brethren in England. Episcopacy was re-established there by proclamation of the Lords Justices, without consulting the Parliament, a considerable time before the English Act of Uniformity took effect. The Presbyterian ministers of Ulster are said to have been treated with great severity by some of the new prelates. Dr Roger Boyle, who had succeeded the celebrated Jeremy Taylor, in the see of Down and Connor, distinguished himself in this way. Sir Arthur Forbes, a zealous loyalist and Commander of the Forces in Ireland, undertook the cause of the oppressed. Early in 1670, he obtained from Dr Margetson, Archbishop of Armagh, and Dr Michael Boyle, Archbishop of Dublin, a joint letter to the Bishop of Down and Connor, requiring him to refrain from further proceedings against the nonconforming ministers, until the case should be considered at a visitation to be held the following August. The visitation proved favourable to their cause, the Lord Lieutenant having advised moderate measures, and his grace of Dublin, who was also Lord Chancellor, being inclined to leniency. Indeed, the "Irish Church," particularly in the north of the country, was, on the whole, more Puritanic, and therefore more sound in doctrine and more liberal in spirit, than her sister in England. Usher's theology and his moderation in ecclesiastical matters, has seldom entirely ceased to influence the body. The Dublin University owed not a little, including Usher's library, to the "Parliament men." At the "Restoration," the ministers who conformed, were not required to repudiate their previous "orders," but only to submit to Episcopal ordination, for the purpose of supplying a deficiency according to the rules of the "Established" communion. The influence of the Antrim Castle family was engaged for the nonconformists, and was powerful in that neighbourhood. These circumstances, combined with Howe's talents, learning, respectability, and position as Lord Massarene's chaplain, will account for what might otherwise appear scarcely credible—from its contrast to what was possible in England—that while in Antrim, Mr Howe was "treated with all imaginable respect," that he had "the particular friendship of the bishop of that diocese, who (together with his metropolitan) without demanding any conformity, gave him free liberty to preach in the parish church in that town every Lord's-day in the afternoon;" and that "the Archbishop, in a pretty full meeting of the clergy, told them frankly, that he would have Mr Howe have every pulpit (where he had any concern) open to him, in which he at any time was free to preach." It is

thought there are now not a few godly Episcopal ministers in Ireland who wish themselves rid of the trammels which prevent their holding ministerial intercourse with their "dissenting brethren." While at Antrim, Mr Howe frequently associated with the Presbyterian ministers of that neighbourhood. In 1674 or 5, in conjunction with one of them, he presided over a seminary for theological students.

Enlightened piety then reigned in Antrim Castle. Howe's magnificent discourse, "The Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World"—which has been described as "one of the richest and maturest fruits of his genius"—was prepared on the death of John, eldest son of Sir John and Lady Houghton, in 1698. In the dedication of it to the bereaved parents, addressing her ladyship, who was a daughter of Lord Massarene, he says—"And, Madam, who could have a more pleasant retrospect of former days than you, recounting your Antrim delights, the delight you took in your excellent relations, your garden delights, your closet delights, your Lord's-day delights! But how much greater a thing is it to serve God in your present station; as the mother of a numerous and hopeful offspring; as the mistress of a large family; where you bear your part, with your likeminded consort, in supporting the interest of God and religion, and have opportunity of scattering blessings around you." This touching allusion to her ladyship's "Antrim delights," places Howe before us in the bosom of the family, where social and rural pleasures abounded, purified and exalted by communion with God, and his "peace which passeth all understanding."

He remained at Antrim about five years. In the early part of his term he published his "Vanity of Man as Mortal." "It has been the judgment of many," says Calamy, "that this discourse is as noble a piece of true theological oratory as can be easily met with." Professor Rogers pronounces it "the most eloquent of all his productions;" nor is it less distinguished for the originality and power of its reasoning. It was composed on the death of Mr Anthony Upton, a relation of Mr Howe, whose corpse was brought home when the family connexions were contemplating a general gathering to bid him welcome on his return after an absence of between twenty and thirty years in Spain. The circumstance which suggested the "text" of the discourse (Psalm xxxix. 47, 48) is curious, and will cause a smile. It belongs to "genus" under the "class" which includes the dream of Pilate's wife. One of the friends "having been some time before sur-

prised with an unusual sadness, joined with an expectation of ill tidings, upon no known cause, had so urged an inculcation of those words, as not to be able to forbear the revolving them much of the former part of that day, in the latter part whereof the first notice was brought to that place of this so near a relation's decease. Certain months after," continues Howe in his dedication, "some of you with whom I was then conversant in London, importuned me to have somewhat from me in writing upon that subject. Whereto at length I agreed, with a cautionary request that it might not come into many hands, but might remain (as the occasion was) among yourselves. Nor will I deny it to have been some inducement to me to apply my thoughts to that theme, that it had been so suggested as was said. For such presages and abodings, as that above mentioned, may reasonably be thought to owe themselves to some more steady and universal principles than casualty, or the party's own imagination; by whose more noble recommendation (that such a gloomy premonition might carry with it not what should only afflict, but also instruct and teach) this subject did seem offered to our meditation. Accordingly, therefore, after my return to the place of my abode, I hastily drew up the substance of the following discourse," &c. It was hardly to be expected, that even John Howe should altogether escape what many will call an "infirmity" of his age. The then "orthodox" faith respecting "presages and abodings," and other matters of that class, will find it drawn out, in full *quantum sufficit* for any lover of the mystical and the marvellous, in Flavel's Treatise on the Soul of Man. The subject is not uninteresting as a branch of the phenomena of our nature. And the world and the church would have had reason to rejoice in the "faith" they sometimes profess to pity, if that "faith" had always produced "fruits" equal to Howe's "Vanity of Man as Mortal."

In 1674 came out his "Delighting in God," which was the substance of some sermons he had preached twenty years before to the people of Torrington, with some additions and enlargements. He dedicated it to his old friends, the inhabitants of that town, by a masculine, but, at the same time, most tender and affectionate epistle to them from Antrim. The "dedication" is worth transcribing; but we must pass on.

Towards the end of 1675, Howe received an invitation to the pastorate in the congregation of Dissenters worshipping in Silver Street, London. His mind was painfully exercised in ascertaining the path of duty with regard to this "call," partly from

there being a difference of opinion among the people,—some of them preferring Mr Charnock,—and partly, if not chiefly, from his being in very delicate health. He resolved on going to London to judge of matters on the spot. After his death a paper was found, headed, “Considerations and Communings with myself concerning my present journey. Dec. 20, -75, by Night on my Bed.” It details an almost morbidly minute scrutiny of the case, and of himself in connection with it, under four general topics of inquiry. The examination is confined to his undertaking the “journey,” and exhibits a wide contrast to the haste with which “removals” are at present often resolved on. The document concludes with eight “Consolations to my wife and other relations, supposing they hear of my death.” Under the second he says, “You are to consider me not as lost in my prime,” yet he was only forty-five; “but as now I am sensibly under great decays, and not likely to continue long, except some means, hitherto not thought on, should have been tried. What a summer had I of the last! seldom able to walk the streets; and not only often disabled by pain, but weakness.” Little did he then calculate on the many years of effective labour that were still before him.

Early in 1676 he finally left Ireland and settled in London. Once more in public life, though a principled Nonconformist, he was on intimate terms with Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; Sharp, afterwards Archbishop of York; Stillingfleet, afterwards Bishop of Worcester; Kidder, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells; and other noted Episcopalians. He did not think, nor did they expect, nor did truth and charity allow, that he should refrain from maintaining his opinions as a Dissenter, when he judged it expedient to do so. When riding with Tillotson in his carriage, he had him in tears for sentiments which he had uttered in a sermon preached before the king in St Paul’s; and the good dean apologised for them. He also published a reply to Stillingfleet’s “Mischief of Separation from the Church of England,” which represented all the Dissenters as “schismatics,” &c. It is sometimes imagined that the “unity of the Spirit” demands silence, and even compromise, upon points with regard to which Christians differ. Many persons are so *testy*, that if you venture, however kindly, to controvert their views or the peculiarities of their body, they deem it an affront, and charge you with “a breach of the peace” among Christ’s followers. How preposterous! As if Paul were guilty of a great sin

when he "withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed," or as if instead of saying "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be as kindness," we should say "If any man presume to speak against my sentiments, I'll renounce his fellowship, and treat him as a foe,"—or, as if the divine law of charity were designed to stereotype error and evil-doing in the Church of God! "Reasoning out of the Scriptures" upon religious subjects respecting which differences prevail, is surely not in itself an evil. Investigation ought to be as free and salutary in matters sacred as in matters secular. Schisms of affection among brethren are always to be deprecated; but when they ensue on discussions for ascertaining or commending what a person believes to be divine truth, the fault rests at his door who allows his carnality to be stirred with sinful passion. Care, however, must be taken that the time chosen for discussion be convenient, that more importance be not attached to the question than is intrinsically or relatively its due, and that the argument be conducted throughout in a spirit that accords with honest concern for the Saviour's glory and the good of men. Let the discussion resemble, not the tornado which spreads desolation while exulting in its power, but the gentle health-diffusing breeze of a spring morning, which is just strong enough to disperse the mists that curtain the earth, and then at once subsides, giving us and all nature afterwards to rest in the tranquil brightness, growth, and buoyancy, it has ushered in.

The year 1676 gave to the world the "First Part" of Mr Howe's greatest work—"The Living Temple." It was inscribed to "that worthy person, Sir John Skeffington of Fisherwick, in Staffordshire, Baronet, also Viscount Lord Massarene, Governor of the county of Londonderry, and one of the Lords of his Majesty Charles the Second's most honourable Privy Council in the kingdom of Ireland." After this inscription Howe begins, "Although I am not, my Lord, without the apprehension that a temple ought to have another sort of dedication, yet I have no such pique at the custom of former days, but that I can think it decent and just that a discourse concerning one conceived under your roof, though born out of your house, should openly own the relation which it thereby hath, and the Author's great obligations to your Lordship; and upon this account I can easily persuade myself (though that custom hath much given place to this latter one), not to be so fashionable as even to write in masquerade." Having stated that by connecting Lord Massarene's name with

this treatise, he had not more jeopardized his Lordship's honour than he had that of the "main cause" itself by writing it, he proceeds, "And if, in any unforeseen state of things, you should ever receive prejudice, or incur danger, by any real service you should design unto the temple of God, your adventure would be the more honourable by how much it were more hazardous. The Order of Templars, your Lordship well knows, was not, in former days, reckoned inglorious." A "Second Part" was published in 1702, and—Lord Massarene being then dead—the whole was inscribed "to the Right Honourable Lord William Pagett, Baron of Beaudesert, in the county of Stafford,"—a connection of the Viscount Massarene, and an ancestor of the present Marquis of Anglesey.

The author appears to have concentrated upon this treatise the wealth, energy, and wisdom, of his well-stored and gifted mind. The book is itself a "temple." Excepting that reared by inspired architects, no edifice of the kind was ever built by man, as a whole, to compare with it. Its walls of thought, massive, lofty, and capacious, bespeak stability and grand design. The inscription on its portal tells us it is "Holy to the Lord." On entering it we find no lack of ornament or fitting furniture; there is a table of shew-bread, a candlestick with well-trimmed lamps, and an incense altar; and it is hung round with spoils won from the "philosophy and vain deceit" that had sought to rob the world of piety and Deity. Before us is the "presence" of ЖЕHOVAH—clear and impressive demonstrations of the divine existence and glory. That presence is recognised "conversable" with man—with man ruined, desecrated, guilty. For there stands, ministering for our race, the great High Priest of the gospel, offering the propitiation of his own blood. There, too, is felt the descended grace of the Holy Ghost, made visible on every hand by its effects, in the profound, entire, and grateful homage of human intellect, learning, and heart, in honour of God's manifested majesty, sanctity, and love. The "Temple," which the book treats of, is *man*—defiled, abandoned, desolate, through sin—re-built, re-hallowed, re-inhabited, through Christ. It abounds with paragraphs of surpassing cogency and splendour. It is for the most part occupied with the atheistic controversy, and contains the elements of what the Clarkes and the Paleys advanced in the following century. Hints for the *a priori* of the former were to be had from the schools. Ample materials for

a posteriori illustrations were being furnished at the time by Ray. From the nature of the discussions, the "Living Temple" is not apt to interest general readers equally with some other of the author's works. But it is surprising how much of conscience-stirring practical appeal is intermingled with its elaborate reasonings. Nor can the Christian fail to admire how beautifully Howe connects the pith and marrow of the gospel with topics which many would think too abstruse and remote to admit of close and vital approximation to the Cross.

Mr Howe's treatise "On the Reconcilableness of God's Pre-science of the Sins of Men, with the Wisdom and Sincerity of his Counsels and Exhortations, and whatever other means he uses to prevent them," appeared in 1677. It is addressed by letter to the Honourable Robert Boyle, at whose request it was prepared. Mr Boyle is well known as one of the most eminent philosophers of his age, and also as a man of great piety. The subject of this treatise involves difficulties not less than these connected with the origin of evil. To say that Howe has mastered them would be saying that he has achieved an impossibility. The harmonizing point or principle between the *fact* of man's total *dependence* on his Maker for all good, moral as well as physical, and the *fact* of man's being so the author of his own conduct as to be positively, and consciously and rationally, *accountable* to his Maker, is lodged among the mysteries of the Deity, at a depth to which the mind of man has not reached, perhaps we may say, to which the mind of a *creature cannot* reach. It *may* be one of these *secrets*—of which who can question there are many!—which it is peculiar to God to know, and which it requires the capacity of divine intelligence to ascertain. That *both* are *facts*, reason, consciousness, and revelation, equally and unequivocally attest. That they *are* reconcilable and harmonious, as truth *necessarily* is with truth, we may be as equally and unequivocally assured. Our duty and our privilege is to recognise, and *rest in*, *both* as *facts*; and in their ultimate and essential consistency as *another "fact" certain*, as if we had for ourselves seen it, or as if it had been proved to us by axiomatic or syllogistic demonstration. Howe's treatise is a fine specimen of vigorous and sober thinking, worthy of being read if it were only for encouraging right habits of mental exercise upon the subject. "Calvinists," as well as "Arminians," have often been too narrow, too superficial, and, we must add, too vain, in their speculations. It is piti-

able to reflect what a mutilated, dwarfish, ill-constructed thing, Truth has appeared, in showings made of her by some who have undertaken to exhibit her to the world.

Of Howe's pulpit discourses after his return to London, up to the year 1681, various series have been given to the public since his death. They include *nineteen* sermons on the Work of the Holy Spirit in reference to Particular Persons ; *fifteen* on the Prosperous State of the Christian Interest by a Plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit ; *eight* on the Vanity of a Formal Profession of Religion ; *seventeen* on the Love of God and our Brother ; besides *ten* on miscellaneous topics. Speaking of the time when those on the Holy Spirit were delivered, namely, from November 1677 to October 1678, Dr Evans, the editor, says in his preface, " That was a time of peculiar distress and danger, not only to Protestants out of the legal establishment in these kingdoms, but to the reformed interest in general through Europe."

But the year 1681, and several that followed, were still more fearful for England's liberty and nonconformity. The crown, with its minions, prepared to do its worst towards establishing its " prerogative" on the principles of " Divine right" and " non-resistance," in utter scorn of the people's privileges chartered by the " constitution." In 1683, that noble patriot and Christian, Lord William Russell, was sacrificed ; a martyr for Protestantism and the rights of his countrymen. After his execution, Mr Howe wrote, anonymously, a long, most able and touching letter of condolence to his lordship's widow. Mr Montgomery of Sheffield, no incompetent judge, in his " Christian Correspondence," distinguishes this above all the remaining 422 letters inserted in his three volumes, by pronouncing it " one of the noblest and most pathetic pieces of epistolary composition in the language." And let Lady Russell's four letters to Dr Fitzwilliam, inserted in the first volume of Mr Montgomery's collection, be read along with it. Though sent anonymously, the writer could not be hid. An intimacy now began between Mr Howe and that noble family, which was honourable and advantageous to both. May each member of the house of Russell possess the piety of its ancestors.

Several of the bishops and magistrates urged on the persecution of the Dissenters to the last extremity. In the county of Devon, a reward of " forty shillings" was offered to any one who should discover a nonconformist minister. Under date of January 14, 1684, the Justices of the Peace of the county of Bedford, issued an order for putting in execution the laws against Dis-

senters, and Dr Barlow, bishop of the diocese, (Lincoln,) published a circular to his clergy to the same effect. This produced an expostulatory letter from Howe to that prelate, before which the most inveterate bigotry and enmity must have quailed.

During these years of severe trial from without, Howe published various admirable pieces. Among them was, in 1681 his "Discourse on Thoughtfulness for the Morrow," dedicated "to the Right Honourable Ann, Lady Wharton." From the style in which he addresses her, it is manifest she was a lady of sterling Christian excellence; nor, happily for his family and the church, was Lord Wharton inferior in piety to his lady. In 1682, came out "Self-dedication, discoursed in the Anniversary Thanksgiving of a Person of Honour for a Great Deliverance." The "Person" was "The Right Honourable John, Earl of Kildare, Baron of Ophalia, First of his Order in the Kingdom of Ireland," an ancestor of the present Duke of Leinster. The "great deliverance," was the earl's preservation when in imminent danger "by a fall from a horse, December 5, 1674." The discourse was published, as well as preached, at the earl's desire. The "anniversary thanksgiving" shows a devout acknowledgment of Providence worthy of imitation. In 1683 came from the pulpit and the press, Howe's "Sermon concerning Union among Protestants." This sermon was delivered at what was called the "Morning Exercise"—a stated lecture in which some point of doctrinal, practical, or casuistic theology was formally discussed by one of the principal dissenting ministers of the metropolis. Their discourses were published in six volumes, the fifth of which, consisting of lectures on the Roman Catholic controversy, contains, allowing for a few idiosyncrasies, as great a mass of varied argument, learning, and Gospel truth, as ever was brought together on the subject in the same compass of press-work;—it presents, most advantageously, the strength of the nonconformist ministry arranged against an "abomination that maketh desolate." Howe's sermon on "Union" is in the third volume of the series. It has been well chosen for republication in the following pages. Nothing, from Howe or any other man could have been selected, more excellent, or more opportune for the movement so happily begun towards openly recognising the union already—and always—existing among real Christians. We have seen, that early in life Howe had embraced the principle that piety—the regenerating work of the Spirit in the heart—the true basis of religious fellowship. From this principle he never swerved. The ground and bond of union in the Church

below and in the Church above, is the same—faith in Christ, shown by submission to him—in other words, a manifestly sincere reception of Immanuel as Prophet, Priest, and King. The visible union contended for by Howe, and to be sought by us, is a union without compromise of differing opinions among its members—a union in which full scope is to be given for “*exhorting* one another,” though not for *judging* one another—for “speaking the truth,” wide as our convictions may extend, with no other restriction than that it be done “in love.” In 1684, was published the treatise which stands the first in this volume—“The Redeemer’s Tears wept over Lost Souls.” It is a treatise which tells the mental and moral character of Howe as a minister, as much as anything he ever wrote. The commencement is in the highest style of graphic description. The pathos in the pictures afterwards drawn, opens the fountains of grief in the reader’s heart, and he mingles his own tears with the Redeemer’s, over the lost Jerusalem *souls*. The succeeding explanations, admonitions, and exhortations, counsels, encouragements, are all so nicely put, and yet breathe such a majesty and earnestness of compassionate anxiety to win and save men, bowing down their spirits under the influence of truth manifested to the conscience, that, after reading it, one concludes that mind can do no more with fellow minds, in dealing for their conversion. Let every reader go through it with prayer about the case of his own soul.

In the year 1685, Mr Howe somewhat suddenly received and accepted an invitation from Philip Lord Wharton, before named, to accompany him in a tour on the Continent. From an affecting letter which he addressed to his congregation after he had left England, it appears that he had no opportunity of giving formal notice to the people of his leaving them. It appears, also, that persecution was then carried to such an extent in the metropolis, that it was dangerous for him to walk the streets, and that his health was seriously impaired by confinement to his house. The letter is described, “To such in and about London, among whom I have laboured in the Work of the Gospel. My most dearly beloved our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grace, mercy, and peace, be through him multiplied unto you.” It lays open the pastor’s heart. It is hardly possible to imagine anything more full, wise, or appropriate. The limits within which this account must be confined, prevent the insertion of more than two extracts, very brief, but inimitably characteristic. After exhorting people to trust Providence under their trials, he cautions them against irritation towards their persecutors, and writes—

“ Oh ! the gentleness, kindness, tenderness, and compassionateness, of the evangelical, truly Christian spirit, as it most eminently appeared in our Lord Jesus Christ himself ! And we are told, ‘ If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.’ And how easy and pleasant is it to one’s own self, to be void of all wrathfulness and vindictive designs towards any other man ! For my own part, I should not have that peace and consolation in a suffering condition, (as my being so many years under restraint from that pleasant work of pleading with sinners that they might be saved, is the greatest suffering I was liable to in this world,) as through the goodness of God I have found, and do find, were I not conscious to myself of no other than kind and benign thoughts towards them I have suffered by, and that my heart tells me I desire not the least to hurt them that would do me the greatest.” The parenthesis in this extract will remind the reader of what we have called a “ golden sentence” in one of Howe’s letters to Baxter. To prevent his people from being “ sunk in dejection,” he says, among other things, “ As the bitterness of Christians one towards another chased away his Spirit, his Spirit shall vanquish and drive away all that bitterness, and consume our other dross. And, as the apostacy long ago foretold, and of so long continuance in the Christian Church hath been begun and continued by constant wars against the Spirit of Christ ; the restitution and recovery of the Church, and the reduction of Christianity to its ancient self, and primitive state, will be by the victory of the Spirit of Christ over that contrary spirit. Then shall all the enmity, pride, wrathfulness and cruelty, which have rent the Church of Christ, and made it a little itself, be melted down ; and with all their great impurities besides, earthliness, carnality, love of this present world, and prevalence of sensual lusts, be purged more generally away ; and his repairing work be done in a way *grievous to none, whereby those that are most absolutely conquered will be most highly pleased* : not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.” The italics are not Howe’s ; they have been introduced to mark his thoughts.

Mr Howe spent about twelve months with Lord Wharton, visiting the principal cities of Europe. No change for the better having occurred by that time in England, he took a house at Utrecht, affording accommodation to distinguished persons who came to that city. With other exiles he preached at the English church there, and he superintended the studies of some young men who were at the University preparing for the ministry. He became acquainted with the leading scholars on the Continent. Mr (afterwards Bishop) Burnet frequently preached and con-

muned with his nonconformist brethren there. Mr Howe had several interviews with the Prince of Orange, afterwards William the Third of England, who "discoursed with him with great freedom, and ever afterwards entertained a great respect for him." In 1687, James II. published a "declaration for liberty of conscience." On this Howe agreed to return to his charge in London. When calling to take leave of the Prince, his Royal Highness counselled him and the other Dissenters to great caution, how they appeared to concur in the measures of the English court. King James, in conversation with Mr Howe, wished him to countenance "addresses" to him from the Dissenters; but Mr Howe respectfully excused himself, as not thinking it right for a minister of the Gospel to meddle in State affairs. The most painful reply which James received was from the Duke of Bedford, whom, in his extremity, he summoned to his council. "My Lord," said James, "you are a good man, and have a great influence; you can do much for me at this time." The Duke answered, "I am an old man, and can do but little;" then added with a deep sigh, "I had once a son, that could now have been very serviceable to your Majesty"—alluding to the Lord Russell who had been sacrificed to the vengeance of James, then Duke of York. The King, we are told, was struck dumb by this answer, so that he could make no reply.

Upon the "glorious Revolution" in 1688, Mr Howe headed the Dissenting ministers when they brought up their address to the Throne, and "made a handsome speech on the occasion." An attempt was soon made to induce the new Government to adopt the old course towards the Dissenters, although they had contributed greatly towards accomplishing the change in which all lovers of their country had reason to rejoice. This led him to publish "The Case of the Protestant Dissenters Represented and Argued." There is in this piece a tone of calm independence and determination, answering to the strength of the cause and to the manliness of the writer. His appeals are not only to Christians, but to Englishmen, as citizens. He claims civil rights for the Dissenters, and sustains his plea by referring to their past conduct in standing by the true interests of their country. His allusion to the sufferings of the Dissenters, and to the awful prophanation by "the exclusive sacramental test, brought down as low as to the keeper of an ale-house," are overwhelming. The opponents of the Dissenters failed for that time. On May 24th, 1689, the "Act of Toleration" received the royal assent. Howe then published his "Humble Requests both to Conformists and

Dissenters, touching their temper and behaviour towards each other upon the lately passed Indulgence"—a document well adapted to the occasion, but one for which the minds of the parties were not yet ready.

It is believed that Mr Howe had much to do in preparing what were called the "Heads of Argument"—a code of rules on which, in 1691, it was attempted to establish a union between the "Presbyterians" and "Congregationalists," the distinction of one from the other consisting already more in name than in fact. But differences soon arose which nullified what had been done. Some of the Independents were zealous "Calvinists," according to the then received meaning of the name. Some of the other class inclined to what was then considered the "Arminian" view; and among them was Richard Baxter. He, and five other ministers, including worthy men of both parties, united in a weekly lecture. The publication of a Dr Crisp's works, with a certificate of their "genuineness," signed by Mr Howe and others, stirred Baxter and those who agreed with him in doctrine. One of the lecturers, Mr Williams, (afterwards Dr, and the founder of Red Cross Street Library,) published his "Gospel Truth Vindicated," to which strong exceptions were taken by some who were engaged in the same lecture. A separation ensued, preceded and followed by unbecoming heats on both sides. These doctrinal disputes led to the preaching and publication, by Mr Howe, of his two discourses on "the Carnality of Religious Contention." Both parties in the controversy held the substantial of the "faith," and both were, perhaps, more or less *ultra* in some of their opinions. Howe's aim was to allay animosities, and bring them to love and live as brethren. The reader, on perusing these discourses, given in this volume as a suitable, if not necessary, accompaniment to the sermon on "Union among Protestants," will value them as they deserve. The second, in a series of particulars, points out the forms under which "carnality" may show itself in contentions about religion, in the advocates of truth as well as in the followers of false doctrine. In how many instances have champions of "orthodoxy" breathed a spirit in their statements, which, whatever evidence of truth their reasonings have pressed upon the head, could not fail to excite and foment the worst workings of depravity in the heart. It is not enough that a man is conscious of defending *truth*. He must watch his *temper*, lest his *animus* counterworks his *arguments*, and his well intended efforts do irreparable mischief to himself and his neighbours, and to the holy and heavenly cause he designs to serve

We are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints;" and we must "declare" to the church and to the world, "the whole counsel of God," keeping back "nothing that is profitable." Yet this may be done, and we are bound to do it, in a manner consistent with another equally express apostolic rule—"the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." These sermons were delivered in 1693. The "Preface" to them is not less excellent than the discourses themselves. In several parts of it Howe asserts his views of Christian communion. He represents "excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom Christ would exclude," as "in itself a real sin." He describes Christians as "a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him." "The Lord's table," he tells us, "certainly ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?" Let these principles be carried out; let Churches recognize "Christian communion" as "being of Christians as such;" let their fellowship be "made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice, own the very substance of the Christian religion." Then we shall soon see "every pot in Jerusalem holiness unto the Lord," "and there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Churches will be brotherhoods of saints, all prepared to blend as parts of "the whole family in heaven and earth." But till that principle be recognized, fellowship among all *Churches*, as such, there cannot be; we must be content with fellowship among those Churches, *as such*, who do acknowledge it. Beyond that line we must take the fellowship of *individuals*, making *that*, however, wide as the fellowship of "the saved."

In the above "Preface," speaking of his having, in publishing the discourses, "complied with a sort of necessity," he says, "my own memorials and preparations were, indeed, imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one, so often in the week engaged in such work." What the sermons were which he preached "so often in the week" from "memorials and preparations" "imperfect enough," we have other and more ample means of judging. Between the years 1690 and 1694, were delivered the several courses of sermons which form the latter part of the sixth, and the whole of the seventh and eighth volumes, in the octavo

edition of his works, edited some years ago, by the Rev. John Hunt, now of Brixton. To that gentleman ministers and others are under great obligations, for placing within their reach so large a store of precious materials. In 1694, were also preached the sermons on "Family Religion and Worship."

The years 1694 and 1695 produced Howe's pieces on the Trinity. The first and principal is entitled "A Calm and Solemn Inquiry concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead." It contains a summary of the evidence from Scripture in proof of a Trinity, but the object and scope of it are precisely what the title expresses—the "possibility" of a Trinity. The "inquiry" is, indeed, "calm and sober"—a model of writing on such a subject. The concluding sentences of the "Postscript" will serve as a specimen. They regard the "simplicity" of the Divine nature, which some affirm excludes a Trinity. After explaining what simplicity may, and what may not, be believed as essential to God, the writer proceeds—"I judge human (and even all created) minds, very incompetent judges of the divine simplicity. We know not what the divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity, without distinction of things: in more dusky light the whole horizon appears most simple, and every where like itself: in brighter light, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aerial people that replenish the region (except rare appearances to very few,) we see none. Here we want not objects, but a finer eye. It is much at this rate with our minds, in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings; most of all the Uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity! and what do we make of that? vast undistinguished vacuity! sad, immense solitude! only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees. But if a voice which we acknowledge to be divine, speak to us out of the profound abyss, and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it; good God! shall we not believe it? Or, shall we say we clearly see *that* is not, which *only we* do not see? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness."

This extract proves that at "sixty-five" the author's faculty of acute and dignified argument was in no degree impaired. Neither was there the semblance of failure in his pulpit minis-

trations. The celebrated antiquary, Ralph Thoresby, visited London in 1695, and made this entry in his diary—"May 19, Die Dom. Heard the famous Mr Howe, both morning and afternoon, who preached incomparably."

When nearly "sixty-eight" his large heart retained in full freshness those generous sympathies which are the soul of friendship. Under date of "March 18, 1698," he thus wrote to the Rev. Mr Spilsbury of Bromsgrove. "May I once more hope to salute my dear brother in this world? Whether I shall or not, I must leave to Him to whom greater, and all things must be left. Thou mayest have taken thy flight before *this* reaches thee, but the soul and spirit from whence it comes *may* in due time; through the infinite riches of freest grace, and the atoning blood of that sacrifice which once for all was offered up. 'We come to the general assembly and to the spirits of just men made perfect,' but as we come to 'Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the blood of sprinkling.' 'By his own blood he is entered into the holy of holies, as the forerunner, and for us.' Upon such terms may sinful unprofitable servants hope to enter, and be received under the notion of faithful, and as those that are graciously counted such, into the joy of their Lord. Thou art ready to enter, and wilt shortly be adoring before the throne: oh, with what complacency! receiving the end of thy faith, having fought the good fight of it! And must thy poor brethren left behind, sigh and groan still? amidst their drowsy hearers, and too drowsy fruitless labours? But I envy thee not; and those that are dearest and nearest to thee owe thee so much as to rejoice in thy joy, while they cannot as yet in their own. Thou art upon my heart, if God saw it good, to live and die with thee. This day se'nnight thy worthy brother B. and my brother F. dined with me, when thou wast most affectionately remembered; but art no day forgotten, by thy sincere lover, and of all thine, hoping and aiming (though faintly) to be thy follower, J. HOWE. If there be joy in heaven for a converted sinner, shall there not for a glorified saint! and the leader and teacher of many such! some that are in glory, and others that shall shortly be! O the triumph at thy abundant entrance!" That "abundant entrance" was granted in about three months afterwards.

Mr Howe's seventieth year (1699) produced his "Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World." The sublime subject accorded with his taste. It was also in keeping with his circumstances; for the friends of his youth and companions of his toils and sufferings, Bates and Mead, and Baxter and Adams, and

others—were fast disappearing from around him and entering that world ; and he was himself approaching upon its confines. But the immediate occasion of the discourse was the death of a most lovely and promising youth, the eldest son of Sir Charles and Lady Houghton. The dedication of it has been already quoted. Of the admirable piece itself, Professor Rogers says truly, “as it was one of the last, so it is one of the richest and maturest fruits of our author’s genius.” As if to leave behind him another and condensed testimony on themes that are the instruments of awakening and salvation to the race, in 1701 he gave forth his “Discourses on Man’s Enmity against God and Reconciliation to Him ;” these are introduced last in the present volume. As if to clear off arrears before he bade us adieu, in 1702 he published the “Second Part” of his “Living Temple,” referring to his sermons on “Self-dedication,” as appropriately completing what he had contemplated in preparing the former work. To the last, however, the press wanted not employment from his pen. Late in 1702, appeared his funeral-sermon for the Rev. Peter Vink, who died at Hackney in September. It is founded on Acts v. 20, and begins, “The present speaker in this text is an angel of God ; one of those blessed spirits from among the principalities and powers in heavenly places, who greatly delight (as you have lately heard, and I hope are, God willing, farther to hear) to be concerned about the affairs of God’s Church on earth.” A note at foot of the page says, “Having a discourse in hand about this time, on Ephesians iii. 10. To the intent that now unto the principalities,” &c. Can *this* “discourse,” or any memorials of it, be possibly found ? What a *subject* for *Howe* ! His sermon on “Deliverance from the Power of Darkness,” was preached November 5, 1703, Mr Howe being then in his *seventy-fourth* year.

At length, in the spring of 1705, came out his last publication, a treatise on “Patience in Expectation of Future Blessedness.” He had preached from the text, Hebrews x. 36, some time before, on the death of Dr Henry Sampson, who had been a member of his church for thirty years. In an Appendix, giving “some memorial” of this friend, he mentions, “my own long languishings,” and “God affording me, at length, some respiration from the extremity of those painful distempers that had long afflicted me.” The “respiration” was very temporary. The “spirit” retained all its vitality and strength unimpaired ; it was “fat and flourishing.” But the “flesh” had been long labouring under infirmity ; as the reader has observed, it had been more than

once tottering ; and now it rapidly gave way. " The earthly house of this tabernacle," was to be " dissolved," and exchanged for a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." But before we go to see him die, we will retrace our steps a little, to notice an instance or two of the foretastes that had been granted him of the joy on which he was about to enter.

Rarely has there existed such a combination of great devotional susceptibility with great intellectual power, as in the case of Mr Howe. This may be gathered from his writings, which abound with *bursts* of hallowed fervour. And other evidence is at hand. On the fly-leaf of his study Bible were found, after his death, some memoranda in Latin, which have been thus translated :—" Dec. 26, '89. After that I had long seriously and repeatedly thought with myself, that besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying savoury taste and relish of them was also necessary, that with stronger force and more powerful energy, they might penetrate into the most inward centre of my heart, and there being most deeply fixed and rooted, govern my life ; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment on my good state Godward ; and after I had in my course of preaching been largely insisting on 2 Cor. i. 12 ; this very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the divine majesty, seemed to dart into my expanded breast. I have often since, with great complacency, reflected on that very signal pledge of special divine favour vouchsafed to me on that memorable day, and have with repeated fresh pleasure tasted the delights thereof. But what on Oct. 22, 1704, of the same kind I sensibly felt, through the admirable bounty of my God and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart; tears gushing out of mine eyes, for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that for this very purpose my own should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit; Rom. v. 5." In addition to these private memoranda of matters which were at the time secret within his own breast, it was observed that in his last illness, and when he had been declining for some time, he was once in a " most affecting, melting, heavenly frame," when administering the Lord's Supper, and was carried out into " such a ravishing and transport-

ing celebration of the love of Christ, that both he himself and the communicants were apprehensive he would have expired in that very service."

Having these facts before us, in addition to what we had previously learned respecting Mr Howe, we are prepared for what his biographer, Dr Calamy, further states of him—that "he discovered no fear of dying, but even when his end drew near, was very serene and calm,"—that "he seemed indeed sometimes to have been got to heaven, even before he had laid aside that mortality which he had been long expecting to have swallowed up of life,"—and, that "though nature was considerably spent in him, yet was there somewhat even in the manner of his dying that was remarkable and worthy of observation." We must not lay too much stress upon what is called "dying experience." Had Howe's been the opposite of what it was, our assurance of his salvation—our respect for his Christian excellence—our admiration of the grace of God in the moral greatness of his character, would have been in no degree diminished. The last hours of some men, eminent in piety and usefulness, as they were in talents and labours through life, have been overcast with gloom that prevented bystanders from recognising the glories of their departure. But the orb setting behind a bank of dense black clouds, is himself far beyond their reach. They affect not his brightness, but merely our view of it. While to us he seems to sink in darkness that extinguishes his beams, he is really rising in other skies gladdening the sight of other observers, and clothed in splendours as if the Almighty had afresh, or for the first time, robed him in the reflection of his own divine effulgence. "We walk by *faith*, not by *sight*;" and when a man's *life* has testified that his *heart* is *right* with *Christ*, we know that his *safety* for glorification is in *Christ's* hands, though his enemies be in malice loading him with anathemas, or he, by morbid influence from what is animal on what is mental, be writing volumes of bitter things against himself, at the crisis of his leaving the body. Still, a cloudless sunset is pleasant to witness, though in its effects on nature quite secondary to a cloudless day. And such a sunset was John Howe's.

We are told that, during his last sickness, he was visited by many of all ranks, and that he conversed very pleasantly with them. Among others was Richard Cromwell, who was now grown old, and had lived many years in retirement from the world since the time when he was Protector of England's Commonwealth, and Howe was his domestic chaplain. The inter-

view was deeply affecting. Both parties in it held the same faith, cherished the same hope, and were inspired with the same love. "There was a great deal of serious discourse between them. Tears were shed freely on both sides, and the parting was very solemn." "Many elder and younger ministers also frequently visited him, and he was very free in his discourse with them, and talked like one of another world, and that had raised uncommon hopes of that blessedness there which his heart had long been set upon."

One morning, finding himself much better than could have been expected after the severe pain he had endured the preceding evening, he became quite cheerful. An attendant noticed it; on which he said, that "he was for feeling that he was *alive*, though most willing to die, and lay the clog of mortality aside." He once told Mrs Howe that "though he thought he loved her as well as it was fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to his choice, whether to die that moment, or to live that night, and the living that night would secure the continuance of his life for seven years to come, he would choose to die that moment." Great as he was accounted by others, he had no dependence but on Christ;—"I expect," said he, "my salvation, not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner." Shortly before his dissolution a change took place which raised the hopes of his friends. Probably it was during this partial revival, that he laid on his son the command to destroy his "memorials." The change was of brief duration. On Thursday, March 29th, it was certain that his end was near; and on the following Monday, April 2, 1705, "being quite worn out," he expired.

Thus died JOHN HOWE!—thus, with a composure that became his sanctified, majestic soul, confiding in "the First and the Last and the Living One, who has the keys of Hades and of Death," did this honoured servant, at his Master's bidding, lay down his earthly charge, and rise to receive the "Well-done," which sovereign mercy, through the Cross in which he gloried, had prepared to compensate and crown for ever his watchful, toilsome, suffering, faithful stewardship below.

His funeral-sermon was preached the following Lord's-day to his bereaved family and people, by his colleague in the ministry, the Rev. John Spademan, from 2 Tim. iii. 14; "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." From an expression towards the commencement of the discourse, it appears that

the meeting-house was hung in black, and that a large number of the hearers had put on mourning, in token of respect for the deceased, and of grief at his removal.

In the outset of his "Discourse on the Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World," occasioned by the death of young Houghton, Mr Howe throws out a gem from his exuberant store, as he often did almost unconsciously, and in a way not likely to be observed. He says, "I am now to take notice to you of (what most would call) the premature or untimely death of a most hopeful young gentleman, the heir of a very considerable family, greatly prepared by parts and pious sentiments; and further preparing by study and conversation, to be useful to the age, cut off in his prime, when the mere shewing of him to the world had begun to raise an expectation, in such as knew him, of somewhat more than ordinary hereafter from him." In a foot-note he appends the scrap—"Ostendunt terris hunc tantum, fata nec ultra esse sinunt"—rendered by Mr Hunt, "The gods have just shewn him to the world, and permitted him to be seen no more." The late Rev. Robert Hall, an enthusiastic admirer of Howe, introduces the same allusion in his beautiful notice of the Rev. Thomas Spencer of Liverpool, who was drowned in the Mersey, upwards of thirty years ago, having just commenced a ministry of astonishing power. The notice is subjoined to a "Discourse on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Ministry." By Howe the gem is simply let fall for the reader to pick up, look at, and make his own, if he will. By Mr Hall, attention is called to it, and it is most gracefully presented in a rich and complete setting. "The unqualified admiration he excited while living, and the deep and universal concern expressed at his death, demonstrate him to have been no ordinary character; but one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the Great Author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, while he hastens to *make them up among his jewels*. The high hopes entertained of this admirable youth, and the shock approaching to consternation, occasioned by his death, will probably remind the classical reader of the inimitable lines of Virgil on Marcellus.—

"O nate, ingentem luctum ne quere tuorum.

Ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinent."

We stay not to remark on this coincidence as indicating the

different character of the two great men. Happily, Howe himself was not merely "the blissful vision of a day"—a youth that should "just be shown on earth, and snatched away." This "rare specimen of human nature"—far transcending the son of Octavia, or young Houghton, or even our own Spencer—was not exhibited "for a moment" only. Through a range of *threescore and fifteen years*, Providence was "shewing" him in positions, aspects, lights, associations, endlessly varied; as if to give opportunity for his being thoroughly examined—studied in detail; and the results preserved to interest and edify posterity. And rarely has a character appeared more worthy of being made a "study." Like a production on which a master of the pencil or the chisel had outdone himself, at first view there may be little noticed that is peculiar; but by degrees, if the observer have capacity, an awakening, an enlargement, an outgoing occurs within him, till at length his soul is spread forth and transfixed in admiration upon the object; so will it be found in looking at JOHN HOWE. True, he was of a depraved race, in common with ourselves; nor was ever one more ready to acknowledge it than he. But—to take a hint from a passage of sublime thought, which few, or no one but himself, of ordinary mortals, could have penned—though every piece of humanity be a ruin-fragment of a sanctuary, John Howe was not a common block of stone, that told not of itself to what it once belonged;—he was rather a noble column yet left standing, or again upreared, with its graceful Doric or rich Corinthian capital, enabling us to judge how glorious the edifice must have been before it was, for sin, abandoned to desolation by its God.

While the inspired statement is true in the fact which it regards, that "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," it is seen, felt, acknowledged, that in other respects there are differences among men, previous to that made by forgiving and regenerating grace. There are *natural* varieties of constitution, temperament, disposition, intellect, taste. Some men are naturally vain, rash, feeble, inconstant, mean, selfish, crafty, rough; others naturally modest, prudent, energetic, dignified, generous, steady, straightforward, bland. These opposite qualities are found variously combined. The differences referred to, from whatever causes they arise, do not altogether disappear, even under the power of the Divine Spirit, while we are in the body. Sufficient allowance is often not made for them in judging of the reality of conversion; nor, on the other hand, do we always apply with becoming care, by self-discipline to mortify what is evil, and encourage what is

good, in our constitutional peculiarities. It is questionable whether due attention has ordinarily been paid to them in admitting candidates for the ministry. Greatness of "natural character," under certain forms, in Saul of Tarsus, no doubt had much to do with the Apostle Paul's greatness in the Gospel. There is a nobility to be derived from ancestry, that depends not on titles or estates, and which is incomparably more precious than both—a nobility which peers and princes *may* be wanting in, while peasantry, and even slaves, *may* have it—a nobility inherent rather than inherited. And in this, the highest nobility apart from grace—this *εὐγενεια* of Acts xvii. 11—JOHN HOWE was rich indeed.

But whatever combinations of grandeur, strength, and goodness may have existed in Mr Howe's natural character, we must not ascribe altogether to it the majestic capacity and benignity which his portrait exhibits enthroned in an unrivalled countenance. The full and advantageous development of inherent desirable properties depends much on the range given for their exercise, and on the influences that affect them. Mr Howe was not so remarkable for the predominance of any one faculty, as for the admirable manifestation, balancing and blending, of all the constituents of a *great man*. He would have excelled in any sphere that gave scope for thought. But when, by his "very early and growing exemplary piety," his intellect was brought to exercise itself on the sublime doctrines of revelation—the grandest range for human or angelic powers—it came to occupy a sphere that afforded room for putting forth all his might of mind. And when, by the same "very early and growing exemplary piety," his heart became constantly wrought on by those stupendous, sacred, and quickening verities, as the spring, and food, and mould, of its dispositions and activities, his soul acquired a vitality and sanctity, a serenity and expansion, an earnestness and lofty bearing, that lifted her far above her former self, and gave her a measure of fellowship, in tone and habit, with spirits within the veil. The mutual action and reaction in him of the natural and the acquired, the mental and the moral, the internal and the external, sustained by watchfulness and prayer, daily added to the enlargement, the elevation, and the strength of his intellect and his heart. No one has described the process here referred to, of vision inducing assimilation and assimilation improving vision, more rationally and beautifully than Mr Howe. And he was himself a living illustration of what he so well described.

Few, if any, uninspired men have equalled him in what may

be called a *philosophic* knowledge of Christianity, understanding thereby an extensive and harmonized acquaintance with the facts it embraces, derived from a diligent and impartial examination of the divine testimony which reveals it. His exposition of the text of his "Discourse on Union among Protestants," is an instance how minutely and thoroughly he could trace out and gather up the whole amount of sentiment that lay before him on the sacred page. His love of truth and grace, and his faith in the Scriptures as the oracles of God, prepared him to go the full length of whatever they declared to be fact. Nearly all his writings show how a single text, lodged for growth in his mind, would unfold till it became a stately tree, covered with foliage and fruit. Yet he was not for taking an insulated passage, and by reasoning upon the principle it affirmed, or was thought to affirm, frame thereon a system which, peradventure, would require him, for consistency's sake, to put forced and unnatural constructions upon other passages—a habit that has done more than a little to encourage false doctrine and sectarianism. His endeavour was to know all that God had taught, and he believed it because God had taught it. Hence he could fearlessly assert the sovereignty of Divine mercy, claiming the whole glory of salvation, in all its parts and stages, for Him, "of whom, and to whom, and through whom, are all things;"—and yet he could press every conceivable form of appeal that could instruct, awaken, humble, or win, upon the unconverted, as if the responsibility of their salvation rested altogether with themselves. He would not allow it "to be thought the holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen by all the world, that every man's destruction was, entirely, and to the last, of himself;" and yet, in the same address, he would exclaim, "Lord! how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine, indeed, in the institution, but merely human in respect of the radication and exercise; in which respects, also, it must be Divine or nothing. What! are we yet to learn, that a Divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as Divine authority direct and enjoin it! Do all such Scriptures go for nothing, that tell us it is God that must create the new heart," &c. No man ever descended lower in searching the depths of human depravity, to bring out, for exposure and conviction, the innate inveterate enmity and atheism of our nature; yet no man has risen higher in contemplating the fruition attained by the spirits of just men made perfect, to inform and encourage the redeemed sinner in

his path-way to that glory. Howe held and taught both the predestination and the justification of grace, together with the agency of the Divine Spirit in the new birth and the believer's life; and yet he inculcated the details of practical piety, and failed not to present every truth, and every text, in its power on the inward and outward character. But IMMANUEL was the theme on which his soul kindled, and appeared like the "angel standing in the sun." Immanuel—the Manifestation of Deity—the Maker and Lord of the universe—the Expiation for our guilt—the Administrator of redemption—the Hope of transgressors—the Life of the dead—the King of Zion—the Fountain of all benediction—the Author, Pattern, and Pledge of His people's glorification—this, THIS was with Howe the one grand subject in connexion with which he made all his great movements, and which gave light and vitality, grace and grandeur, to every movement that he made.

Fault has been found with him as too argumentative and metaphysical. Similar complaints have been made of the apostle Paul. They come from persons who like not to exercise the *mind* upon religion—persons who care not to *think*, in order to believe; who wish for edification, without the trouble of getting information; who prize feeling, more than judgment; who are ruled by impulses, not evidence. "Dryness" is one of the last things that can fairly be charged upon Howe; his statements—even his minute explanations—breathe life and freshness. More generally, however, and more justly, have objections been made to his *style*. Nor, surely, can it be taken as a model. He never made composition a study; it was not the habit of his age to do so. John Howe and Robert Hall have been placed in juxtaposition a few pages ago. One almost covets for Howe's thoughts, the advantageous polish and dressing which Mr Hall, without effort, gave to his. Yet it is questionable whether they might not thereby have lost somewhat of their massiveness, condensation, and pungency. But be that as it may, Howe's style served for his time. Wood praises it. And Howe's thoughts are, for the most part, diamonds, that can owe little of their preciousness to the art and toil of the lapidary.

He was considered a "great preacher;" and deservedly, if abundance of matter, given out with hallowed earnestness, and addressed to the understanding and the heart, entitles a man to be so accounted. To what is called "oratory" he made no pretence. *His* was the eloquence of *soul*, more than of *words*; and *that* he had in an eminent degree. If instruction, reasoning, ex-

postulation, or living pathos, be adapted to commend the truth to the hearer's conscience, one can readily imagine how *his* sermons would tell upon an auditory. And it speaks well for the congregations of his day, that they could appreciate and enjoy a ministry of so much sterling intellectual and christian worth. He frequently delivered a succession of sermons, directed fully to expound a *subject*. His ordinary plan with insulated discourses, was to expound the text, catching up its own points, imbibing its animus or that of the truth as in it presented, and then to place the whole before his audience with various applications, so as to make the hearers feel that it was the text, or rather the Spirit in the text, and not Howe himself, that was addressing them. This habit gave to his preaching depth, fulness, savour, authority, and variety without end, which even *his* could never otherwise have acquired. And the habit was likely to impress his people with a sense of the inexhaustible riches of the sacred volume itself, whence as they were made to see, he brought the profusion that he produced ; while his laying open to them frequently the analysing process by which he obtained what he supplied, gave the hearers to know that he was drawing for their benefit, not on the accumulations of his own mind, but on the resources of One that is divine. This, however, is a habit of ministry not to be attained by imbecile, or indolent, or superficial, or merely excitable men.

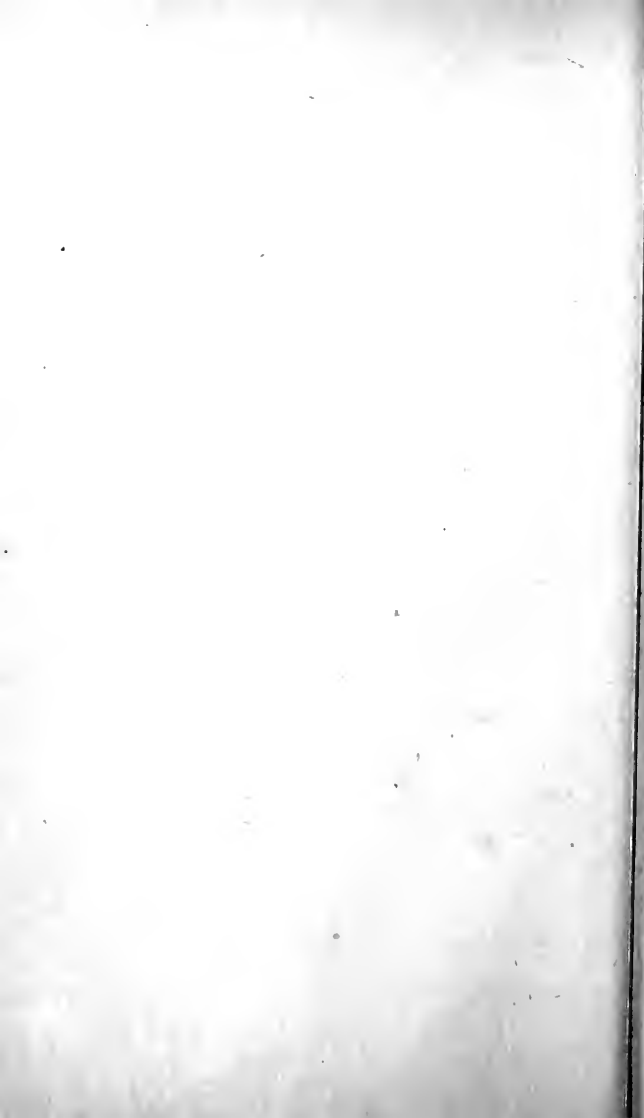
Mr Howe was the "minister of God" every where. He never laid aside his character in that respect. Several anecdotes are related of rebukes he gave, even to persons of rank. Swearing was, after the Commonwealth, much more general in the upper circles than it is at present. When he was once at table with a respectable company, a gentleman, while eulogizing Charles I., indulged in many profane expressions. Howe, observing it, quietly remarked, "That in his enumeration of the excellencies of that prince he had totally omitted *one*, which had been universally and justly ascribed to him." The gentleman, well pleased to find that Mr Howe was in any degree an admirer of Charles, was eager to know "what was the excellence which had escaped him." Howe suffered him to press some time for the information, and then told him, "that Charles was never known to swear an oath in his common conversation." The gentleman bore the reproof well, and promised to abandon the habit in future. At another time, as he was passing along the street, he came up with two respectable men, engaged in an angry dispute, and he overheard them "damn" each other. Mr Howe taking off his hat bowed to them most courteously, and said, "I pray God *save*

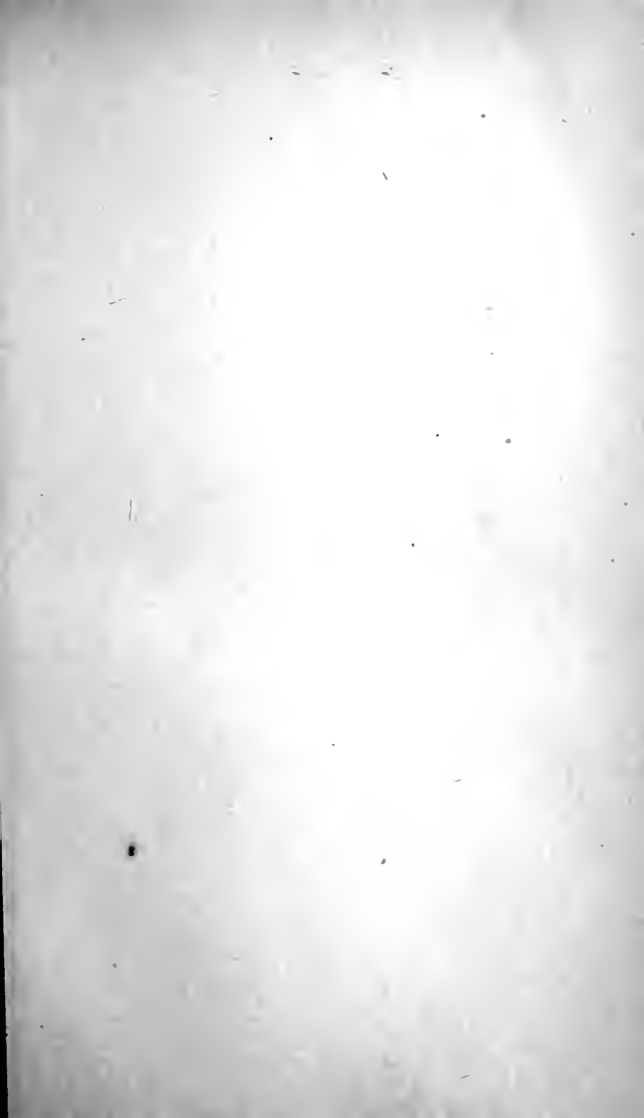
you both." The parties forgot their anger, and joined in thanking him. While the Bill against occasional conformity was under debate in Parliament, not long before his death, as Mr Howe was one day walking in St. James's Park, a noble lord, to whom he was well known, sent his footman to say he desired to speak with him. When he came up, his lordship saluted him with much cordiality, entered into conversation respecting the Bill, which he assured Mr. Howe he had opposed to the utmost of his power. The "noble Lord" became warm, and at length said, "D—n those wretches for they are mad, and will bring us all into confusion." Howe calmly replied, "My Lord, 'tis a great satisfaction to us, who, in all affairs of this nature, desire to look upwards, that there is a God that governs the world, to whom we can leave the issues and events of things : and we are satisfied, and may thereupon be easy, that he will not fail in due time of making a suitable retribution to all, according to their present carriage. And this Great Ruler of the world, my Lord, has among other things also declared that He will make a difference between him that *swareth*, and him that *fearth* an oath." His lordship was struck with Howe's remarks, and after a pause said, "Sir, I thank you for your freedom ; I understand your meaning ; I shall endeavour to make a good use of it." Howe replied, "My lord, I have a great deal more reason to thank your lordship, for saving me the most difficult-part of a discourse, which is the *application*."

It is hardly possible to conceive of a man, in the present state of infirmity, who was more thoroughly imbued with the genius of the Gospel, as "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." His "power" was great—for withstanding, for enduring, for performing. His "love" was genuine, evangelical, universal, self-sacrificing, constant ; the counterpart of Heaven's mercy wrought in him through his believing and spiritual contemplation of itself. His ministry and character were a comment on the words, "We have known and believed the love which God hath toward us ; God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." And he was not less distinguished for his "sound mind ;" in proportion as his love abounded, it abounded "in knowledge and in all judgment."

He "walked with God" on earth. He now "walks with God" in heaven. A minister, yet living, some years since had a dream. He thought he was in glory, associating with Owen, and Flavel, and Charnock, and others, among whom was Howe. His heart

swelled with pleasure and thankfulness, in the consciousness of the free fellowship he was now to have with these already perfected worthies. His emotions for the time were only second to those produced by the sense he had of his own safety, and of the presence and favour of his and their LORD. He awoke—and “behold, it *was a dream!*”—May the writer and the reader of these lines come at length to the far transcending reality, which the dream, however prompted, so humbly and evanescently portrayed!—“BELOVED, NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD; AND IT DOETH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE, BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.”





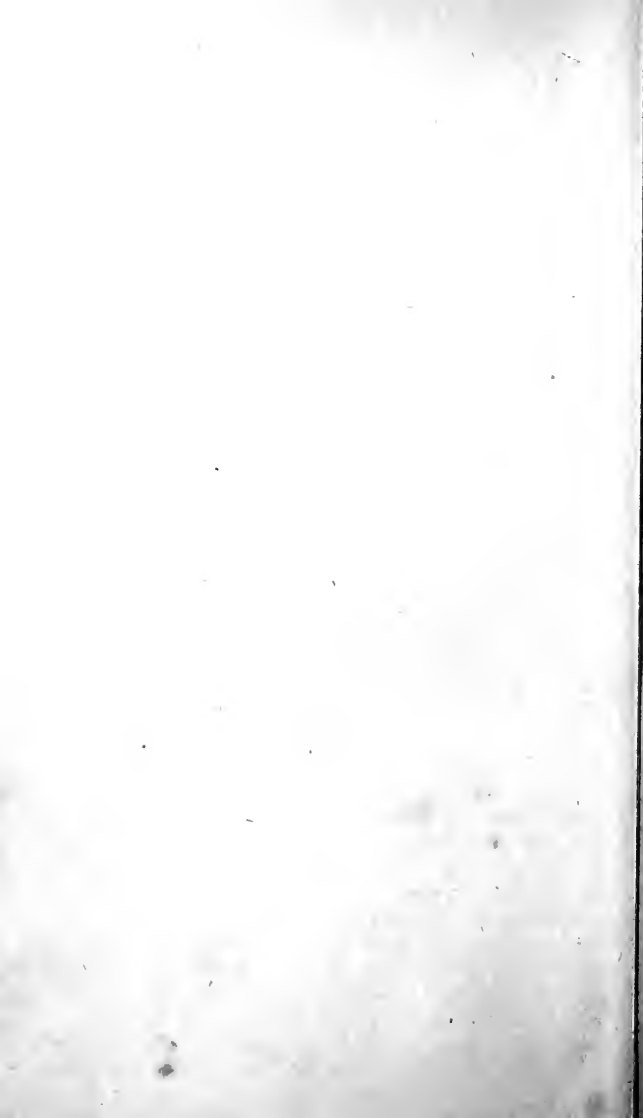


THE
REDEEMER'S TEARS
WEPT OVER LOST SOULS;

A TREATISE ON LUKE xix. 41, 42:

WITH
AN APPENDIX,

Wherein somewhat is occasionally discoursed, concerning the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and how God is said to will the salvation of them that perish.



P R E F A C E.

WHEN spiritual judgments do more eminently befall a people great outward calamities do often ensue. We know it was so in the instance which the text here insisted on refers to. But it is not always so ; the connexion between these two sorts of judgments is not absolutely certain and necessary, yea, and is more frequent with the contraries of each. For this reason therefore, and because judgments of the former kind are so inexpressibly greater and more tremendous, this discourse insists only upon them, about which serious monitions both have a clearer ground, and are of greater importance ; and wholly waives the latter.

Too many are apt, first to fancy similitudes between the state of things with one people and another, and then to draw inferences ; being perhaps imposed on by a strong imagination in both ; which yet must pass with them for a spirit of prophecy, and perhaps they take it not well, if it do not so with others too. It were indeed the work of another prophet certainly to accommodate and make application of what was spoken by a former to a distinct time and people. 'Tis enough for us to learn from such sayings as this of our Saviour, those rules of life and practice, such instruction and cautions as are common to all times, without arrogating to ourselves his prerogative, of foretelling events that shall happen in this or that. The affectation of venturing upon futurity, and foreboding direful things to kingdoms and nations, may, besides its being without sufficient ground, proceed from some one or other very bad principle. Dislike of the present methods of Providence,

weariness and impatience of our present condition, too great proneness to wish what we take upon us to predict, the prediction importing more heat of anger than certainty of foresight, a wrathful spirit, that would presently fetch down fire from heaven upon such as favour not our inclinations and desires, so that (as the poet speaks) whole cities should be overturned at our request, if the heavenly powers would be so easy, as to comply with such furious imprecations : a temper that ill agrees with humanity itself, not to care at what rate of common calamity and misery a purchase be made of our own immunity from sufferings. Nay, to be willing to run the most desperate hazard in the case, and even covet a general ruin to others, upon a mere apprehended possibility that our case may be mended by it ; when it may be more probable to become much worse. But O how disagreeable is it to the Spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour, whose name we bear, upon any terms to delight in human miseries ! The greatest honour men of that complexion are capable of doing the Christian name, were to disclaim it. Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well-pleased spectators, yea authors, of one another's calamities and ruin ? Can the tears that issued from these compassionate, blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woful catastrophe, do nothing towards the quenching of these flames ?

But I add, that the too intent fixing of our thoughts upon any supposable events in this world, argues, at least, a narrow, carnal mind, that draws and gathers all things into time, as despairing of eternity ; and reckons no better state of things considerable, that is not to be brought about under their own present view, in this world ; as if it were uncertain or insignificant, that there shall be unexceptionable, eternal order and rectitude in another.

'Tis again as groundless, and may argue as ill a mind, to prophesy smooth and pleasant things, in a time of abounding wickedness. The safer, middle course, is, without God's express warrant, not to prophesy at all, but as we have opportunity, to warn and instruct men, with all meekness

and long-suffering ; for which the Lord's ordinary messengers can never want his warrant. And, after our blessed Saviour's most imitable example, to scatter our tears over the impenitent, even upon the (too probable) apprehension of the temporal judgments which hang over their heads, but most of all upon the account of their liableness to the more dreadful ones of the other state ; which in the following discourse, I hope, it is made competently evident, this lamentation of our Saviour hath ultimate reference unto. For the other, though we know them to be due, and most highly deserved ; yet concerning the actual infliction of them, even upon obstinate and persevering sinners, we cannot pronounce. We have no settled constitution, or rule, by which we can conclude it, any more than that outward felicity, or prosperity, shall be the constant portion of good men in this world. The great God hath reserved to himself a latitude of acting more arbitrarily, both as to promises and threatenings of this nature. If the accomplishment of either could be certainly expected, it should be of the promises rather ; because as to promised rewards God is pleased to make himself debtor, and a right accrues to them to whom the promise is made, if either the promise be absolute, or made with any certain condition, that is actually performed. But God is always the *creditor pœnæ*, the right to punish remains wholly in himself, the exacting whereof he may therefore suspend, without any appearance of wrong, as seemeth good unto him. If, therefore, he may withhold temporal blessings from good and pious men, to which they have a remote and fundamental right, as having reserved to himself the judgment of the fit time and season of bestowing them ; much more doth it belong to his wisdom, to fix the bounds of his patience and long-suffering ; and determine the season of animadverting upon more open and insolent offenders by temporal punishments, according as shall make most for the ends of his government, and finally prove more advantageous to the dignity and glory of it. The practice, therefore, of our Saviour, in speaking so positively concerning the approaching fall and ruin of Jerusalem, is no

pattern unto us. He spake not only with the knowledge of a prophet, but with the authority of a judge: and his words may be considered both as a prediction and a sentence. We can pretend to speak in neither capacity touching things of this nature.

But for the everlasting punishments in another world, that belong to unreconciled sinners, who refuse to know the things of their peace, the gospel-constitution hath made the connexion firm and unalterable, between their continuing, unrepented wickedness, and those punishments. When, therefore, we behold the impudent, provoking sins of the age wherein we live, against the natural law of our Creator, persisted in with all the marks of infidelity and obduration against the truth and grace that so gloriously shine forth in the gospel of our Redeemer, we may (after him) speak positively, He that believeth not shall be damned—is condemned already; shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. And here, how doth it become us too, in conformity to his great example, to speak compassionately, and as those that, in some measure, know the terror of the Lord! O how doleful is the case, when we consider the inconsistent notions of many, with, not this or that particular doctrine, or article of the Christian faith, but with the whole sum of Christianity, the atheism of some, the avowed mere theism of others! The former sort far outdoing the Jewish infidelity. Which people, besides the rational means of demonstrating a Deity common to them with the rest of mankind, could, upon the account of many things peculiar to themselves, be in no suspense concerning this matter. How great was their reverence of the books of the Old Testament, especially those of Moses! their knowledge most certain of plain, and most convincing matter of fact. How long the government of their nation had been an immediate theocracy! what evident tokens of the divine presence had been among them from age to age! in how wonderful a manner they were brought out of Egypt, through the

Red sea, and conducted all along through the wilderness ! how glorious an appearance and manifestation of himself God afforded to them at the giving of the law, upon mount Sinai ! and by how apparent exertions of the divine power the former inhabitants were expelled, and they settled in the promised land ! Upon all this they could be in no more doubt concerning the existence of a Deity, than of the sun in the firmament. Whereas we are put to prove, in a Christian nation, that this world, and its continual successive inhabitants, have a wise intelligent Maker and Lord, and that all things came not into the state wherein they are, by (no man can imagine what) either fatal necessity or casualty.

But both sorts agree in (what I would principally remark) the disbelief of Christ being the Messiah. And so, with both, the whole business of Christianity must be a fable and a cheat. And thus it is determined, not by men that have made it their business to consider and examine the matter (for the plain evidence of things cannot but even obtrude a conviction upon any diligent inquirer), but by such as have only resolved to consider ; who have beforehand settled their purpose, never to be awed by the apprehension of an invisible Ruler, into any course of life that shall bear hard upon sensual inclination, have already chosen their master, enslaved themselves to brutal appetite, and are so habituated to that mean servility, made it so connatural, so deeply inward to themselves, so much their very life, as that through the pre-apprehended pain and uneasiness of a violent rupture, in tearing themselves from themselves, it is become their interest not to admit any serious thought. Any such thought they are concerned (they reckon) to fence against, as against the point of a sword ; it strikes at their only life, the brute must die, that (by a happy *παλιγγενησία*) they may be again born men. That is the design of Christianity, to restore men to themselves again ; and because it hath this tendency, it is therefore not to be endured. And all the little residue of human wit which is yet left them (which because the sensual nature is predo-

minant, is pressed into a subserviency to the interest and defence of a brutal life), only serves them to turn every thing of serious religion into ridicule, and being themselves resolved never to be reasoned into any seriousness, they have the confidence to make the trial, whether all other men can be jested out of it.

If this were not the case, if such persons could allow themselves to think and debate the matter, how certain would the victory, how glorious would the triumph be, of the Christian religion over all the little cavils they are wont to allege against it! Let their own consciences testify in the case, whether ever they have applied themselves to any solemn disquisition concerning this important affair, but only contented themselves with being able, amidst transient discourse, to cast out, now and then, some oblique glance, against somewhat or other that was appendant, or more remotely belonging, to the Christian profession (in so much haste as not to stay for an answer), and because they may have surprised, sometimes, one or other, not so ready at a quick repartee, or who reckoned the matter to require solemn and somewhat larger discourse (which they have not had the patience to hear), whether they have not gone away puffed and swollen with the conceit, that they have whiffled Christianity away, quite off the stage, with their profane breath; as if its firm and solid strength, wherein it stands stable, as a rock of adamant, depended upon this or that sudden, occasional, momentary effort on the behalf of it. But if such have a mind to try whether any thing can be strongly said in defence of that sacred profession, let them considerately peruse what hath been written by divers to that purpose. And not to engage them in any very tedious longsome task, if they like not to travel through the somewhat abstruser work of the most learned Hugo Grotius, *De Veritate Christianæ Religionis*, or the more voluminous Huetius, his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, or divers others that might be named, let them but patiently and leisurely read over that later very plain and clear, but nervous and solid, discourse of Dr Parker, upon this sub-

ject, and judge then, whether the Christian religion want evidence, or whether nothing can be alleged, why we of this age, so long after Christ's appearance upon the stage of the world, are to reckon ourselves obliged to profess Christianity, and observe the rules of that holy profession.

And really if, upon utmost search, it shall be found to have firm truth at the bottom, it makes itself so necessary (which must be acknowledged part of that truth), that any one that hath wit enough to be author of a jest, might understand it to be a thing not to be jested with. It trifles with no man. And, where it is once sufficiently propounded, leaves it no longer indifferent whether we will be of it or no. Supposing it true, it is strange if we can pretend it not to be sufficiently propounded to us; or that we are destitute of sufficient means to come by the knowledge of that truth! Was this religion instituted only for one nation or age? Did the Son of God descend from heaven, put on flesh, and die? had we an incarnate Deity conversant among men on earth, and made a sacrifice for the sins of men? and hath he left the world at liberty, whether, upon any notice hereof, they should inquire and concern themselves about him or no? Being incarnate he could not, as such, be every where; nor was it fit he should be long here, or needful (and, therefore, not fit) he should die often. It was condescension enough that he vouchsafed once to appear, in so mean and self-abasing a form, and offered himself to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And whereas he hath himself founded a dominion over us in his own blood, did die, and revive, and rise again, that he might be Lord of the living and of the dead; and the eternal Father hath hereupon highly exalted him, given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and that all should confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God; and hath required that all should honour the Son as himself is to be honoured; hath given him power over all flesh, and made him head of all things to the church: was it ever intended men should, generally, remain exempt from obligation to observe, believe, and obey him?

was it his own intention to waive, or not insist upon, his own most sacred, and so dearly acquired rights? to quit his claim to the greatest part of mankind? Why did he then issue out his commission as soon as he was risen from the dead, to teach all nations, to proselyte the world to himself, to baptize them into his name, with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost? (O the great and venerable names that are named upon professing Christians!) Could it be his intention, to leave it lawful to men to choose this, or any, or no religion, as their humours, or fancies, or lusts should prompt them; to disregard and deride his holy doctrines, violate and trample upon his just and equal laws, reject and contemn his offered favours and mercy, despise and profane his sacred institutions? When he actually makes his demand, and lays his claim, what amazing guilt, how swift destruction, must they incur, that dare adventure to deny the Lord that bought them! And they that shall do it, among a Christianized people, upon the pretended insufficiency of the revelation they have of him, do but heighten the affront and increase the provocation. 'Tis to charge the whole Christian institution with foolery, as pretending to oblige men, when they cannot know to what, how, or upon what ground they should be obliged; to pronounce the means and methods inept, and vain, which he hath thought sufficient (and only fit) for the propagating and continuing Christianity in the world; to render the rational reception of it from age to age impossible, in his appointed way; or unless men should be taught by angels, or voices from heaven, or that miracles should be so very frequent and common, as thereby also to become useless to their end; and so would be to make the whole frame of Christian religion an idle impertinency; and, in reference to its avowed design, a self-repugnant thing; and consequently were to impute folly to him who is the Wisdom of God.

And how are other things known, of common concernment, and whereof an immediate knowledge is as little possible? Can a man satisfy himself that he hath a title to an estate, conveyed down to him by very ancient writings,

the witnesses whereof are long since dead and gone ? or that he is obliged by laws made many an age ago ? Or could any records be preserved with more care and concern, than those wherein our religion lies ? or be more secure from designed or material deprivation ? But this is no place to reason these things. Enough is said by others, referred to before. I only further say, if any that have the use of their understandings, living in a Christian nation, think to justify their infidelity and disobedience to the Son of God, by pretending they had no sufficient means to know him to be so, the excuse will avail them alike, as that did him, who insolently said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ? I know not the Lord, neither will I, &c. For have not we as good means to know who Christ is, as the Egyptians at that time had, to know who was the God of Israel, though afterwards he was more known by the judgments which he executed ? Although the knowledge of the only true God be natural, and the obligation thereto common to them ; yet the indisposition to use their understanding this way, is so great and general, and the express revelation that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, requires so much less labour to understand it, than there is in arguing out the existence and attributes of God, by an inhabile, sluggish mind, that the difference cannot be great, if any, on that side. This latter only needs the inquiry, whence the revelation comes ; which as it is not difficult in itself, so this occasion, viz. of its being proposed, doth invite and urge to it ; whereas the generality of the pagan world have little of external inducement, leading them into inquiries concerning the true God. Therefore, all circumstances considered, I see not how they that live under the gospel can be thought to have less advantage and obligation to own Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God, than the rest of the world, to own the only living and true God ; or that the former should be less liable to the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven for holding supernatural truth in unrighteousness, than the other, for doing so injurious violence to that which is merely natural. Unto what

severities, then, of the divine wrath and justice, even of the highest kind, do multitudes lie open in our days !

For besides those (much fewer) mental, or notional, infidels, that believe not the principles of the Christian religion, against the clearest evidence, how vastly greater is the number of them that are so in heart and practice, against their professed belief ! that live in utter estrangement from God, as without him in the world, or in open enmity against him, and contrariety to the known rules of the religion they profess ! How many that understand nothing of its principal and plainest doctrines ! as if nothing were requisite to distinguish the Christian from the pagan world, more than an empty name ; or as if the Redeemer of sinners had died upon the cross, that men might more securely remain alienated from the life of God, not to reconcile and reduce them to him ! or that they might with safety indulge appetite, mind earthly things, make the world their god, gratify the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it, defy heaven, affront their Maker, live in malice, envy, hatred to one another ! not to bless them, by turning them from these impieties and iniquities ! As if it were so obscurely hinted, as that it could not be taken notice of, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so looking for the blessed hope. And that Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ! How many, again, are Christians, they know not why ! upon the same terms that others are Mahometans, because it is the religion of their country, by fate or by accident, not by their own choice and judgment ! The same inconsideration makes them be Christians, that makes others be none.

And now, shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone over these perishing souls ? have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject ? Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains ! Is it nothing to us, that multitudes are sinking, going down into perdition, under the name of

Christian, under the seal of baptism, from under the means of life and salvation ! perishing ! and we can do nothing to prevent it ! We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all, even with all their hearts and souls, and mind and might ; that do not believe in his Son and pay him homage, as their rightful Lord, sincerely subjecting themselves to his laws and government. But this they will not understand, or not consider. Our endeavours to bring them to it are ineffectual ; 'tis but faint breath we utter. Our words drop and die between us and them ! We speak to them in the name of the eternal God that made them, of the great Jesus who bought them with his blood, and they regard it not. The Spirit of the Lord is in a great degree departed from among us, and we take it not to heart ! We are sensible of lesser grievances, are grieved that men will not be more entirely proselyted to our several parties and persuasions, rather than that they are so disinclined to become proselytes to real *Christianity* ; and seem more deeply concerned to have Christian religion so or so modified, than whether there shall be any such thing ! or whether men be saved by it or lost !

This sad case, that so many were likely to be lost under the first sound of the gospel ; and the most exemplary temper of our blessed Lord in reference to it, are represented in the following treatise ; with design to excite their care for their own souls, who need to be warned, and the compassions of others for them who are so little apt to take warning. The good Lord grant that it may be, some way or other, useful for good !

JOHN HOWE.



THE REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

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*"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes"—Luke, xix. 41, 42.*

WE have here a compassionate lamentation in the midst of a solemn triumph. Our Lord's approach unto Jerusalem at this time, and his entrance into it (as the foregoing history shews), carried with them some face of regal and triumphal pomp, but with such allays, as discovered a mind most remote from ostentation; and led by judgment (not vain glory), to transmit through a dark umbrage some glimmerings only of that excellent majesty which both his sonship and his mediatorship entitled him unto; a very modest and mean specimen of his true indubious royalty and kingly state; such as might rather intimate than plainly declare it, and rather afford an after-instruction to teachable minds, than beget a present conviction and dread in the stupidly obstinate and unteachable. And this effect we find it had, as is observed by another evangelical historian; who relating the same matter, how in his passage to Jerusalem the people met him with branches of palm-trees and joyful hosannas, he riding upon an ass's colt (as princes or judges, to signify meekness as much as state, were wont to do, Judges v. 10), tells us, these things his disciples understood not at the first, but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him, John, xii. 16. For great regard was had in this, as

in all the acts of his life and ministry, to that last and conclusive part, his dying a sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of men ; to observe all along that mediocrity, and steer that middle course between obscurity and a terrifying, overpowering glory, that this solemn oblation of himself might neither be prevented, nor be disregarded. Agreeably to this design, and the rest of his course, he doth, in this solemnity, rather discover his royal state and dignity by a dark emblem, than by an express representation ; and shews in it more of meekness and humility, than of awful majesty and magnificence, as was formerly predicted, Zech. ix. 9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

And how little he was taken in this piece of state, is sufficiently to be seen in this paragraph of the chapter. His mind is much more taken up in the foresight of Jerusalem's sad case ; and therefore being come within view of it (which he might very commodiously have in the descent of the higher opposite hill, mount Olivet), he beheld the city, 'tis said, and wept over it. Two things concur to make up the cause of this sorrow :—1. The greatness of the calamity ; Jerusalem, once so dear to God, was to suffer, not a scar, but a ruin ;—“ The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another :” and—2. The lost opportunity of preventing it ;—“ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes,” ver. 42. And again, “ Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

*First,* The calamity was greater in his eyes, than it can be in ours. His large and comprehensive mind could take the compass of this sad case. Our thoughts cannot reach far, yet we can apprehend what may make this case very

deplorable ; we can consider Jerusalem as the city of the great King, where was the palace and throne of the Majesty of heaven, vouchsafing to "dwell with men on earth." Here the divine light and glory had long shone ; here was the sacred Shechinah, the dwelling-place of the Most High, the symbols of his presence, the seat of worship, the mercy-seat, the place of receiving addresses, and of dispensing favours ; "The house of prayer for all nations." To his own people this was the city of their solemnities, whither the tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord : for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, Psal. cxxii. 4, 5. He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where through the succession of many by-past ages the great God did use (though more obscurely) to unfold his kind intentions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known, to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance ! And that now the dismal prospect presents itself of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory ! and lay waste the dwellings of divine love ! his sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.

*Secondly*, And the opportunity of prevention was quite lost ! There was an opportunity : "He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel : he came to them as his own." Had they received him, O how joyful a place had Jerusalem been ! How glorious had the triumphs of God been there, had they repented, believed, obeyed ! These were the "things that belonged to their peace ;" this was their opportunity, their "day of visitation ;" these were the things that might have been done within that day : but it was now too late, their day was over, and the things of their peace hid from their eyes ; and how fervent were his desires, they had done otherwise ! taken the wise and safe course. If thou hadst known ! the words admit the optative form, *si* being put, as 'tis observed to be some-

times by other authors, for εἴθε, *utinam*; O that thou hadst known, I wish thou hadst; his sorrow must be proportionable to his love. Or otherwise we may conceive the sentence incomplete, part cut off by a more emphatical *aposiopesis*, tears interrupting speech, and imposing a more speaking silence, which imports an affection beyond all words. They that were anciently so over-officious as to raze those words "and wept over it" out of the canon, as thinking it unworthy so divine a person to shed tears, did greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures (which elsewhere speak of our Lord's weeping), nor the power of divine love, (now become incarnate), nor indeed the true perfections and properties of human nature: otherwise they had never taken upon them to reform the gospel, and reduce not only Christianity, but Christ himself, to the measures and square of their stoical philosophy: but these have also met with a like ancient confutation.

One thing (before we proceed) needs some disquisition, viz.—Whether this lamentation of our blessed Lord do refer only or ultimately to the temporal calamity he foresaw coming upon Jerusalem:—or whether it had not a further and more principal reference to their spiritual and eternal miseries that were certain to be concomitant, and consequent thereunto? Where let it be considered,

1. That very dreadful spiritual plagues and judgments did accompany their destruction very generally; which every one knows who is acquainted with their after-story, *i. e.* that takes notice what spirit reigned among them, and what their behaviour was towards our Lord himself, and afterwards towards his apostles and disciples all along to their fearful catastrophe; (as it may be collected from the sacred records, and other history); what blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what mighty prejudice, what inflexible obstinacy, against the clearest light, the largest mercy, the most perspicuous and most gracious doctrine, and the most glorious works, wrought to confirm it, against the brightest beams and evidences of the divine truth, love, and power! what persevering impenitency and infi-



delity against God and Christ, proceeding from the bitterest enmity ! (Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father, John, xv. 24). What mad rage and fury against one another, even when death and destruction were at the very door ! Here were all the tokens imaginable of the most tremendous infatuation, and of their being forsaken of God. Here was a concurrence of all kinds of spiritual judgments in the highest degree.

2. That the concomitancy of such spiritual evils with their temporal destruction, our Lord foreknew as well as their temporal destruction itself. It lay equally in view before him ; and was as much under his eye. He that knew what was in man, could as well tell what would be in him. And by the same light by which he could immediately look into hearts, he could as well see into futurities, and as well the one futurity as the other. The knowledge of the one he did not owe to his human understanding : from his divine understanding, whereby he knew all things, the other could not be hid.

3. The connexion between the impenitency and infidelity that prove to be final, and eternal misery, is known to us all. Of his knowledge of it therefore (whose law hath made the connexion, besides what there is in the nature of the things themselves) there can be no doubt.

4. That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are in themselves far the greatest, we all acknowledge : nor can we make a difficulty to believe, that our Lord apprehended and considered things according as they were in themselves, so as to allow every thing its own proper weight and import in his estimating of them. These things seem all very evident to any eye. Now though it be confessed not impossible, that of things so distinct from one another as outward and temporal evils, and those that are spiritual and eternal, even befalling the same persons, one may for the present consider the one without attending to the other, or making distinct reflection thereon at the same time ; yet how unlikely is it, these things bordering so closely upon one another as they did in the pre-

sent case, that so comprehensive a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to enclose them both, and so spiritual a mind, apt no doubt to consider most what was in itself most considerable, should in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part, and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it ! That he mentions only the approaching outward calamity (ver. 43, 44), was that he spake in the hearing of the multitude, and upon the way, but in passing, when there was not opportunity for large discourse ; and therefore he spake what might soonest strike their minds, was most liable to common apprehension, and might most deeply affect ordinary, and not yet enough prepared, hearers.

And he spake what he had, no doubt, a deep sense of himself. Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity, could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city, the destroying of pompous buildings that were all of a perishable material, the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion ; to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery, and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever ! When also it is plain he considered that perverse temper of mind and spirit in them, as the cause of their ruin ! which his own words imply ; that " the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes ;" and that the things he foretold, should befall them, because " they knew not the time of their visitation." For what could the things be that belonged to their peace, but turning to God, believing in himself, as the Messiah, bringing forth the fruits meet for repentance ? Whence also there must be another latent and concealed meaning of their peace itself, than only their continued amity with the Roman state ; their peace with heaven ; their being set right, and standing in favour and acceptance, with God. For was it ever the first

intention of the things enjoined in gospel, but to entitle men to earthly secular benefits ?

Nor can we doubt but the same things lay deep in the mind of our blessed Lord, when he uttered these words, as when he spake those so very like them, Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. These other were not spoken indeed at the same time, but very soon after : *those* we are considering, in his way to the city, *these* when he was come into it, most probably, by the series of the evangelical history, the second day, after his having lodged the first night at Bethany. But it is plain they have the same sense, and that the same things lay with great weight upon his spirit ; so that the one passage may contribute much to the enlightening and expounding of the other.

Now what can be meant by that, "I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her wings ?" Could it intend a political meaning ; that he would have been a temporal prince and saviour to them ? which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed ; professing to the last, his kingdom was not of this world. It could mean no other thing, but that he would have reduced them back to God, have gathered and united them under his own gracious and safe conduct in order thereto, have secured them from the divine wrath and justice, and have conferred on them spiritual and eternal blessings. In a like sense their *peace* here was no doubt more principally to be understood ; and their loss and forfeiture of it, by their not understanding the things belonging thereto, considered and lamented.

Therefore the principal intendment of this lamentation, though directly applied to a community, and the formed body of a people, is equally applicable unto particular persons living under the gospel, or to whom the ordinary means of conversion and salvation are vouchsafed, but are

neglected by them and forfeited. We may therefore thus sum up the meaning and sense of these words:—That it is a thing in itself very lamentable, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus, when such as living under the gospel, have had a day of grace, and an opportunity of knowing the things belonging to their peace, have so outworn that day, and lost their opportunity, that the things of their peace are quite hid from their eyes:—where we have these distinct heads of discourse to be severally considered and insisted on.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace.

II. That they have a day or season wherein to know not these things only, but the whole compass of their case, and what the knowledge of those things more immediately belonging to their peace supposes, and depends upon.

III. That this day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost; those things are for ever hid from their eyes.

IV. That this is a case to be considered with deep resentment and lamentation, and was so by our Lord Jesus.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace? Where we are more particularly to inquire,—1. What those things themselves are—2. What sort of knowledge of them it is that here is meant, and made necessary.

1. What the things are which belong to the peace of a people living under the gospel. The things belonging to a people's peace, are not throughout the same with all. Living, or not living, under the gospel makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews, that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient to them before, to believe in a Messiah to come, more indefinitely. Afterwards he plainly tells them, If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, John, viii. 24. Believing in Christ cannot be necessary to

pagans that never heard of him, *as a duty*, howsoever necessary it may be *as a means*. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want remedy for their other sins. But it more concerns us who do live under the gospel, to apprehend aright what is necessary for ourselves. That is a short and full summary which the Apostle gives, Acts, xx. 21. Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel finds us in a state of apostacy from God, both as our sovereign Ruler, and sovereign Good, not apt to obey and glorify him, as the former, nor enjoy him, and be satisfied in him, as the latter. Repentance towards God cures and removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts towards him, under both these notions. By it the whole soul turns to him, with this sense and resolution : " I have been a rebellious disloyal wretch, against the high authority and most rightful government of him who gave me breath, and whose creature I am. I will live no longer thus. Lo now I come back unto thee, O Lord, thou art my Lord and God. Thee I now design to serve and obey, as the Lord of my life ; thee I will fear, unto thee I subject myself, to live no longer after my own will, but thine. I have been hitherto a miserable forlorn distressed creature, destitute of any thing that could satisfy me, or make me happy ; have set my heart upon a vain and thorny world, that had nothing in it answerable to my real necessities, that hath flattered and mocked me often, never satisfied me, and been wont to requite my pursuits of satisfaction from it with vexation and trouble, and ' pierce me through with many sorrows.' I have borne in the mean time a disaffected heart towards thee, have therefore cast thee out of my thoughts, so that amidst all my disappointments and sorrows, it never came into my mind to say, ' Where is God my Maker ?' I could never savour any thing spiritual or divine, and was ever more ready, in distress, to turn myself any way than (that which I ought) towards thee. I now see and bemoan my folly, and with a convinced, self-judging heart, betake myself to thee ; the desires of my

soul are now unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. Whom have I in heaven but thee, or on earth that I can desire besides thee ?”

This is “repentance towards God,” and is one thing belonging, and most simply necessary, to our peace. But though it be most necessary, it is not enough. It answers to something of our wretched case, but not to every thing. We were in our state of apostasy averse and disaffected to God. To this evil, repentance towards him is the opposite and only proper remedy. But besides our being without inclination towards him, we are also without interest in him. We not only had unjustly cast off him, but were also most justly cast off by him. Our injustice had set us against him, and his justice had set him against us ; we need, in order to our peace with him, to be relieved as well against his justice, as our own injustice. What if, now we would return to him, he will not receive us ? And he will not receive us for our own sakes. He must have a recompense for the wrong we had done him, by our rebellion against his government, and our contempt of his goodness. Our repentance is no expiation. Nor have we of our own, or were capable of obliging him to give us, the power and grace to repent. . Our high violation of the sacred rights and honour of the Godhead, made it necessary, in order to our peace and reconciliation, there should be a sacrifice, and a mediator between him and us. He hath judged it not honourable to him, not becoming him to treat with us, or vouchsafe us favours upon other terms. And since he thought it necessary to insist upon having a sacrifice, he judged it necessary too, to have one proportionable to the wrong done ; lest he should make the Majesty of heaven cheap, or occasion men to think it a light matter to have fundamentally overturned the common order which was settled between himself and men. The whole earth could not have afforded such a sacrifice, it must be supplied from heaven. His co-eternal Son made man, and so uniting heaven and earth in his own person, undertakes to be that sacrifice, and, in the virtue of it, to be a standing continual

Mediator between God and us ; through him, and for his sake, all acts and influences of grace are to proceed towards us. No sin is to be forgiven, no grace to be conferred, but upon his account. 'Tis reckoned most God-like, most suitable to the divine greatness, once offended, to do nothing that shall import favour towards sinners, but upon his constant interposition. Him hath he set over us, and directed that all our applications to himself, and all our expectations from him, should be through him. Him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins, Acts, v. 31. Now to one so high in power over us, he expects we should pay a suitable homage. That homage the Holy Scripture calls by the name of Faith, believing on him. God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. So that when by repentance we turn to God, as our end, we must also apply ourselves by faith, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as our way to that end. Which till we do, we are in rebellion still, and know not what belongs to our peace. He insists that his Son, into whose hands he hath committed our affairs, should be honoured by us, as he himself requires to be, John, v. 23.

Now these two things sum up our part of the covenant between God and us. By repentance we again take God for our God. Repenting we return to him as our God. By faith we take his Son for our Prince and Saviour. These things, by the tenor of the evangelical covenant, are required of us. Peace is settled between God and us (as it is usually with men towards one another after mutual hostilities) by striking a covenant. And in our case it is a covenant by sacrifice, as you have seen. Nor are harder terms than these imposed upon us. Dost thou now, sinner, apprehend thyself gone off from God ? and find a war is commenced and on foot, between God and thee ? He can easily conquer and crush thee to nothing, but he offers

thee terms of peace, upon which he is willing to enter into covenant with thee. Dost thou like his terms? Art thou willing to return to him, and take him again for thy God? to resign and commit thyself with unfeigned trust and subjection into the hands of his Son thy Redeemer? These are "the things which belong to thy peace." See that thou now know them.

2. But what knowledge of them is it that is here meant? The thing speaks itself. It is not a mere contemplative knowledge. We must so know them as to do them; otherwise the increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow. Thy guilt and misery will be the greater. To know any thing that concerns our practice, is to no purpose if we do not practise it. It was a Hebrew form of speech, and is a common form, by words of knowledge to imply practice. It being taken for granted that in matters so very reasonable and important, if what we are to do once be rightly known, it will be done. Thus elsewhere the same great requisites to eternal life and blessedness are expressed by our Lord. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; it being supposed and taken for granted that a true, vivid knowledge of God and Christ will immediately form the soul to all suitable dispositions and deportments towards the one and the other; and consequently to all men also, as Christian precepts do direct to all the acts of sobriety, justice, and charity, unto which the law of Christ obliges. An habitual course of sin in any kind, is inconsistent with this knowledge of the things of our peace, and therefore with our peace itself. All sin is in a true sense reducible to ignorance; and customary sinning into total destitution of divine knowledge. According to the usual style of the sacred writings, 1 Cor. xv. 34. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. 3 John ii. He that sinneth *i. e.* that is a doer of sin, ὁ κακοποιῶν, a worker of iniquity, hath not seen God.

II. Such as live under the gospel have a day, or a present opportunity, for the obtaining the knowledge of these



things immediately belonging to their peace, and of whatsoever is besides necessary thereunto. I say nothing what opportunities they have who never lived under the gospel, who yet no doubt might generally know more than they do ; and know better what they do know. It suffices us who enjoy the gospel, to understand our own advantages thereby. Nor, as to those who do enjoy it, is every one's day of equal clearness. How few in comparison, have ever seen such a day as Jerusalem at this time did ! made by the immediate beams of the Sun of righteousness ! our Lord himself vouchsafing to be their Instructor, so speaking as never man did ; and with such authority as far outdid their other teachers, and astonished the hearers. In what transports did he use to leave those that heard him, wheresoever he came, wondering at the gracious words that came out of his mouth ! And with what mighty and beneficial works was he wont to recommend his doctrine, shining in the glorious power, and savouring of the abundant mercy of heaven, so as every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate, God was come down to treat with men, and allure them into the knowledge and love of himself. The word was made flesh. What unprejudiced mind might not perceive it to be so ? He was there manifested and veiled at once ; both expressions are used concerning the same matter. The Divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that vail ; so that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14. This Sun shone with a mild and benign, but with a powerful vivifying light. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. Such a light created unto the Jews this their day. Happy Jews, if they had understood their own happiness ! And the days that followed, to them (for a while) and the gentile world, were not inferior, in some respects brighter and more glorious (the more copious gift of the Holy Ghost being reserved unto the crowning and enthroning of the victorious Redcemer), when the everlasting gospel flew like lightning to the utmost ends of the earth ; and the word which began

to be spoken by the Lord himself, was confirmed by them that heard him, God also himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 4. No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever the same gospel, for substance, comes, it also makes a day of the same kind, and affords always true, though diminished light; whereby, however the things of our peace might be understood and known. The written gospel varies not; and if it be but simply and plainly proposed (though to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less, yet), still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace extant before our eyes; and divers things besides, which it concerns us to be acquainted with, that we may the more distinctly and to better purpose understand these things. For instance,

1. We have the true and distinct state of the quarrel between God and us. Pagans have understood somewhat of the apostasy of man from God; that he is not in the same state wherein he was at first. But while they have understood that something was amiss, they could scarce tell what. The gospel reveals the universal pravity of the degenerate nature even of all men, and of every faculty in man; That there is none that doeth good, no not one (Rom. iii.); and that every one is altogether become filthy and impure, and that there is an entire old man to be put off, wholly corrupt by deceivable lusts (Eph. iv.); that the ἀρεταί, the noblest powers, are vitiated, the mind and conscience defiled; that the spirit of the mind needs renewing, is sunk into carnality; and that the carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. viii.), and is not subject to his law, nor can be, nor capable of savouring the things of God; that the sinner is in the flesh, under the dominion of power, and in the possession of the fleshly, sensual nature, and can therefore neither obey God nor enjoy him; that it is become impossible to him either to please God, or be pleased with him. That the sinner's quarrel therefore with God is about the most appropriate rights of the Godhead; the controversy is who shall be God, which is

the supreme authority and which is the supreme good. The former peculiarity of the Godhead, the lapsed creature is become so insolent, as to usurp and arrogate to himself. When he is become so much less than a man (a very beast) he will be a god. His sensual will shall be his only law. He lives and walks after the flesh, serves divers lusts and pleasures, and says, "Who is the Lord over me?" But being conscious that he is not self-sufficient, that he must be beholden to somewhat foreign to himself for his satisfaction, and finding nothing else suitable to his sensual inclination; that other divine peculiarity, to be the supreme good, he places upon the sensible world; and for this purpose *that* shall be his god; so that between himself and the world he attempts to share the undivided Godhead. This is a controversy of a high nature, and about other matters than even the Jewish Rabbins thought of, who when Jerusalem was destroyed, supposed God was angry with them for their neglect of the recitation of their phylacteries morning and evening; or that they were not respectful enough of one another; or that distance enough was not observed between superiors and inferiors, &c. The gospel impleads men as rebels against their rightful Lord; but of this treason against the Majesty of heaven men little suspect themselves till they are told. The gospel tells them so plainly, represents the matter in so clear a light, that they need only to contemplate themselves in that light, and they may see that so it is. Men may indeed, by resolved, stiff winking, create to themselves a darkness amidst the clearest light. But open thine eyes man, thou that livest under the gospel, set thyself to view thine own soul, thou wilt find it is day with thee; thou hast a day, by being under the gospel, and light enough to see that this is the posture of thy soul, and the state of thy case God-ward. And it is a great matter towards the understanding the things of thy peace, to know aright what is the true state of the quarrel between God and thee.

2. The gospel affords light to know what the issue of this quarrel is sure to be, if it go on, and there be no recon-

ciliation. It gives us other and plainer accounts of the punishment of the other world; more fully represents the extremity and perpetuity of the future miseries, and state of perdition appointed for the ungodly world; speaks out concerning the "Tophet prepared of old" (Isa. xxx.), "the lake of fire and brimstone" (Rev. xxi.); shews the miseries of that state to be the immediate effects of divine displeasure; that "the breath of the Almighty as a river of brimstone" always foment those flames; that "indignation and wrath cause the tribulation and anguish" (Rom. ii.) which must be the portion of evil-doers; and how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!" (Heb. x.) It gives us to understand what accession men's own unaltered vicious habits will have to their miseries; their own outrageous lusts and passions, which here they made it their business to satisfy, becoming their insatiable tormentors; that they are to receive "the *things done* in the body, according to what they have done" (2 Cor. v.); and that "what they have sowed, *the same* also they are to reap" (Gal. vi.); and what their own guilty reflections will contribute, the bitings and gnawings of the worm that dies not, the venomous corrosions of the viper bred in their own bosoms, and now become a full-grown serpent; what the society and insultation of devils, with whom they are to partake in woes and torments, and by whom they have been seduced and trained into that cursed partnership and communion; and that this fire wherein they are to be tormented together, is to be everlasting, "a fire never to be quenched." If men be left to their own conjectures only, touching the danger they incur by continuing and keeping up a war with heaven, and are to make their own hell, and that it be the creature only of their own imagination; 'tis like they will make it as easy and favourable as they can; and so are little likely to be urged earnestly to sue for peace by the imagination of a tolerable hell. But if they understand it to be altogether intolerable, this may make them bestir themselves, and think the favour of God worth the seeking. The gospel imports favour and kindness to

you, when it imports most of terror, in telling you so plainly the worst of your case if you go on in a sinful course. It makes you a day, by which you may make a truer judgment of the blackness, darkness, and horror of that everlasting night that is coming on upon you ; and lets you know that black and endless night is introduced by a terrible preceding day, that day of the Lord the business whereof is judgment. They that live under the gospel cannot pretend they are in darkness so as that day should overtake them as a thief ; and that, by surprise, they should be doomed and abandoned to the regions of darkness. The gospel forewarns you plainly of all this ; which it does not merely to fright and torment you before the time, but that you may steer your course another way, and escape the place and state of torment. It only says this that it may render the more acceptable to you what it hath to say besides ; and only threatens you with these things if there be no reconciliation between God and you. But then at the same time,

3. It also represents God to you as reconcilable through a Mediator. In that gospel "peace is preached to you, by Jesus Christ." That gospel lets you see God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin may not be imputed to them. That gospel proclaims glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men. So did the voices of angels sum up the glad tidings of the gospel, when that Prince of peace was born into the world. It tells you "God desires not the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live ;" that he would "have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth ;" that he is "long-suffering towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," that he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The rest of the world can't but collect, from darker intimations, God's favourable propensions towards them. He spares them, is patient towards them, that herein "his goodness might lead them to

repentance." He sustains them, lets them dwell in a world which they might understand was of his making, and whereof he is absolute Lord. "They live, move, and have their being in him, that they might seek after him, and by feeling find him out." He doth them "good, gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." He lets "his sun shine on them," whose far extended beams shew forth his kindness and benignity to men, even "to the utmost ends of the earth. For there is no speech or language whither his line and circle reaches not." But those are but dull and glimmering beams in comparison of those that shine from the Sun of righteousness through the gospel-revelation, and in respect of that divine glory which appears in the face of Jesus Christ. How clearly doth the light of this gospel-day reveal God's design of reducing sinners, and reconciling them to himself by a Redeemer! How canst thou but say, sinner, thou hast a day of it? and clear day-light shewing thee what the good and acceptable will of God towards thee is? Thou art not left to guess only thou mayst be reconciled and find mercy, and to grope and feel thy way in the dark, unless it be a darkness of thy own making. And whereas a sinner, a disloyal rebellious creature, that hath affronted the Majesty of heaven, and engaged against himself the wrath and justice of his Maker, and is unable to make him any recompense, can have no reason to hope God will shew him mercy, and be reconciled to him for his own sake, or for any thing he can do to oblige or induce him to it; the same gospel shews you plainly, it is for the Redeemer's sake, and what he hath done and suffered to procure it. But inasmuch also as the sinner may easily apprehend, that it can never answer the necessities of his state and case, that God only be not his enemy, that he forbear hostilities towards him, pursue him not with vengeance to his destruction. For he finds himself an indigent creature, and he needs somewhat beyond what he hath ever yet met with to make him happy; that it is uneasy and grievous to wander up and down with craving

desires among varieties of objects that look speciously, but which, either he cannot so far compass as to make a trial what there is in them, or wherewith, upon trial, he finds himself mocked and disappointed, and that really they have nothing in them ; he finds himself a mortal creature, and considers that if he had all that he can covet in this world, the increase of his present enjoyments doth but increase unto him trouble and anguish of heart, while he thinks what great things he must shortly leave and lose for ever, to go he knows not whither, into darksome, gloomy regions, where he cannot so much as imagine any thing suitable to his inclinations and desires. For he knows all that is delectable to his present sense he must here leave behind him ; and he cannot divest himself of all apprehensions of a future state, wherein if God should make him suffer nothing, yet, if he have nothing to enjoy, he must be *always* miserable.

4. The gospel, therefore, further represents to him the final, eternal blessedness, and glorious state, which they that are reconciled shall be brought into. They that live under the gospel are not mocked with shadows, and empty clouds, nor with fabulous elysiums. Nor are they put off with some unintelligible notion of only being happy in general. But are told expressly wherein their happiness is to consist. "Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel." 'Tis given them to understand how great a good is laid up in store. The things which eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which otherwise could not have entered into the heart of man, the things of God's present and eternal kingdom, are set in view. It shews the future state of the reconciled shall consist not only in freedom from what is evil, but in the enjoyment of the best and most delectable good ; that God himself in all his glorious fulness will be their eternal and most satisfying portion ; that their blessedness is to lie in the perpetual fruitive vision of his blessed face, and in the fulness of joy, and the everlasting pleasures which the divine presence itself doth perpetually afford. And whereas their glorious

Redeemer is so nearly allied to them, flesh of their flesh, who inasmuch as the children were made partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same (Heb. ii. 14), and is become by special title their authorized Lord, they are assured (of that, than which nothing should be more grateful to them) "they shall be for ever with the Lord;" that they are to be where he is, "to behold his glory;" and shall be "joint-heirs with Christ," and be "glorified together with him," shall partake, according to their measure and capacity, in the same blessedness which he enjoys. Thou canst not pretend, sinner, who livest under the gospel, that thou hast not the light of the day to shew thee what blessedness is. Heaven is opened to thee. Glory beams down from thence upon thee to create thee a day, by the light whereof thou mayst see with sufficient clearness what is "the inheritance of the saints in light." And though all be not told thee, and it do not in every respect appear what we shall be; so much may be fore-known, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 1, 2. And because the heart, as yet carnal, can savour little of all this; and finding itself strange and disaffected to God, affecting now to be without Christ and without God in the world, may easily apprehend it impossible to it to be happy in an undesired good, or that it can enjoy what it dislikes; or, in the meantime, walk in a way to which it finds in itself nothing but utter averseness and disinclination.

5. The gospel further shews us what is to be wrought and done in us to attemper and frame our spirits to our future state and present way to it. It lets us know we are to be born again, born from above, born of God, made partakers of a divine nature, that will make the temper of our spirits connatural to the divine presence. That whereas "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all," we "who were darkness shall be made light in the Lord:" that we are to be "begotten again to a lively hope, to the eternal and undefiled inheritance that is reserved in the heavens for us:" that we are thus to be made "meet to



be partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light." And as we are to be eternally conversant with Christ, we are here to put on Christ, to have Christ in us the hope of glory. And whereas only the way of holiness and obedience leads to blessedness, that we are to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works to walk in them." And shall thereupon find the ways prescribed to us by him, who is the Wisdom of God, to be all "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace:" that he will "put his Spirit into us, and cause us to walk in his statutes," and to account that "in keeping them there is great reward." And thus all that is contained in that mentioned summary of the things belonging to our peace, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," will all become easy to us, and as the acts of nature; proceeding from that new and holy nature imparted to us.

And whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, canst thou deny that it is day with thee, as to all this? Wast thou never told of this great necessary heart-change? Didst thou never hear that the "tree must be made good that the fruit might be good?" that thou must become a "new creature, have old things done away, and all things made new?" Didst thou never hear of the necessity of having "a new heart, and a right spirit" created and renewed in thee; that except thou wert "born again," or from above (as that expression may be read), thou couldst "never enter into the kingdom of God?" Wast thou kept in ignorance that a form of godliness without the power of it would never do thee good? that a name to live without the principle of the holy, divine life, would never save thee? that a specious outside, that all thy external performances, while thou wentest with an unrenewed, earthly, carnal heart, would never advantage thee as to thy eternal salvation and blessedness? And this might help thine understanding concerning the nature of thy future blessedness, and will be found most agreeable to it, being aright understood: for as thou art not to be blessed by a blessedness without thee and distant from thee, but inwrought into

thy temper, and intimately united with thee, nor glorified by an external glory, but by a glory revealed within thee; so nor canst thou be qualified for that blessed glorious state otherwise than by having the temper of thy soul made habitually holy and good. As what a good man partakes of happiness here is such, that he is "satisfied from himself;" so it must be hereafter, not originally from himself, but by divine communication made most intimate to him. Didst thou not know that it belonged to thy peace, to have a peace-maker? and that the Son of God was he? and that he makes not the peace of those that despise and refuse him, or that receive him not, that come not to him, and are not willing to come to God by him? Couldst thou think, living under the gospel, that the reconciliation between God and thee was not to be mutual? that he would be reconciled to thee while thou wouldst not be reconciled to him, or shouldst still bear towards him a disaffected, implacable heart? For couldst thou be so void of all understanding as not to apprehend what the gospel was sent to thee for? or why it was necessary to be preached to thee, or that thou shouldst hear it? Who was to be reconciled by a gospel preached to thee but thyself? who was to be persuaded by a gospel sent to thee? God, or thou? Who is to be persuaded but the unwilling? The gospel, as thou hast been told, reveals God willing to be reconciled, and thereupon beseeches thee to be reconciled to him. Or could it seem likely to thee thou couldst ever be reconciled to God, and continue unreconciled to thy Reconciler? To what purpose is there a days-man, a middle person between God and thee, if thou wilt not meet him in that middle person? Dost thou not know that Christ avails thee nothing if thou still stand at a distance with him, if thou dost not unite and adjoin thyself to him, or art not in him? And dost thou not again know that divine power and grace must unite thee to him? and that a work must be wrought and done upon thy soul by an Almighty hand, by God himself, a mighty transforming work, to make thee capable of that union? (2 Cor. v. 17)

that whosoever is in Christ is a new creature ? (1 Cor. i. 30) that thou must be of God in Christ Jesus, who then is made unto thee of God also wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; every way answering the exigency of thy case, as thou art a foolish, guilty, impure, and enslaved, or lost creature ? Didst thou never hear, that none can come to Christ but whom the Father draws ? and that he draws the reasonable souls of men not violently or against their wills (he draws, yet drags them not), but makes them willing in the day of power, by giving a new nature and new inclinations to them ? 'Tis sure with thee not dark night, not a dubious twilight, but broad day as to all this.

Yes, perhaps thou mayst say, but this makes my case the worse, not the better ; for it gives me at length to understand that what is necessary to my peace and welfare is impossible to me ; and so the light of my day doth but serve to let me see myself miserable and undone, and that I have nothing to do to relieve and help myself. I therefore add,

6. That by being under the gospel, men have not only light to understand whatsoever is any way necessary to their peace, but opportunity to obtain that communication of divine power and grace whereby to comply with the terms of it. Whereupon, if this be made good, you have not a pretence left you to say your case is the worse, or that you receive any prejudice by what the gospel reveals of your own impotency to relieve and help yourselves ; or determines touching the terms of your peace and salvation, making such things necessary thereto, as are to you impossible, and out of your own present power, unless it be a prejudice to you not to have your pride gratified ; and that God hath pitched upon such a method for your salvation, as shall wholly turn to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that you are to be *of him* (1 Cor. i. 30, 31) in Christ Jesus—that whosoever glories might glory in the Lord. Is it for a sinner that hath deserved, and is ready to perish, to insist upon being saved with reputation ? or to envy the

great God, upon whose pleasure it wholly depends whether he shall be saved or not saved, the entire glory of saving him? For otherwise, excepting the mere business of glory and reputation; is it not all one to you whether you have the power in your own hands of changing your hearts, of being the authors to yourselves of that holy, new nature, out of which actual faith and repentance are to spring, or whether you may have it from the God of all grace, flowing to you from its own proper divine fountain? Your case is not sure really the worse that your salvation from first to last is to be all of grace, and that it is impossible to you to repent and believe, while it is not simply impossible; but that he can effectually enable you thereto, unto whom all things are possible; supposing that he will: whereof by and by. Nay, and it is more glorious and honourable, even to you, if you understand yourselves, that your case is so stated as it is. The gospel indeed plainly tells you that your repentance must be given you. Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." And so must your faith, and that frame of spirit which is the principle of all good works. By grace ye are saved, through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, Ephes. ii. 8-10. Is it more glorious to have nothing in you but what is self-sprung, than to have your souls the seat and receptacle of divine communications; of so excellent things as could have no other than a heavenly original? If it were not absurd and impossible you should be self-begotten, is it not much more glorious to be born of God? As they are said to be that receive Christ, John i. 12, 13. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And now that, by being under the gospel, you have the

opportunity of getting that grace, which is necessary to your peace and salvation ; you may see, if you consider what the gospel is, and was designed for. It is the ministration of the Spirit ; that Spirit by which you are to be born again, John iii. 3, 5, 6. The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious, in you the holy truths contained in the gospel. Of his own good will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, James i. 18. And again, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. So our Saviour prays : Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth, John xvii. 17. The gospel is, upon this account, called the word of life, Phil. ii. 16, as by which the principles of that divine and holy life are implanted in the soul, whereby we live to God, do what his gospel requires, and hath made our duty, and that ends at length in eternal life. But you will say, Shall all, then, that live under the gospel obtain this grace and holy life ? Or if they shall not, or, if so far as can be collected, multitudes do not, or, perhaps, in some places that enjoy the gospel, very few do, in comparison of them that do not, what an I better ? when, perhaps, it is far more likely that I shall perish notwithstanding, than be saved ? In answer to this, it must be acknowledged, that all that live under the gospel do not obtain life and saving grace by it. For then there had been no occasion for this lamentation of our blessed Lord over the perishing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as having lost their day, and that the things of their peace were now hid from their eyes ; and by that instance it appears too possible, that even the generality of a people living under the gospel may fall at length into the like forlorn and hopeless condition. But art thou a man that thus objectest ? A reasonable understanding creature ? Or dost thou use the reason and understanding of a man in objecting thus ? Didst thou expect, that when thine own wilful transgression had made thee liable to eternal death and wrath, peace, and life, and salvation should be imposed upon thee whether

thou wouldst or no, or notwithstanding thy most wilful neglect and contempt of them, and all the means of them? Could it enter into thy mind, that a reasonable soul should be wrought and framed for that high and blessed end, whereof it is radically capable, as a stock or a stone is for any use it is designed for, without designing its own end or way to it? Couldst thou think the gospel was to bring thee to faith and repentance, whether thou didst hear it or no? or ever apply thy mind to consider the meaning of it, and what it did propose and offer to thee? or when thou mightest so easily understand that the grace of God was necessary to make it effectual to thee, and that it might become his power (or the instrument of his power) to thy salvation, couldst thou think it concerned thee not to sue and supplicate to him for that grace, when thy life lay upon it, and thy eternal hope? Hast thou lain weltering at the footstool of the throne of grace in thine own tears (as thou hast been formerly weltering in thy sins and impurities), crying for grace to help thee in this time of thy need? And if thou thinkest this was above thee and without thy compass, hast thou done all that was within thy compass in order to the obtaining of grace at God's hands? But here, perhaps, thou wilt inquire, Is there any thing, then, to be done by us whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow? To which I answer,

1. That it is out of question nothing can be done by us to deserve it, or *for which* we may expect it to follow. It were not grace if we had obliged, or brought it, by our desert, under former preventive bonds to us. And,

2. What if nothing can be done by us *upon which* it may be *certainly* expected to follow? Is a certainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved?

3. Such as live under the gospel have reason to apprehend it highly probable they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. For,

4. There is generally afforded to such that which is wont to be called common grace. I speak not of any

further extent of it, 'tis enough to our present purpose that it extends so far, as to them that live under the gospel, and have thereby a day allowed them wherein to provide for their peace. Now, though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair, but that being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it.

And this is that which requires to be insisted on, and more fully evinced. In order whereto let it be considered, that it is expressly said to such, they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, for this reason, that God works (or is working *ἔστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν*) in them, *i. e.*, statedly and continually at work, or is always ready to work in them, to will and to do of his own good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. The matter fails not on his part. He will work on in order to their salvation, if they work in that way of subordinate co-operation, which his command, and the necessity of their own case, oblige them unto. And it is further to be considered, that where God had formerly afforded the symbols of his gracious presence, given his oracles, and settled his church, though yet in its nonage, and much more imperfect state, there he, however, communicated those influences of his Spirit, that it was to be imputed to themselves if they came short of the saving operations of it. Of such it was said, Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them, Nehem. ix. 20. And to such, Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye set at nought my counsel, and despised all my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, &c., Prov. i. 23, 24. We see whence their destruction came; not from God's first restraint of his Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at nought his counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, they rebelled and vexed his Spirit, and he therefore turned and fought against them, and became their enemy, Isa. lxiii. 10, it appears, that before his Spirit was not withheld,

but did variously, and often, make essays and attempts upon them. And when Stephen, immediately before his martyrdom, thus bespeaks the descendants of these Jews, Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised,—ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye, Acts vii., 'tis implied the Holy Ghost had been always striving from age to age with that stubborn people : for where there is no counter-striving there can be no resistance, no more than there can be a war on one side only. Which also appears to have been the course of God's dealing with the old world, before their so general lapse into idolatry and sensual wickedness, from that passage, Gen. vi. 3, according to the more common reading and sense of those words.

Now whereas the gospel is eminently said to be the ministration of the Spirit in contradistinction not only to the natural religion of other nations, but the divinely instituted religion of the Jews also, as is largely discoursed, 2 Cor. iii., and more largely through the Epistle to the Galatians, especially chap. iv. ; and whereas we find that, in the Jewish church, the Holy Ghost did generally diffuse its influences, and not otherwise withhold them, than penally, and upon great provocation ; how much more may it be concluded, that under the gospel, the same blessed Spirit is very generally at work upon the souls of men, till by their resisting, grieving, and quenching of it, they provoke it to retire and withdraw from them.

And let the consciences of men living under the gospel testify in the case. Appeal sinner to thine own conscience ; Hast thou never felt any thing of conviction, by the word of God ? hadst thou never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming thy life, of making thy peace ? have no desires ever been raised in thee, no fears ? hast thou never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure in the things of God ? whence have these come ? What ! from thyself, who art not sufficient to think any thing as of thyself ? *i. e.* not any good or right thought. All must be from that good Spirit that hath been striving with thee ; and might



still have been so unto a blessed issue for thy soul, if thou hadst not neglected and disobeyed it.

And do not go about to excuse thyself by saying, that so all others have done too, 'tis like, at one time or other; and if that therefore be the rule and measure, that they that contend against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted and given up to perish, who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so for thy neglecting and despising the grace and Spirit of God. 'Tis true that herein the great God shews his sovereignty: when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve by their slighting them to be forsaken alike; he gives instances and makes examples of just severity, and of the victorious power of grace, as seems him good, which there will be further occasion to speak more of hereafter. In the mean time the present design is not to justify thy condemnation but procure thy salvation, and therefore to admonish and instruct thee, that, though thou art not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are notwithstanding conquered and saved thereby, it shall therefore fare as well with thee; yet thou hast reason to be confident, it will be well and happy for thee, if now thou despise and slight them not. And whether thou do or not, it is however plain, that by being under the gospel thou hast had a day, wherein to mind the things of thy peace, though it is not told thee it would last always, but the contrary is presently to be told thee.

And thou mayst now see 'tis not only a day in respect of *light* but *influence* also; that thou mightest not only know notionally what belonged thereto, but efficaciously and practically; which you have heard is the knowledge here meant. And the concurrence of such light and influence has made thee a season wherein thou wast to have been at work for thy soul. The day is the proper season for work: when the night comes working ceases, both because that then light fails, and because drowsiness and sloth are more apt to possess men. And the night will come. For (which is the next thing we have to speak to),

III. This day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost with such, the things of their peace are for ever hid from their eyes. And that this day is not infinite and endless, we see in the present instance. Jerusalem had her day; but that day had its period, we see it comes to this at last, that *now* the things of her peace are hid from her eyes. We generally see the same thing, in that sinners are so earnestly pressed to make use of the present time. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Psal. xcv, quoted and urged Heb. iii. 7, 8. They are admonished to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is nigh, Isa. lv. It seems some time he will not be found, and will be afar off. They are told this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation, Isa. xlix. ; 2 Cor. vi.

This day, with any place or people, supposes a precedent night, when the day-spring from on high had not visited their horizon, and all within it sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Yea, and there was a time, we know, of very general darkness, when the gospel day, "the day of visitation," had not yet dawned upon the world; "times of ignorance," wherein God as it were winked upon the nations of the earth; the beams of his eye did in a sort overshoot them, as the word *ὑπεριδών* imports. But when the eyelids of the morning open upon any people, and light shines to them with direct beams, they are *now* commanded to repent (Acts, xvii. 30), limited to the present point of time with such peremptoriness, as that noble Roman used towards a proud prince, asking time to deliberate upon the proposal made to him of withdrawing his forces that molested some of the allies of that state; he draws a line about him with the end of his rod, and requires him now, out of hand, before he stirred out of that circle, to make his choice, whether he would be a friend or enemy to the people of Rome. So are sinners to understand the state of their own case. The God of thy life, sinner, in whose hands thy times are, doth with much higher right limit thee to the present time, and expects

thy present answer to his just and merciful offers and demands. He circumscribes thy day of grace ; it is enclosed on both parts, and hath an evening as well as morning ; as it had a foregoing, so hath it a subsequent night, and the latter, if not more dark, yet usually much more stormy than the former ! For God shuts up this day in much displeasure, which hath terrible effects. If it be not expressly told you what the condition of that night is that follows your gospel day ; if the watchman being asked, " What of the night ? " do only answer it cometh as well as the morning came ; black events are signified by that more awful silence. Or, 'tis all one if you call it *a day* ; there is enough to distinguish it from the *day of grace*. The Scriptures call such a calamitous season indifferently either by the name of night or day ; but the latter name is used with some or other adjunct, to signify *day* is not meant in the pleasant or more grateful sense : a day of wrath, an evil day, a day of gloominess and thick darkness, not differing from the most dismal night ; and to be told the morning of such a day is coming, is all one, as that the evening is coming of a bright and a serene day.

And here perhaps, reader, thou will expect to be told what are the limits of this day of grace. It is indeed much more difficult punctually to assign those limits, than to ascertain thee there are such ; but it is also less necessary. The wise and merciful God doth in matters of this nature little mind to gratify our curiosity ; much less is it to be expected from him, that he should make known to us such things, whereof it were better we were ignorant, or the knowledge whereof would be much more a prejudice to us than an advantage. And it were as bold and rash an undertaking, in this case, as it would be vain and insignificant, for any man to take on him to say, in it, what God hath not said, or given him plain ground for. What I conceive to be plain and useful in this matter I shall lay down in the following propositions, insisting more largely where the matter requires it, and contenting myself but to mention what is obvious, and clear at the first sight.

1. That there is a great difference between the ends and limits of the day or season of grace as to particular persons, and in reference to the collective body of a people, inhabiting this or that place. It may be over with such or such a place, so as that they that dwell there shall no longer have the gospel among them, when as yet it may not be over with every particular person belonging to it, who may be providentially cast elsewhere, or may have the "ingrafted word" in them, which they lose not. And again, it may be over with some particular persons in such a place, when it is not yet over with that people or place, generally considered.

2. As to both there is a difference between the ending of such a day, and intermissions, or dark intervals, that may be in it. The gospel may be withdrawn from such a people, and be restored. And God often, no doubt, as to particular persons, either deprives them of the outward means of grace for a time (by sickness, or many other ways), or may for a time forbear moving upon them by his Spirit, and again try them with both.

3. As to particular persons, there may be much difference between such as, while they lived under the gospel, gained the knowledge of the principal doctrines, or of the sum or substance, of Christianity, though without any sanctifying effect or impression upon their hearts, and such as, through their own negligence, lived under it in total ignorance hereof. The day of grace may not be over with the former, though they should never live under the ministry of the gospel more. For it is possible, while they have the seeds and principles of holy truth laid up in their minds, God may graciously administer to them many occasions of recollecting and considering them, wherewith he may so please to co-operate, as to enliven them, and make them vital and effectual to their final salvation. Whereas, with the other sort, when they no more enjoy the external means, the day of grace is like to be quite over, so as that there may be no more hope in their case than in that of pagans in the darkest parts of the world; and perhaps much less,

as their guilt hath been much greater by their neglect of so great and important things. It may be better with Tyre and Sidon, &c.

4. That yet it is a terrible judgment to the most knowing, to lose the external dispensation of the gospel, while they have yet no sanctifying impression upon their hearts by it, and they are cast upon a fearful hazard of being lost for ever, being left by the departed gospel in an unconverted state. For they need the most urgent inculcations of gospel truths, and the most powerful enforcing means, to engage them to consider the things which they know. It is the design of the gospel to beget not only light in the mind, but grace in the heart. And if that were not done while they enjoyed such means, it is less likely to be done without them. And if any slighter and more superficial impressions were made upon them thereby, short of true and thorough conversion, how great is the danger that all will vanish, when they cease to be pressed and urged, and called upon by the public voice of the gospel-ministry any more. How naturally desident is the spirit of man, and apt to sink into deadness, worldliness, and carnality, even under the most lively and quickening means; and even where a saving work hath been wrought! how much more when those means fail, and there is no vital principle within, capable of self-excitation and improvement! O that they would consider this, who have got nothing by the gospel all this while, but a little cold, spiritless, notional, knowledge, and are in a possibility of losing it before they get any thing more!

5. That as it is certain, death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible it may end with divers before they die; by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blessed Spirit of God from them, so as to return and visit them no more. How the day of grace may end with a person, is to be understood by considering what it is that makes up and constitutes such a day. There must be some measure and

proportion of time to make up this (or any) day, which is as the *substratum* and ground forelaid. Then there must be light superadded, otherwise it differs not from night, which may have the same measure of mere time. The gospel-revelation some way or other must be had, as being the light of such a day. And again there must be some degree of liveliness, and vital influence, the more usual concomitant of light; the night doth more dispose men to drowsiness. The same sun that enlightens the world, disseminates also an invigorating influence. If the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel-revelation, and breathe in it, we have no day of grace. It is not only a day of light, but a day of power, wherein souls can be wrought upon, and a people made willing to become the Lord's, Psal. cx. As the Redeemer revealed in the gospel is the light of the world, so he is life to it too, though neither are planted or do take root every where. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light that rays from him is vital light in itself, and in its tendency and design, though it be disliked and not entertained by the most.

Whereas therefore these things must concur to make up such a day: if either a man's time, his life on earth, expire, or if light quite fail him, or if all gracious influence be withheld, so as to be communicated no more; his day is done, the season of grace is over with him. Now it is plain, that many a one may lose the gospel before his life end; and possible that all gracious influence may be restrained, while as yet the external dispensation of the gospel remains. A sinner may have hardened his heart to that degree, that God will attempt him no more, in any kind, with any design of kindness to him, not in that more inward, immediate way at all, *i. e.* by the motions of his Spirit, which peculiarly can import nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are personally applied unto, so that cannot be meant; nor by the voice of the gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they continued under it, but for their heavier doom at

length. Which though it may seem severe, is not to be thought strange, much less unrighteous.

It is not to be thought strange to them that read the Bible, which so often speaks this sense : as when it warns and threatens men with so much terror, as Heb. x. 26-29. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit of grace* ? And when it tells us, after many overtures made to men in vain, of his having given them up, &c. Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. But my people would not hearken to my voice ; and Israel would none of me ; so I gave them up unto their own heart's lust ; and they walked in their own counsels : and pronounces, Let him that is unjust, be unjust still, and let him which is filthy, be filthy still, Rev. xxii. 11, and says, In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged ; thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee, Ezek. xxiv. 13. Which passages seem to imply a total desertion of them, and retraction of all gracious influence. And when it speaks of letting them be under the gospel, and the ordinary means of salvation, for the most direful purposes : as that, This child (Jesus) was set for the fall, as well as for the rising, of many in Israel, Luke, ii. 34. As to which text the very learned Grotius, glossing upon the words *κείραι* and *εἰς πῶσιν*, says, *Accedo vis qui non necdum eventum, sed ei consilium*, that he is of their opinion who think not that the naked event, but the counsel or purpose of God, is signified by it, the same with *τίθειαι* ; and alleges several texts where the active of that verb must have the same sense, as to appoint or ordain ;

and mentions divers other places of the same import with this so understood ; and which therefore to recite will equally serve our present purpose ; as that, Rom. ix. 33. Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence. And 1 Pet. ii. 8. The stone which the builders refused, is made a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. With that of our Saviour himself, John, ix. 39. For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and that they which see, might be made blind. And most agreeable to those former places is that of the prophet Isaiah, xxviii. 13. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little ; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. And we may add, that our Lord hath put us out of doubt that there is such a sin as that which is eminently called the sin against the Holy Ghost ; that a man may, in such circumstances, and to such a degree, sin against that blessed Spirit, that he will never move or breathe upon them more, but leave them to a hopeless ruin ; though I shall not in this discourse determine or discuss the nature of it. But I doubt not it is somewhat else than final impenitency and infidelity ; and that every one that dies, not having sincerely repented and believed, is not guilty of it, though every one that is guilty of it, dies impenitent and unbelieving, but was guilty of it before ; so as it is not the mere want of time, that makes him guilty. Whereupon therefore, that such may outlive their day of grace, is out of question.

But let not such, as, upon the descriptions the gospel gives us of that sin, may be justly confident they have not perhaps committed it, therefore think themselves out of danger of losing their season of making their peace with God before they die. Many a one may, no doubt, that never committed the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as he is the witness, by his wonderful works,



of Christ being the Messiah. As one may die, by neglecting himself, that doth not poison himself, or cut his own throat. You will say, "But if the Spirit retire from men, so as never to return, where is the difference?" I answer, the difference lies in the *specific nature* and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently, in the deeper degrees of its punishment. For though the reason of its unpardonableness lies not principally in its greater heinousness, but in its direct repugnancy to the way of obtaining pardon, yet there is no doubt of its being much more heinous than many other sins for which men perish. And therefore 'tis in proportion more severely punished. But is it not misery enough to dwell in darkness and woe for ever, as every one that dies unreconciled to God must do, unless the most intense flames and horror of hell be your portion? As his case is sufficiently bad that must die as an ordinary felon, though he is not to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Nor is there any place or pretence for so profane a thought, as if there were any colour of unrighteousness in this course of procedure with such men. Is it unjust severity to let the gospel become deadly to them whose malignity perverts it, against its nature, and genuine tendency, into a savour of death (as 2 Cor. ii. 16), which it is *τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*, *i. e.* to them (as the mentioned author speaks) who may be truly said to seek their own destruction? or that God should intend their more aggravated condemnation, even from the despised gospel itself, who, when such light is come into the world, hate it, shew themselves *lucifugæ, tenebriones* (as he also phrases it, speaking further upon that first mentioned text), *such as fly from the light, choose and love to lurk in darkness?* He must have very low thoughts of divine favour and acceptance, of Christ, and grace, and glory, that can have hard thoughts of God, for his vindicating, with greatest severity, the contempt of such things. What could better become his glorious majesty, and excellent greatness, than, as all things work together for good towards them that love him, so to let all things work for the hurt of them that so irreconcilably hate

him, and bear a disaffected and implacable mind towards him? Nor doth the addition of his designing the matter so, make it hard. For if it be just to punish such wickedness, is it unjust to intend to punish it? and to intend to punish it according to its desert, when it cannot be thought unjust actually to render to men what they deserve?

We are, indeed, to account the primary intention of continuing the gospel to such a people, among whom these live, is kindness towards others, not this higher revenge upon them; yet nothing hinders but that this revenge upon them, may also be the fit matter of his secondary intention. For should he intend nothing concerning them? Is he to be so unconcerned about his own creatures that are under his government? While things cannot fall out to him unawares, but that he hath this dismal event in prospect before him, he must at least intend to let it be, or not to hinder it. And who can expect he should? For, that his gracious influence towards them should at length cease, is above all exception: that it ceasing, while they live still under the gospel, they contract deeper guilt, and incur heavier punishment, follows of course. And who can say he should not intend to let it follow? For should he take away the gospel from the rest, that these might be less punished? that others might not be saved, because they will not?

Nor can he be obliged to interpose extraordinarily, and alter for their sakes the course of nature and providence, so as either to hasten them the sooner out of the world, or cast them into any other part of it, where the gospel is not, lest they should, by living still under it, be obnoxious to the severer punishment. For whither would this lead? He should, by equal reason, have been obliged to prevent men's sinning at all, that they might not be liable to any punishment. And so not to have made the world, or have otherwise framed the methods of his government, and less suitably to a whole community of reasonable creatures; or to have made an end of the world long ago, and have quitted all his great designs in it, lest some should sin on,

and incur proportionable punishment ! or to have provided extraordinarily that all should do and fare alike ; and that it might never have come to pass, that it should be less tolerable for Capernaum, and Chorazin, and Bethsaida, than for Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom, and Gomorrah. But is there unrighteousness with God ? or is he unrighteous in taking vengeance ? or is he therefore unjust, because he will render to every one according to his works ; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life ; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ? Rom. ii. 6-9. Doth righteousness itself make him unrighteous ? O sinner, understand how much better it is to avoid the stroke of divine justice than accuse it ! God will be found true, and every man a liar, that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges, Psal. li. 4.

6. Yet are we not to imagine any certain fixed rule, according whereto (except in the case of the unpardonable sin) the divine dispensation is measured in cases of this nature : viz. That, when a sinner hath contended just so long, or to such a degree, against his grace and Spirit in his gospel, he shall be finally rejected ; or if but so long, or not to such a degree, he is yet certainly to be further tried, or treated with. It is little to be doubted, but he puts forth the power of victorious grace, at length, upon some more obstinate and obdurate sinners, and that have longer persisted in their rebellions (not having sinned the unpardonable sin), and gives over some sooner, as it seems good unto him. Nor doth he herein owe an account to any man of his matters. Here sovereign good pleasure rules and arbitrates, that is tied to no certain rule. Neither, in these variations, is there any shew of that blameable *προσωποληψία* or *accepting of persons*, which, in his own word, he so expressly disclaims. We must distinguish matters of right (even such as are so by promise only, as

well as others), and matters of mere unpromised favour. In matters of right, to be an acceptor of persons, is a thing most highly culpable with men, and which can have no place with the holy God : *i. e.* when a human judge hath his rule before him, according whereto he is to estimate men's rights, in judgment ; there, to regard the person of the rich, or of the poor, to the prejudice of the justice of the cause, were an insufferable iniquity ; as it were also in a private person to withhold another's right, because he hath no kindness for him. So even the great God himself, though of mere grace he first fixed and established the rule (fitly therefore called the covenant, or law of grace), by which he will proceed in pardoning and justifying men, or in condemning and holding them guilty, both here and in the final judgment ; yet having fixed it, he will never recede from it ; so as either to acquit an impenitent unbeliever, or condemn a believing penitent. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive. None shall be ever able to accuse him of breach of faith, or of transgressing his own rules of justice. We find it therefore said in reference to the judgment of the last day, when God shall render to every man according to his works, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, that there is no respect of persons with God, Rom. ii. 6-11, yet (*qui promisit pœnitenti veniam, non promisit peccanti pœnitentiam*) whereas he hath, by his evangelical law, ascertained pardon to one that sincerely obeys it, but hath not promised grace to enable them to do so, to them that have long continued wilfully disobedient and rebellious ; this communication of grace is, therefore, left arbitrary, and to be dispensed, as the matter of free and unassured favour, as it seems him good. And indeed, if in matters of arbitrary favour, respect of persons ought to have no place, friendship were quite excluded the world, and would be swallowed up of strict and rigid justice. I ought to take all men for my friends alike, otherwise than as justice should oblige me to be more respectful to men of more merit.

7. Wherefore no man can certainly know, or ought to

conclude, concerning himself or others, as long as they live, that the season of grace is quite over with them. As we can conceive no rule God hath set to himself to proceed by, in ordinary cases of this nature; so nor is there any he hath set unto us to judge by, in this case. It were to no purpose, and could be of no use to men, to know so much; therefore it were unreasonable to expect God should have settled and declared any rule, by which they might come by the knowledge of it. As the case is then, viz. there being no such rule, no such thing can be concluded; for who can tell what an arbitrary, sovereign, free agent will do, if he declare not his own purpose himself? How should it be known, when the Spirit of God hath been often working upon the soul of a man, that this or that shall be the last act, and that he will never put forth another? And why should God make it known? To the person himself whose case it is, 'tis manifest it could be no benefit. Nor is it to be thought the holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen to all the world, that every man's destruction was, entirely, and to the last, of himself. If God had made it evident to a man, that he were finally rejected, he were obliged to believe it. But shall it ever be said, God hath made any thing a man's duty, which were inconsistent with his felicity. The having sinned himself into such a condition wherein he is forsaken of God, is indeed inconsistent with it. And so the case is to stand, *i.e.* that his perdition be in immediate connexion with his sin, not with his duty. As it would be in immediate, necessary connexion with his duty, if he were bound to believe himself finally forsaken, and a lost creature. For that belief makes him hopeless, and a very devil, justifies his unbelief of the gospel, towards himself, by removing and shutting up, towards him, the object of such a faith, and consequently brings the matter to this state, that he perishes,\* not because he doth not believe God

\* See more to this purpose in the Appendix.

reconcilable to man, but because, with particular application to himself, he ought not so to believe.

And it were most unfit, and of very pernicious consequence, that such a thing should be generally known concerning others. It were to anticipate the final judgment, to create a hell upon earth, to tempt them whose doom were already known, to do all the mischief in the world, which malice and despair can suggest, and prompt them unto; it were to mingle devils with men! and fill the world with confusion! How should parents know how to behave themselves towards children, a husband towards the wife of his bosom in such a case, if it were known they were no more to counsel, exhort, admonish them, pray with or for them, than if they were devils!

And if there were such a rule, how frequent misapplications would the fallible and distempered minds of men make of it! so that they would be apt to fancy themselves warranted to judge severely, or uncharitably, and (as the truth of the case perhaps is) unjustly concerning others, from which they are so hardly withheld, when they have no such pretence to embolden them to it, but are so strictly forbidden it; and the judgment-seat so fenced, as it is, by the most awful interdicts against their usurpations and encroachments. We are therefore to reverence the wisdom of the divine government, that things of this nature are among the arcana of it; some of those secrets which belong not to us. He hath revealed what was fit and necessary for us and our children, and envies to man no useful knowledge.

But it may be said, when the apostle (1 John, v. 16) directs to pray for a brother whom we see sinning a sin that is not unto death, and adds, there is a sin unto death, I do not say he shall pray for it; is it not implied that it may be known when one sins that sin unto death, not only to himself, but even to others too? I answer, it is implied there may be too probable appearances of it, and much ground to suspect and fear it concerning some, in some

cases; as when any against the highest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah (the proper and most sufficiently credible testimony whereof, he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, under heads to which the whole evidence of the truth of Christianity may be fitly enough reduced), do notwithstanding, from that malice which blinds their understanding, persist in infidelity, or apostatize and relapse into it from a former profession, there is great cause of suspicion, lest such have sinned that sin unto death. Whereupon yet it is to be observed, he doth not expressly forbid praying for the persons whose case we may doubt; only he doth not enjoin it, as he doth for others, but only says, I do not say ye shall pray for it, *i. e.* that in his present direction to pray for others, he did not intend such, but another sort, for whom they might pray remotely from any such suspicion: viz. that he meant *now* such praying as ought to be interchanged between Christian friends, that have reason, in the main, to be well persuaded concerning one another. In the mean time intending no opposition to what is elsewhere enjoined, the praying for all men (1 Tim. ii. 1), without the personal exclusion of any, as also our Lord himself prayed indefinitely for his most malicious enemies, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do; though he had formerly said, there was such a sin as should never be forgiven; whereof 'tis highly probable some of them were guilty: yet such he doth not expressly except; but his prayer being in the indefinite, not the universal, form, 'tis to be supposed it must mean such as were within the compass and reach of prayer, and capable of benefit by it. Nor doth the apostle here direct personally to exclude any, only that indefinitely and in the general such must be supposed not meant as had sinned the sin unto death; or must be conditionally excluded if they had, without determining who had or had not. To which purpose it is very observable, that a more abstract form of expression is used in this latter clause of this verse. For whereas in the former *positive part* of the direction,

he enjoins praying for him or them that had not sinned unto death (*viz.* concerning whom there was no ground for any such imagination or suspicion that they had); in the *negative part*, concerning such as might have sinned it, he doth not say for him or them, but for it (*i. e.* concerning, in reference to it), as if he had said, the case in general only is to be excepted, and if persons are to be distinguished (since every sin is some one's sin, the sin of some person or other), let God distinguish, but do not you, 'tis enough for you to except the sin, committed by whomsoever. And though the former part of the verse speaks of a particular person, "If a man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death," which is as determinate to a person as the sight of our eye can be, it doth not follow the latter part must suppose a like particular determination of any person's case, that he hath sinned it. I may have great reason to be confident such and such have not, when I can only suspect that such a one hath. And it is a thing much less unlikely to be certain to oneself than another, for they that have sinned unto death, are no doubt so blinded and stupified by it, that they are not more apt or competent to observe themselves, and consider their case, than others may be.

8. But though none ought to conclude that their day or season of grace is quite expired, yet they ought deeply to apprehend the danger, lest it should expire before their necessary work be done, and their peace made. For though it can be of no use to them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it, 'tis of great use to apprehend the latter; and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the Holy Scripture abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or apposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle (Phil. ii. 12), Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; considered together with the subjoined ground of it, ver. 13, For it is God that worketh in you to will



and to do of his own good pleasure. How correspondent is the one with the other; *work*, for *he works*: there were no working at all to any purpose, or with any hope, if he did not work. And work with fear and trembling, for he works of his own good pleasure, *q. d.* " 'Twere the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one that works at so perfect liberty, under no obligation, that may desist when he will; to impose upon so absolutely sovereign and arbitrary an agent, that owes you nothing; and from whose former gracious operations not complied with, you can draw no argument unto any following ones, that because he doth, therefore he will. As there is no certain connexion between present time and future, but all time is made up of undepending, not strictly coherent, moments, so as no man can be sure, because one now exists, another shall; there is also no more certain connexion between the arbitrary acts of a free agent within such time; so that I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awakening me, therefore he will still do so, again and again. Upon this ground, then, what exhortation could be more proper than this? "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What could be more awfully monitory, and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, if I should be negligent, or undutiful, he may give out the next moment, nay let the work fall, and me perish! And there is more especial cause for such an apprehension, upon the concurrence of such things as these:—

1. If the workings of God's Spirit upon the soul of a man have been more than ordinarily strong and urgent, and do now cease: if there have been more powerful convictions, deeper humiliations, more awakened fears, more formed purposes of a new life, more fervent desires, that are now all vanished and fled, and the sinner is returned to his old dead and dull temper.

2. If there be no disposition to reflect and consider the difference, no sense of his loss, but he apprehends such

workings of spirit in him unnecessary troubles to him, and thinks it well he is delivered and eased of them.

3. If in the time when he was under such workings of spirit, he had made known his case to his minister, or any godly friend, whose company he now shuns, as not willing to be put in mind or hear any more of such matters.

4. If hereupon he hath more indulged sensual inclination, taken more liberty, gone against the checks of his own conscience, broken former good resolutions, involved himself in the guilt of any grosser sins.

5. If conscience, so baffled, be now silent; lets him alone, grows more sluggish and weaker (which it must) as his lusts grow stronger.

6. If the same lively powerful ministry, which before affected him much, now moves him not.

7. If especially he is grown into a dislike of such preaching; if serious godliness, and what tends to it, are become distasteful to him; if discourses of God, and Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavoury and disrelished; if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import, and the persons that most value them, and live accordingly; if he hath taken the seat of the scorner, and makes it his business to deride what he had once a reverence for, or took some complacency in.

8. If, upon all this, God withdraw such a ministry, so that he is now warned and admonished, exhorted and striven with, as formerly, no more. O the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be for ever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear would in this case be his great duty, and might yet prove the means of saving him; despair would be his very heinous and destroying sin. If yet he would be stirred up to consider his case, whence he is fallen, and whither he is falling, and set himself to serious seeking of God, cast down himself before him, abuse himself, cry for mercy, as for his life, there is yet hope in his case. God may here show an

example of what he can induce himself to do for a perishing wretch ! But,

IV. If with any that have lived under the gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now for ever hid from their eyes, this is in itself a most deplorable case, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself. That the case is in itself most deplorable, who sees not ? A soul lost ! a creature capable of God ! upon its way to him ! near to the kingdom of God ! shipwrecked in the port ! O sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen ! into what depths of misery and woe ! And that it was lamented by our Lord, is in the text. He beheld the city (very generally, we have reason to apprehend, inhabited by such wretched creatures), and wept over it. This was a very affectionate lamentation. We lament often, very heartily, many a sad case, for which we do not shed tears. But tears, such tears, falling from such eyes ! the issues of the purest and best governed passion that ever was, shewed the true greatness of the cause. Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportionable to the occasion. There needs no other proof that this is a sad case, than that our Lord lamented it with tears, which that he did, we are plainly told, so that touching that, there is no place for doubt. All that is liable to question is, whether we are to conceive in him any like resentments of such cases, in his present glorified state ?

Indeed we cannot think heaven a place or state of sadness, or lamentation ; and must take heed of conceiving any thing there, especially on the throne of glory, unsuitable to the most perfect nature, and the most glorious state. We are not to imagine tears there, which in that happy region are wiped away from inferior eyes ; no grief, sorrow, or sighing, which are all fled away, and shall be no more : as there can be no other turbid passion of any kind. But when expressions that import anger, or grief, are used, even concerning God himself, we must sever in our conception every thing of imperfection, and ascribe every thing of real perfection. We are not to think such expressions

signify nothing, that they have no meaning, or that nothing at all is to be attributed to him under them.

Nor are we again to think they signify the same thing with what we find in ourselves, and are wont to express by those names. In the divine nature, there may be real, and yet most serene, complacency and displacency, viz. that are unaccompanied with the least commotion, and import nothing of imperfection, but perfection rather, as it is a perfection to apprehend things suitably to what in themselves they are. The Holy Scriptures frequently speak of God as angry, and grieved for the sins of men, and their miseries which ensue therefrom. And a real aversion and dislike is signified thereby, and by many other expressions, which in us would signify vehement agitations of affection, that we are sure can have no place in him. We ought therefore in our own thoughts to ascribe to him that calm aversion of will, in reference to the sins and miseries of men in general ; and, in our own apprehensions, to remove to the utmost distance from him all such agitations of passion or affection, even though some expressions that occur, carry a great appearance thereof, should they be understood according to human measures, as they are human forms of speech. As, to instance in what is said by the glorious God himself, and very near in sense to what we have in the text, what can be more pathetic, than that lamenting wish, Psal. lxxxvi. 13, O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways !

But we must take heed lest, under the pretence that we cannot ascribe every thing to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe to a real unwillingness that men should sin on, and perish ; and consequently a real willingness that they should turn to him and live ; which so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us, to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things, which he doth not think fit to interpose his omnipotency to hinder, and is truly willing of some things, which he doth not put forth his omnipotency to effect.

That he most fitly makes this the ordinary course of his dispensations towards men, to govern them by laws, and promises, and threatenings (made most express to them that live under the gospel), to work upon their minds, their hope, and their fear; affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence, with which he requires them to comply, and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold, and give them the victory to their own ruin; though oftentimes he doth, from a sovereignty of grace, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline, their wills, and gain a victory over them, to their salvation.

Nor is his will towards the rest altogether ineffectual, though it have not this effect. For whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, though thou dost not know that God so wills thy conversion and salvation, as to effect it, whatsoever resistance thou now makest; though thou art not sure he will finally overcome all thy resistance, and pluck thee as a firebrand out of the mouth of hell; yet thou canst not say his good will towards thee hath been without any effect at all tending thereto. He hath often called upon thee in his gospel, to repent and turn to him through Christ; he hath waited on thee with long patience, and given thee time and space of repentance; he hath within that time been often at work with thy soul. Hath he not many times let in beams of light upon thee? shewn thee the evil of thy ways? convinced thee? awakened thee? half persuaded thee? and thou never hadst reason to doubt, but that if thou hadst set thyself with serious diligence to work out thy own salvation, he would have wrought on, so as to have brought things to a blessed issue for thy soul.

Thou mightest discern his mind towards thee to be agreeable to his word, wherein he hath testified to thee he desired not the death of sinners, that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, or in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn and live; exhorted thee, expostulated

with thee, and others in thy condition, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? He hath told thee expressly thy stubbornness, and contending against him, did grieve him, and vex his Spirit; that thy sin, wherein thou hast indulged thyself, hath been an abomination to him, that it was the abominable thing which his soul hated, that he was broken with the whorish heart of such as thou, and pressed therewith, as a cart that was full of sheaves.

Now such expressions as these, though they are borrowed from man, and must be understood suitably to God, though they do not signify the thing with him as they do in us, yet they do not signify nothing. As when hands and eyes are attributed to God, they do not signify as they do with us, yet they signify somewhat correspondent, as active and visive power: so these expressions, though they signify not, in God, such unquiet motions and passions, as they would in us, they do signify a mind and will, really, though with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity, set against sin, and the horrid consequences of it, which yet, for greater reasons than we can understand, he may not see fit to do all he can to prevent. And if we know not how to reconcile such a will in God, with some of our notions concerning the divine nature; shall we, for what we have thought of him, deny what he hath so expressly said of himself, or pretend to understand his nature better than he himself doth?\*

And when we see from such express sayings in Scripture, reduced to a sense becoming God, how God's mind stands in reference to sinners, and their self-destroying ways, we may thence apprehend what temper of mind our Lord Jesus also bears towards them in the like case, even in his glorified state. For can you think there is a disagreement between him and the Father about these things? And whereas we find our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, one while complaining men would not come to him that they might have life (John, v. 40), elsewhere grieved at the hardness of their hearts (Mark, iii. 5), and here scat-

\* See the Appendix.

tering tears over sinning and perishing Jerusalem ; we cannot doubt but that the (innocent) perturbation, which his earthly state did admit, being severed, his mind is still the same, in reference to cases of the same nature ; for can we think there is any disagreement between him and himself ? We cannot therefore doubt but that,

1. He distinctly comprehends the truth of any such case. He beholds from the throne of his glory above, all the treaties which are held and managed with sinners in his name, and what their deportments are therein. His eyes are as a flame of fire, wherewith he searches hearts, and trieth reins. He hath seen therefore, sinner, all along, every time an offer of grace hath been made to thee, and been rejected ; when thou hast slighted counsels and warnings that hath been given thee, exhortations and entreaties that have been pressed upon thee, for many years together, and how thou hast hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatenings, against promises and allurements ; and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come of it, and that, if thou persist, it will be bitterness in the end.

2. That he hath a real dislike of the sinfulness of thy course. It is not indifferent to him whether thou obeyest, or disobeyest the gospel ; whether thou turn and repent or no ; that he is truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitency, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy, and contempt of his grace, and takes real offence at them.

3. He hath real kind propensions towards thee, and is ready to receive thy returning soul, and effectually to mediate with the offended Majesty of heaven for thee, as long as there is any hope in thy case.

4. When he sees there is no hope, he pities thee, while thou seest it not, and dost not pity thyself. Pity and mercy above are not names only ; 'tis a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place there, in far higher excellency and perfection, than it can with us poor mortals here below. Ours is but borrowed, and participated from that first fountain and original above. Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heavenly pity,

though thou hast made thy case incapable of remedy. As the well tempered judge bewails the sad end of the malefactor, whom justice obliges him not to spare, or save.

And now let us consider what use is to be made of all this. And though nothing can be useful to the persons themselves, whom the Redeemer thus laments as lost, yet that he doth so, may be of great use to others.

*Use.* Which will partly concern those who do justly apprehend this is not their case ; and partly such as may be in great fear that it is.

I. For such as have reason to persuade themselves it is not their case. The best ground upon which any can confidently conclude this, is that they have in this their present day, through the grace of God, already effectually known the things of their peace, such, viz. as have sincerely, with all their hearts and souls, turned to God, taken him to be their God, and devoted themselves to him, to be his ; intrusting and subjecting themselves to the saving mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant, from which they do not find their hearts to swerve or decline, but resolve, through divine assistance, to persevere herein all their days. Now for such as with whom things are already brought to that comfortable conclusion, I only say to them,

1. Rejoice and bless God that so it is. Christ your Redeemer rejoices with you, and over you ; you may collect it from his contrary resentment of their case who are past hope ; if he weep over them, he, no doubt, rejoices over you. There is joy in heaven concerning you. Angels rejoice, your glorious Redeemer presiding in the joyful concert. And should not you rejoice for yourselves ? Consider what a discrimination is made in your case ! To how many hath that gospel been a deadly savour, which hath proved a savour of life unto life to you ! How many have fallen on your right hand and your left, stumbling at the stone of offence, which to you is become the headstone of the corner, elect and precious ! Whence is this difference ? Did you never slight Christ ? never make light of offered mercy ?



was your mind never blind or vain ? was your heart never hard or dead ? were the terms of peace and reconciliation never rejected or disregarded by you ? How should you admire victorious grace, that would never desist from striving with you till it had overcome ! You are the triumph of the Redeemer's conquering love, who might have been of his wrath and justice ! Endeavour your spirits may taste, more and more, the sweetness of reconciliation, that you may more abound in joy and praises. Is it not pleasant to you to be at peace with God ? to find that all controversies are taken up between him and you ? that you can now approach him, and his terrors not make you afraid ? that you can enter into the secret of his presence, and solace yourselves in his assured favour and love ? How should you joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement ! What have you now to fear ? 'If, when you were enemies, you were reconciled by the death of Christ, how much more, being reconciled, shall you be saved by his life ? How great a thing have you to oppose to all worldly troubles ! If God be for you, who can be against you ? Think how mean it is for the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, to be dismayed at the appearances of danger that threaten them from the inhabitants of the earth ! What if all the world were in a posture of hostility against you, when the mighty Lord of all is your friend ? Take heed of thinking meanly of his power and love ; would any one diminish to himself, whom he takes for his God ? All people will walk every one in the name of his god ; why should not you much more in the name of yours, glorying in him, and making your boast of him all the day long ? O the reproach which is cast upon the glorious name of the great God, by their diffidence and despondency, who visibly stand in special relation to him, but fear the impotent malice of mortal man more than they can trust in his Almighty love ! If indeed you are justified by faith, and have peace with God, it becomes you so to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as also to glory in tribulation, and tell all the world that in his favour stands your

life, and that you care not who is displeased with you for the things wherewith, you have reason to apprehend, he is pleased.

2. Demean yourselves with that care, caution, and dutifulness that become a state of reconciliation. Bethink yourselves that your present peace and friendship with God is not original, and continued from thence, but hath been interrupted and broken; that your peace is not that of constantly innocent persons. You stand not in this good and happy state because you never offended, but as being reconciled, and who therefore were once enemies. And when you were brought to know, in that your day, which you have enjoyed, the things belonging to your peace, you were made to feel the smart and taste the bitterness of your having been alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works. When the terrors of God did beset you round, and his arrows stuck fast in you, did you not then find trouble and sorrow? were you not in a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation to consume and burn you up as adversaries? Would you not then have given all the world for a peaceful word or look? for any glimmering hope of peace? How wary and afraid should you be of a new breach! How should you study acceptable deportments, and to walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing! How strictly careful should you be to keep faith with him, and abide stedfast in his covenant! How concerned for his interest! and in what agonies of spirit, when you behold the eruptions of enmity against him from any others! not from any distrust, or fear of final prejudice to his interest, but from the apprehension of the unrighteousness of the thing itself, and a dutiful love to his name, throne, and government. How zealous should you be to draw in others! how fervent in your endeavours, within your own sphere, and how large in your desires, extended as far as the sphere of the universe, that every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess to him! They ought to be more deeply concerned for his righteous cause, that remember they were once most unrighteously engaged

against it. And ought besides to be filled with compassion towards the souls of men, yet in an unreconciled state, as having known by the terrors of the Lord, and remembering the experienced dismalness and horror of that state, what it was to have divine wrath and justice armed against you with almighty power! And to have heard the thunder of such a voice, "I lift my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever, if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on vengeance, I will recompense fury to mine adversaries, vengeance to mine enemies."—Do you not know what the case is like to be, when potsherds, that should strive but with the potsherds of the earth, venture to oppose themselves as antagonists to omnipotency? And when briars and thorns set themselves in battle-array against the consuming fire, how easily it can pass through, and devour, and burn them up together? And how much more fearful is their condition that know it not! but are ready to rush like the horse into the battle! Do you owe no duty, no pity to them that have the same nature with you, and with whom your case was once the same? If you do indeed know the things of your peace God-ward, so as to have made your peace, to have come to an agreement, and struck a covenant with him; you have now taken his side, are of his confederates; not as equals but subjects. You have sworn allegiance to him, and associated yourself with all them that have done so. There can hereupon be but one common interest to him and you. Hence therefore you are most strictly obliged to wish well to that interest, and promote it to your uttermost, in his own way, *i. e.* according to his openly avowed inclination and design, and the genuine constitution of that kingdom which he hath erected, and is intent to enlarge and extend further in the world. That, you do well know, is a kingdom of grace; for his natural kingdom already confines with the universe, and can have no enlargement, without enlarging the creation. Whosoever they are that contend against him, are not merely enemies, therefore, but rebels. And you see he aims to conquer them by love and good-

ness ; and therefore treats with them, and seeks to establish a kingdom over them, in and by a Mediator, who if he were not intent upon the same design, had never lamented the destruction of any of them, and wept over their ruin, as here you find. So, therefore, should you long for the conversion of souls, and enlargement of his kingdom this way, both out of loyalty to him, and compassion towards them.

II. For such as may be in great fear lest this prove to be their case. They are either such as may fear it, but do not ; or such as are deeply afflicted with this actual fear.

1. For the former sort, who are in too great danger of bringing themselves into this dreadful deplorable condition, but apprehend nothing of it. All that is to be said to them apart by themselves, is only to awaken them out of their drowsy, dangerous slumber and security ; and then they will be capable of being spoken to, together with the other sort. Let me therefore,

1. Demand of you ; do you believe there is a Lord over you, yea or no ? Use your thoughts, for, about matters that concern you less, you can think. Do you not apprehend you have an invisible Owner and Ruler, that rightfully claims to himself an interest in you, and a governing power over you ? How came you into being ? You know you made not yourselves. And if you yet look no higher than to progenitors of your own kind, mortal men, as you are ; how came they into being ? You have so much understanding about you, if you would use it, as to know they could none of them make themselves more than you, and that, therefore, human race must have had its beginning from some superior Maker. And did not he that made them make you and all things else ? Where are your arguments to prove it was otherwise, and that this world, and all the generations of men, took beginning of themselves, without a wise and mighty Creator ? Produce your strong reasons, upon which you will venture your souls, and all the possibilities of your being happy or miserable to eternity ! Will your imagination make you

safe? and protect you against his wrath and justice, whose authority you will not own? Can you, by it, uncreate your Creator, and nullify the eternal Being? or have you any thing else, besides your own blind imagination, to make you confident, that all things came of nothing, without any maker? But if you know not how to think this reasonable, and apprehend you must allow yourselves to owe your being to an Almighty Creator, let me,

2. Ask of you how you think your life is maintained? Doth not he that made you live, keep you alive? Whereas you have heard we all live, and move, and have our beings in him, doth it not seem most likely to you to be so? Have you power of your own life? Do you think you can live as long as you will? At least do you not find you need the common helps of meat and drink, and air and clothing, for the support and comfort of your lives? And are not all these his creatures as well as you? And can you have them, whether he will or no?

3. And how can you think that he that made and maintains you, hath no right to rule you? If it were possible any one should as much depend upon you, would you not claim such power over him? Can you suppose yourself to be under no obligation to please him, who hath done so much for you? and to do his will, if you can any way know it?

4. And can you pretend you have no means to know it? That book that goes up and down under the name of his Word, can you disprove it to be his Word? If such writings should now first come into the world, so sincere, so awful, so holy, so heavenly, bearing so expressly the divine image, avowing themselves to be from God, and the most wonderful works are wrought to prove them his word, the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the sick healed, the dead raised, by a word only commanding it to be so, would you not confess this to be sufficient evidence that this revelation came from heaven? And are you not sufficiently assured they are so confirmed? Do you find in yourselves any inclination to cheat your

children, in any thing that concerns their wellbeing? Why should you more suspect your forefathers' design, to cheat you in the mere reporting falsely a matter of fact? Was not human nature the same, so many hundred years ago? Did ever the enemies of the Christian name, in the earlier days of Christianity, when it was but a novelty in the world, and as much hated, and endeavoured to be rooted out, as ever any profession was, deny such matters of fact? Have not some of the most spiteful of them confessed it? Did not Christians then willingly sacrifice their lives by multitudes, upon the assured truth of these things? Have they not been ever since most strictly careful to preserve these writings, and transmit them, as wherein the all of themselves and their posterity was contained? And where is now your new light? where are your latter discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to evict these writings of falsehood, or dare venture to disbelieve them?

5. But if you believe these writings to be divine, how expressly is it told you, in them, what the state of your case is God-ward, and what he requires of you! You may see you have displeased him, and how you are to please him, as hath been shewn before in this discourse. You know that you have lived in the world mindless and inobservant of him, not trusting, fearing, loving, or delighting in him, declining his acquaintance and converse; seeking your own pleasure, following your inclination, doing your own will; as if you were supreme, never minding to refer your actions to his precepts as your rule, or to his glory as your end. And from that word of his you may understand all this to be very displeasing to him. And that you can never please him by continuing this course, but by breaking it off, and returning to him as your Lord, and your God. That since your case did need a redeemer, and reconciler, and he hath provided and appointed one for you; you are to apply yourselves to him, to commit and subject your souls to him, to trust in his merits and blood, and submit to his authority and government. And,

6. Are you not continually called hereto by the gospel, under which you have lived all this while ? so that you are in actual, continual rebellion against him all the while you comply not with this call ; every breath you draw is rebellious breath. There is no moment wherein this lies not upon you, by every moment's addition to your time. And that patience of his which adds by moments to your life, and should lead you to repentance, is, while you repent not, perverted by you, only to the treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment.

7. And do you not find, as his word also plainly tells you, a great averseness and disinclination in you to any such serious solemn applying yourself to him, and your Redeemer ? Try your own hearts ; do you not find them draw back and recoil ? If you urge them, do they not still fly off ? How loath are you to retire ! and set yourselves to consider your case ! and unto serious seeking of God in Christ ! both from a reluctancy and indisposition to any such employment as this is itself, and from disaffection to that whereto it tends, the breaking off your former sinful course of life, and entering upon a better. And does not all this shew you the plain truth of what the word of God hath told you, that the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good who are accustomed to do evil (Jer. xiii. 23) ; that you have a heart that cannot repent (Rom. ii. 5), till God give you repentance to life (Acts, xi. 18), that you cannot come to Christ till the Father draw you, John, vi. 44. Do you not see your case then ? that you must perish if you have not help from heaven, if God do not give you his grace, to overcome and cure the averseness and malignity of your nature ? that things are likely thus to run on with you as they have from day to day, and from year to year ; and you that are unwilling to take the course that is necessary for your salvation to-day, are likely to be as unwilling to-morrow, and so your lives consume in vanity, till you drop into perdition ? But,

8. Dost thou not also know, sinner (what hath been so newly shewn thee from God's word), that, by thy being under the gospel, thou hast a day of grace? not only as offers of pardon and reconciliation are made to thee in it, but also as through it, converting, heart-renewing grace is to be expected, and may be had? that what is sufficient for the turning and changing of thy heart, is usually not given all at once, but as gentler insinuations (the injection of some good thoughts and desires) are complied with, more powerful influences may be hoped to follow? that therefore thou art concerned, upon any such thought cast into thy mind, of going now to seek God for the life of thy soul, to strive, thyself, against thy own disinclination? that if thou do not, but yield to it, and still defer, it may prove mortal to thee? For is it not plain to thee in itself, and from what hath been said, that this day hath its limits, and will come to an end? Dost thou not know thou art a mortal creature, that thy breath is in thy nostrils? Dost thou know how near thou art to the end of thy life? and how few breaths there may be for thee between this present moment and eternity? Dost thou not know thy day of grace may end before thy life? that thou mayst be cast far enough out of the sound of the gospel? and if thou shouldst carry any notices of it with thee, thou, who hast been so unapt to consider them, while they were daily pressed upon thee, wilt most probably be less apt when thou hearest of no such thing? that thou mayst live still under the gospel, and the Spirit of grace retire from thee, and never attempt thee more for thy former despiting of it? For what obligation hast thou upon that blessed Spirit? Or why shouldst thou think a Deity bound to attend upon thy triflings? And,

9. If yet all this move not: consider what it will be to die unreconciled to God! Thou hast been his enemy, he hath made thee gracious offers of peace, waited long upon thee, thou hast made light of all. The matter must at length end either in reconciliation or vengeance! The former is not acceptable to thee: art thou prepared for the



latter? canst thou sustain it? Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Thou wilt not do him right; he must then right himself upon thee. Dost thou think he cannot do it? canst thou doubt his power? Cast thine eyes about thee, behold the greatness (as far as thou canst) of this creation of his, whereof thou art a very little part. He that hath made that sun over thine head, and stretched out those spacious heavens, that hath furnished them with those innumerable bright stars, that governs all their motions, that hath hung this earth upon nothing, that made and sustains that great variety of creatures that inhabit it, can he not deal with thee, a worm? Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong, if he plead with thee? if he surround thee with his terrors, and set them in battle-array against thee? Hell and destruction are open before him, and without covering; how soon art thou cast in and engulfed! Sit down, and consider whether thou be able, with *thy impotency*, to stand before him, that comes against thee with *almighty power*! Is it not better to sue in time for peace? But perhaps thou mayst say, "I begin now to fear it is too late, I have so long slighted the gospel, resisted the Holy Spirit of God, abused and baffled my own light and conscience, that I am afraid God will quite abandon me, and cast me off for ever." It is well if thou do indeed begin to fear. That fear gives hope. Thou art then capable of coming into their rank who are next to be spoken to, viz.

2. Such as feel themselves afflicted with the apprehension and dread of their having out-lived their day, and that the things of their peace are now irrecoverably hid from their eyes. I desire to counsel such faithfully, according to that light and guidance which the Gospel of our Lord affords us in reference to any such case.

1. Take heed of stifling that fear suddenly, but labour to improve it to some advantage, and then to cure and remove it by rational, evangelical means and methods. Do not, as thou lovest the life of thy soul, go about suddenly, or by undue means, to smother or extinguish it. 'Tis too

possible, when any such apprehension strikes into a man's mind, because 'tis a sharp or piercing thought, disturbs his quiet, gives him molestation, and some torture, to pluck out the dart too soon, and cast it away. Perhaps such a course is taken, as doth him unspeakably more mischief, than a thousand such thoughts would ever do. He diverts, it may be, to vain company, or to sensuality, talks or drinks away his trouble ; makes death his cure of pain, and to avoid the fear of hell, leaps into it. Is this indeed the wisest course ? Either thy apprehension is reasonable, or unreasonable. If it should prove a reasonable apprehension, as it is a terrible one, would the neglect of it become a reasonable creature, or mend thy case ? if it shall be found unreasonable, it may require time and some debate to discover it to be so ; whereby, when it is manifestly detected, with how much greater satisfaction is it laid aside ! Labour then to inquire rightly concerning this matter.

2. In this inquiry, consider diligently what the kind of that fear is that you find yourselves afflicted with. The fear that perplexes your heart, must some way correspond to the apprehension you have in your mind, touching your case. Consider what that is, and in what form it shews itself there. Doth it appear in the form of a peremptory judgment, a definitive sentence, which you have past within yourself concerning your case ; that your day is over, and you are a lost creature ? or only of a mere doubt, lest it should prove so ? The fear that corresponds to the former of these, makes you quite desperate, and obstinately resolute against any means for the bettering of your condition. The fear that answers to the latter apprehension, hath a mixture of hope in it, which admits of somewhat to be done for your relief, and will prompt thereunto. Labour to discern which of these is the present temper and posture of your spirit.

3. If you find it be the former, let no thought any longer dwell in your mind *under that form*, viz. as a definitive sentence concerning your state. You have nothing to do to pass such a judgment ; the tendency of it is dismal and

horrid, as you may, yourself, perceive. And your ground for it is none at all. Your conscience within you is to do the office of a judge; but only of an under-judge, that is to proceed strictly by rule, prescribed and set by the sovereign Lord and Arbitrer of life and death: there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Nor is your conscience, as an under-judge, to meddle at all, but in cases within your cognizance. This about your final state is a reserved, excepted case, belonging only to the supreme tribunal, which you must take heed how you usurp. As such a judgment tends to make you desperate, so there will be high presumption in this despair. Dare you take upon you to cancel and nullify to yourself the obligation of the evangelical law? and whereas that makes it your duty to repent, and believe the gospel, to absolve yourselves from this bond, and say, it is none of your duty, or make it impossible to you to do it? You have matter and cases enough within the cognizance of your conscience, not only the particular actions of your life, but your present state also, whether you be as yet in a state of acceptance with God, through Christ, yea or no. And here you have rules set you to judge by. But concerning your final state, or that you shall never be brought into a state of acceptance, you have no rule by which you can make such a judgment; and therefore this judgment belongs not to you. Look, then, upon the matter of your final condition, as an exempt case, reserved to the future judgment, and the present determination whereof, against yourself, is without your compass and line, and most unsuitable to the state of probation, wherein, you are to reckon, God continues you here, with the rest of men in this world; and therefore any such judgment you should tear and reverse, and as such, not permit to have any place with you.

4. Yet since, as hath been said, you are not quite to reject or obliterate any apprehension or thought touching this subject, make it your business to correct and reduce it to that other form, *i. e.* let it only for the present remain with you, as a doubt how your case now stands, and what

issue it may at length have. And see that your fear thereupon be answerable to your apprehension, so rectified. While as yet it is not evident you have made your peace with God upon his known terms, you are to consider God hath left your case a doubtful case, and you are to conceive of it accordingly; and are to entertain a fear concerning it, not as certainly hopeless, but as uncertain. And as yours is really a doubtful case, 'tis a most important one. It concerns your souls, and your eternal well-being, and is not therefore to be neglected, or trifled with. You do not know how God will deal with you: whether he will again afford you such help as he hath done, or whether ever he will effectually move your heart unto conversion and salvation. You therefore are to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, because (as was told you) he works, but of his own good pleasure. Your fear should not exceed this state of your case, so as to exclude hope. It is of unspeakable concernment to you, that hope do intermingle with your fear. That will do much to mollify and soften your hearts, that after all the abuse of mercy, and imposing upon the patience of God, your neglects and slights of a bleeding Saviour, your resisting and grieving the Spirit of grace, he may yet, once for all, visit your forlorn soul with his vital influence, and save you from going down to perdition! How can your hearts but melt and break upon this apprehension! And it is not a groundless one. He that "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," will not fail to treat them well, whom he sees beginning to listen to his call, and entertaining the thoughts that most directly tend to bring them to a compliance with it. Your hope insinuating itself and mingling with your fear, is highly grateful to the God of all grace. He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy, Psal. cxlvii. 11.

5. But see to it also that your fear be not slight and momentary, and that it vanish not, while as yet it hath so great a work to do in you, viz. to engage you to accept God's own terms of peace and reconciliation, with all your

heart and soul. It is of continual use, even not only in order to conversion, but to the converted also. Can you think those mentioned words were spoken to none such, Phil. ii. 12, 13? or those, Heb. iv. 1? Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short, &c. And do we not find a holy fear is to contribute all along to the whole of progressive sanctification? 2 Cor. vii. 1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And that by it he preserves his own, that they never depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. Much more do you need it in your present case, while matters are yet in treaty between God and you. And as it should not exceed the true apprehension of your case, so neither should it come short of it.

6. You should therefore in order hereto aggravate to yourselves the just causes of your fear. Why are you afraid your day should be over, and the things of your peace be for ever hid from your eyes? Is it not that you have sinned against much light, against many checks of your own consciences, against many very serious warnings and exhortations, many earnest importunate beseechings and entreaties you have had in the ministry of the gospel, many motions and strivings of the Spirit of God thereby? Let your thoughts dwell upon these things. Think what it is for the great God, the Lord of glory, to have been slighted by a worm! Doth not this deserve as ill things at the hands of God as you can fear? 'Tis fit you should apprehend what your desert is, though perhaps mercy may interpose, and avert the deserved dreadful event. And if he have signified his displeasure towards you hereupon, by desisting for the present, and ceasing to strive with you as he hath formerly done; if your heart be grown more cold, and dead, and hard, than sometime it was; if you have been left so as to fall into grosser sin; 'tis highly reasonable you should fear being finally forsaken of the blessed Spirit of God, and greatly fear it, but with an awful

fear that may awaken you most earnestly to endeavour his return to you, not with a despairing fear, that will bind you up from any further endeavour for your soul at all.

And if upon all this (by death or otherwise) such a ministry be withdrawn from you as God did work by, in some degree, upon you, and you find not in that kind, what is so suitable to your state and case; take heed lest you be stupid under such a stroke. Think what it imports unto you, if God have, as it were, said concerning any servant of his (as Ezek. iii. 26), I will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that he shall not be a reprover to you any more! Consider that God may by this be making way that "wrath may come upon you to the uttermost," and never let you have opportunity to know more the things of your peace. Perhaps you may never meet with the man more, that shall speak so suitably to your condition, that shall so closely pursue you through all the haunts, and subterfuges, and lurking-holes, wherein your guilty convinced soul hath been wont to hide itself, and falsely seek to heal its own wounds. One of more value may be less apt, possibly, to profit you: as a more polished key doth not therefore alike fit every lock. And thy case may be such, that thou shalt never hear a sermon or the voice of a preacher more.

7. And now in this case recollect yourselves, what sins you have been formerly convinced of, under such a ministry, and which you have persisted in notwithstanding. Were you never convinced of your neglecting God, and living as without him in the world? of your low esteem and disregard of Christ? of your worldliness, your minding only the things of this earth? of your carnality, pride, self-seeking, voluptuousness, your having been lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? of your unprofitableness in your station? wherein you ought to have lived more conformably to Christian rules and precepts, according to the relations wherein God had set you? Were you never convinced how very faulty governors you have been, or members of families? parents or masters, children or ser-

vants, &c. ? What will this come to at last, that convictions have hitherto signified and served for nothing but increase of guilt ?

8. Under all this weight and load of guilt, consider what you have to do for your souls ! Bethink yourselves : are you to sit down and yield yourselves to perish ? Consider, man, it is the business of thy soul, and of thine eternal state, that is now before thee. Thou hast the dreadful flaming gulf of everlasting horror and misery in view ; hast thou nothing left thee to do but to throw thyself into it ? Methinks thou shouldst sooner reconcile thy thoughts to any thing than that ; and that, if any thing at all be to be done for thine escape, thou shouldst rather set thyself about it, and do it. Thou art yet alive, not yet in hell, yet the patience of God spares thee, thou hast yet time to consider, thou hast the power to think yet left thee, and canst thou use it no other way than to think of perishing ? Think rather how not to perish. A great point is gained, if thou art but brought to say, " What shall I do to be saved ? " which doth imply thou dost both apprehend the distressedness of thy case, and art willing to do any thing that is to be done for thy relief. And if thou art brought to this, thy circumstances may perhaps be such, that thou canst only put this question to thyself, and art only thyself to answer it, without a living, present guide, which may therefore make such a help as this needful to thee. Possibly some irresistible providence may have so cast thy lot, that thou art only now to be thy own preacher ; though it sometime was otherwise with thee ; and things were said to thee most suitable to the condition of thy soul, which thou wouldst not then consider. It is yet pressed upon thee to consider now, with some design to direct thy thoughts, that they run not into useless and troublesome confusion only. And your subject being what course you are now to take, that you may escape eternal wrath and ruin, 'tis obvious to you to apprehend nothing is to be done against or without God, but with him, and by him. Your utmost consideration can but bring the matter to this short

point, that whereas you have highly offended the God that made you, incurred his wrath, and made him your enemy, either to resist, or treat and supplicate. That madness which would let you intend the *former*, is not capable of consideration at all. For, if you consider, will you contend with omnipotency, or fight with an all-devouring flame? And *as to the latter*, it is well for you, that it can be the matter of your consideration, that you have any encouragement to turn your thoughts that way. You might have enemies that, being provoked, and having you in their power, would never admit of a treaty, nor regard your supplications, but fall upon you with merciless fury, and leave you nothing to think of but perishing. Here it is not so with you. The merciful God hath graciously told you, fury is not so in him, but that (though if briars and thorns will set themselves in battle against him, he will easily pass through, and burn them up together, yet) if any will take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, they shall make peace with him, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. You are to consider there is danger in your case, and there is hope, that your sin is not so little as to need no forgiveness, nor too great to be forgiven. Wherefore, whose case soever this is, since you may be forgiven, if you duly apply yourselves, and must be forgiven, or you are undone, my further advice to you is, and you may, as to this, advise yourself, having nothing else left you to do.

9. That you cast yourselves down before the mercy-seat of God, humble yourselves deeply at his footstool, turn to him with all your soul, implore his mercy through Christ, make a solemn covenant with him, taking him to be your God, and devoting yourself to him to be his, accepting his Son as your Lord and Saviour, and resigning your soul with submission and trust entirely to him, to be ruled and saved by him. That you are to do this, the case is plain, and even speaks itself; how you are to do it may need to be more particularly told you.

1. Take heed that what you do in this be not the mere effect of your present apprehended distress, but of the altered



judgment and inclination of your mind and heart. The apprehension of your distressed, dangerous condition, may be a useful means and inducement to engage you more seriously to listen and attend to the proposals made to you in the gospel. But if upon all this, it should be the sense of your heart that you would rather live still as without God in the world, and that you would never come to any such treaty or agreement with him; if mere necessity, and the fear of perishing, did not urge you to it, you are still but where you were. Therefore, though the feared danger was necessary to make you bethink yourself, and consider what God propounds to you; that consideration ought to have that further effect upon you, to convince you of the equity and desirableness of the things themselves which he propounds, summarily, of your betaking yourselves to him as your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, to fear and love, obey and enjoy him, in Christ Jesus, and accordingly ought to incline your heart thereto.

2. You are to consider in your entering into this covenant with God in Christ, that it is not a transaction for the present only you are about, but for your whole life. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, your God and your guide even to the death, Psalm xlviii. 14. You are to live in his fear and love, in his service and communion, all your days, and must understand this to be the meaning and tenor of the covenant which you make with him.

3. And hence therefore, it is plain that your whole transaction in this matter must proceed from a new nature, and a new vital principle of grace and holiness in you. What you do herein will otherwise neither be sincere nor lasting. You can never embrace religion for itself, without this, nor continue on in a religious course. What you do only from a temporary pang of fear upon you, is but from a kind of force that is for the present upon you, and will come to nothing, as soon as the impression of that fear wears off. The religion which is true and durable, is not from a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. You must be a new creature, God's workmanship, created

in Christ Jesus unto good works—that you may walk in them. The life of the new creature stands in love to God, as its way and course afterwards is a course of walking with God. <sup>s</sup> If your heart be not brought to love God, and delight in him, you are still but dead towards God, and you still remain alive unto sin, as before. Whereas, if you ever come to be a Christian indeed, you must be able truly to reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ, Rom. vi. 11. Whereupon in your making the mentioned covenant, you must yield yourself to God, as one that is alive from the dead, as 'tis verse 13 of the same chapter. A new nature and life in you, will make all that you do, in a way of duty (whether immediately towards God or man, the whole course of godliness, righteousness, and sobriety), easy and delightful to you. And because it is evident both from many plain scriptures, and your own and all men's experience, that you cannot be, yourselves, the authors of a new life and nature, you must therefore further, in entering into this covenant,

4. Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit, by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God and Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord! how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine indeed in the institution, but merely human, in respect of the radication and exercise; in which respects also it must be divine or nothing. What, are we yet to learn that a divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as divine authority direct and enjoin it? Do all such scriptures go for nothing that tell us, it is God that must create the new heart, and renew the right spirit in us; that he must turn us, if ever we be turned; that we can never come to Christ, except the Father draw us, &c.? Nor is there any cause of discouragement in this, if you consider what hath before been said in this discourse. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them

that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone. But what if you be put to ask often, and wait long, this doth but the more endear the gift, and shew the high value of it. You are to remember how often you have grieved, resisted, and vexed this Spirit, and that you have made God wait long upon you. What if the absolute sovereign Lord of all expect your attendance upon him? He waits to be gracious—and blessed are they that wait for him. Renew your applications to him. Lay from time to time that covenant before you, which yourselves must be wrought up unto a full entire closure with. And if it be not done at one time, try yet if it will another, and try again and again. Remember it is for your life, for your soul, for your all. But do not satisfy yourself with only such faint motions within thee, as may only be the effects of thy own spirit, of thy dark, dull, listless, sluggish, dead, hard heart, at least not of the efficacious regenerating influence of the divine Spirit. Didst thou never hear what mighty workings there have been in others, when God hath been transforming and renewing them, and drawing them into living union with his Son, and himself through him? What an amazing penetrating light hath struck into their hearts! as 2 Cor. iv. 6. Such as when he was making the world, enlightened the chaos. Such as hath made them see things that concerned them as they truly were, and with their own proper face, God, and Christ, and themselves, sin and duty, heaven and hell, in their own true appearances! How effectually they have been awakened! how the terrors of the Almighty have beset and seized their souls! what agonies and pangs they have felt in themselves, when the voice of God hath said to them, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light! Eph. v. 14. How he hath brought them down at his feet, thrown them into the dust, broken them, melted them, made them abase themselves, loathe and abhor themselves, filled them with sorrow, shame, confusion, and with indignation towards their own guilty souls, habituated them to a severity

against themselves, unto the most sharp, and yet most unforced self-accusations, self-judging, and self-condemnation; so as even to make them lay claim to hell, and confess the portion of devils belonged to them, as their own most deserved portion. And if now their eyes have been directed towards a Redeemer, and any glimmering of hope hath appeared to them; if now they are taught to understand God saying to them, Sinner, art thou yet willing to be reconciled, and accept a Saviour? O the transport into which it puts them! this is life from the dead! What, is there hope for such a lost wretch as I? How tasteful now is that melting invitation! how pleasant an intimation doth it carry with it! Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest, &c. If the Lord of heaven and earth do now look down from the throne of glory, and say, "What! sinner, wilt thou despise my favour and pardon, my Son, thy mighty merciful Redeemer, my grace and Spirit still?—What can be the return of the poor abashed wretch, overawed by the glory of the divine Majesty, stung with compunction, overcome with the intimation of kindness and love? I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear, now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. So inwardly is the truth of that word now felt, That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God, Ezek. xvi. 63. But, sinner, wilt thou make a covenant with me and my Christ? wilt thou take me for thy God, and him for thy Redeemer and Lord? And may I, Lord? yet, may I? O admirable grace! wonderful sparing mercy! that I was not thrown into hell at my first refusal! Yea, Lord, with all my heart and soul, I renounce the vanities of an empty cheating world, and all the pleasures of sin. In thy favour stands my life. Whom have I in heaven but thee? whom on earth do I desire besides thee? And O, thou blessed Jesus, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast

loved me, and washed me from my sins in thy blood, and whom the eternal God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, I fall before thee, my Lord and my God; I here willingly tender my homage at the footstool of thy throne. I take thee for the Lord of my life. I absolutely surrender and resign myself to thee. Thy love constrains me henceforth no more to live to myself, but to thee who diedst for me, and didst rise again. And I subject and yield myself to thy blessed light and power, O Holy Spirit of grace, to be more and more illuminated, sanctified, and prepared for every good word and work in this world, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified in the other. Sinner, never give thy soul leave to be at rest till thou find it brought to some such transaction with God (the Father, Son, and Spirit) as this; so as that thou canst truly say, and dost feel thy heart is in it. Be not weary or impatient of waiting and striving, till thou canst say, this is now the very sense of thy soul. Such things have been done in the world (but O how seldom of latter days!) so God hath wrought with men to save them from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for them. And why may he not yet be expected to do so? He hath smitten rocks ere now, and made the waters gush out; nor is his hand shortened, nor his ear heavy. Thy danger is not, sinner, that he will be inexorable, but lest thou shouldst. He will be entreated, if thou wouldst be prevailed with to entreat his favour with thy whole heart.

And that thou mayst, and not throw away thy soul, and so great a hope, through mere sloth, and loathness to be at some pains for thy life; let the text, which hath been thy *directory* about the things that belong to thy peace, be also thy *motive*, as it gives thee to behold the Son of God weeping over such as would not know those things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee? O hard heart! Consider what these tears import to this purpose.

1. They signify the real depth and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an

intellectual and most comprehensive eye, that sees far, and pierces deep into things, hath a wide and large prospect ; takes the comfort of that forlorn state into which unreconcilable sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, or for a light matter ; nor did he for himself either spend his own, or desire the profusion of others' tears. Weep not for me, O daughters of Jerusalem, &c. He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them ; the severity of God's justice, and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects of them will be, when they finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe him that did, at least believe his tears.

2. They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. Canst thou think his deceitful tears ? his, who never knew guile ? was this like the rest of his course ? And remember that he who shed tears, did, from the same fountain of love and mercy, shed blood too ! Was that also done to deceive ? Thou makest thyself some very considerable thing indeed, if thou thinkest the Son of God counted it worth his while to weep, and bleed, and die, to deceive thee into a false esteem of him and his love. But if it be the greatest madness imaginable to entertain any such thought, but that his tears were sincere and inartificial, the natural genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity, thou art then to consider what love and compassion thou art now sinning against ; what bowels thou spurnest ; and that if thou perishest, 'tis under such guilt as the devils themselves are not liable to, who never had a Redeemer bleeding for them, nor, that we ever find, weeping over them.

3. They shew the remedilessness of thy case, if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. These tears will then be the last issues of (even defeated) love, of love that is frustrated of its kind design. Thou mayst perceive in

these tears the steady unalterable laws of heaven, the inflexibleness of the divine justice, that holds thee in adamantine bonds, and hath sealed thee up, if thou prove incurably obstinate and impenitent, unto perdition ; so that even the Redeemer himself, he that is mighty to save, cannot at length save thee, but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame, which assuage it not ; but (though they have another design, even to express true compassion) do yet unavoidably heighten and increase the fervour of it, and will do so to all eternity. He even tells thee, sinner, "Thou hast despised my blood, thou shalt yet have my tears." That would have saved thee, these do only lament thee lost.

But the tears wept over others, as lost and past hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case ? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over him, thou mayst assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls, did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless : thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider further, that,

4. They signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears, would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And that love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved ? There his love is disappointed and vexed, crossed in its gracious intendment ; but here having compassed it, how will he joy over thee with singing, and rest in his love ! And thou also, instead of being involved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of the old Jerusalem, shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in eternal glory.

## APPENDIX.

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BECAUSE some things, not fit to be wholly omitted, were as little fit to come into the body of a practical discourse, 'twas thought requisite to subjoin here the following additions, that will severally have reference to distinct parts of the foregoing discourse.

As to what was said of the unreasonableness and ill consequence of admitting it—to be any man's duty to believe himself utterly rejected, and forsaken of God, inasmuch as it would make that his duty which were repugnant to his felicity:—this is to be evinced by a consideration, which also, even apart by itself, were not without its own great weight, viz. that such a belief were inconsistent with his former stated and known duty; it were therefore inconsistent with his felicity, inasmuch as it would make that duty impossible to be performed, which before, was by constitution of the evangelical law, made necessary to it, viz. repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The hope of acceptance is so necessary to both these, that the belief of a man's being finally rejected, or that he shall never be accepted, cannot but make them both impossible, equally impossible as if he were actually in hell, as much impossible to him as to the devils themselves. Nor is this impossibility merely from a moral impotency, or that obijuration of heart which were confessedly vicious, and his great sin, but from the natural influence of that belief of his being for ever rejected, which (upon the mentioned supposition) were his duty. Besides, inasmuch as it is the known duty of a sinner under the-



gospel, to turn to God through Christ, and it is also declared in the same gospel (sufficiently to make it the common matter of faith to Christians) that none can of themselves turn to God, and believe in his Son, without the help of special efficacious grace ; it must hereupon be a man's duty also to pray for that grace which may enable him hereto. How deep in wickedness was Simon Magus, even in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, when yet Peter calls him to repentance, and puts him upon praying for forgiveness (which must imply also his praying for the grace to repent) ; but how can a man pray for that, which, at the same time, he believes shall not be given him ? yea, and which is harder, and more unaccountable, how can he stand obliged in duty, to pray for that which, at the same time, he stands obliged in duty to believe he shall not obtain ? How can these two contrary obligations lie upon a man at the same time ? or is he to look upon the former as ceased ? should he reckon the gospel as to him repealed ? or his impenitency and infidelity, even when they are at the highest, no sins ?

I know 'tis obvious to object, as to all this, the case of the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost ; which will be supposed to be stated and determined in the sacred Scriptures ; and being so, the person that hath committed it, may equally be thought obliged (by a mixed assent, partly of faith to what is written, partly of self-knowledge, which he ought to have of his own acts and state) to conclude himself guilty of it ; whereupon all the former inconvenience and difficulty will be liable to be urged as above. But even as to this also, I see not but it may fitly enough be said, that though the general nature of that sin be stated, and sufficiently determined in *thesi*, yet that God hath not left it determinable in *hypothesi*, by any particular person, that he hath committed it. For admit that it generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost, by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly and

certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought as by speech. I also doubt not but it will be acknowledged on all hands, that prejudice and malice against Christianity must have a great ingrediency into this sin ; not such malice as whereby, knowing it to be the true religion, a man hates and detests it as such (which would suppose these Pharisees, whom our Saviour charges with it, or cautions against it, to have been, at that time, in their judgments and consciences, Christians), but such malignity, and strong prejudice, as darkens and obstructs his mind, that he judges it not to be true, against the highest evidence of its being. It will also be acknowledged, that some enmity and disaffection to true religion is common to all men ; more especially in their unregeneracy, and unconverted state.

Now let it be supposed that some person or other, of a very unwarrantably sceptical genius, had opportunity to know certainly the matter of fact, touching the miraculous works wrought by our Saviour, and understood withal somewhat generally of the doctrine which he taught ; and that he sets himself, as a philosopher, to consider the case. Suppose that, partly through prejudice against the holy design of Christianity, whereof there is some degree in all, and partly through shortness of discourse, not having thoroughly considered the matter ; he thinks it possible that some demon or other, with design, under a specious pretence, to impose upon or amuse the credulous vulgar, may have done all those strange things ; suppose his judgment should for the present more incline this way : what if, thinking this to be the case in the instance of Appollonius Tyanæus, he hath not yet, upon a slighter view, discerned enough to distinguish them, but thinks alike of both cases : yea, and suppose he have spoken his sentiments to some or other : perhaps upon further inquiry and search, he might see cause to alter his judgment ; and now, setting himself to inquire more narrowly, he perceives the unex-

ceptionable excellent scope and tendency of our Saviour's doctrine and precepts, considers the simplicity and purity of his life, contemplates further the awful greatness of his mighty works : but amidst these his deliberations, he finds among the rest of Christian constitutions this severe one, Matt. xii. 31, 32, and begins to fear lest, supposing the truth of this excellent religion, he have precluded himself of all the advantages of it by that former judgment of his. What is he to do in this case ? what were he to be advised unto ? What, to pass judgment upon himself, and his case, as desperate ? or not rather to humble himself before the God of heaven, ask pardon for his injurious rash judgment, and supplicate for mercy, and for further illumination, in the mystery of God, of the Father, and of Christ ? Which course, that it may have a blessed issue with him, who dare venture to deny or doubt ? And what have we to say hereupon, but that in great wisdom and mercy, our Saviour hath only told us there is such a sin, and what the general nature of it is, or whereabouts it lies, but the judgment of particular cases wherein, or of the very pitch and degree of malignity wherewith, it is committed, he hath reserved to himself ; intending further to strive with persons by his Spirit, while he judges them yet within the reach of mercy, or withhold it, when he sees any to have arrived to that culminating pitch of malignity and obstinacy, wherein he shall judge this sin specially to consist ? And what inconvenience is it to suppose he hath left this matter, touching the degree, humanly undeterminable ? The knowledge of it can do them who have committed it no good : and probably they have by it so blinded and stupified their own souls, as to have made themselves very little capable of apprehending that they have committed it, or of considering whether they have or no. But they are sunk into a deep abyss of darkness and death, so as that such knowledge may be as little possible, as it would be useful to them. All their faculties of intellection, consideration, and self-reflection, being (as to any such exercise) bound up in a stupefying dead sleep.

And to what purpose should they have a rule by which to determine a case, who—1. Can receive no benefit by the determination, and—2. Who are supposed when they use it, to have no faculty sufficiently apt to make this sad (but true) judgment of their case by it? But for them who have not committed it, and who are consequently yet capable of benefit by what should be made known about it, there is, therefore, enough made known for their real use and benefit. It will,

1. Be of real use to many such, to know their danger of running into it. And it is sufficient to that purpose, that they are plainly told wherein the general nature of it consists, or whereabouts it lies; without shewing them the very point that hath certain death in it; or letting them know just how near they may approach it, without being sure to perish, when there is danger enough in every step they take toward it. As if there were some horrid desert, into any part whereof no man hath any business to come but in some part whereof there is a dreadful gulf, whence arises a *contagious halitus*, which, if he come within the verge of it, will be certainly poisonous and mortal to him. What need is there that any man should know just how near he may come, without being sure to die for it? He is concerned to keep himself at a cautious awful distance.

2. It may be of great use to others, that are afflicted with very torturing fears lest they have committed it, to know that they have not. And they have enough also to satisfy them in the case. For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of divine favour, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God, and making their peace; they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that fearful gulf; and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them. For since we are not sufficient to think any thing (that good is) of ourselves, it is much more reasonable to ascribe any such thought or agitation

of spirit that have this design to him, than to ourselves, and to account that he is yet at work with us (at least in the way of common grace), though when our thoughts drive towards a conclusion against ourselves, that we have committed that sin, and towards despair thereupon, we are to apprehend a mixture of temptation in them, which we are concerned earnestly to watch and pray against. And yet even such temptation is an argument of such a one's not having committed that sin. For such as the devil may apprehend more likely to have committed it (and 'tis not to be thought he can be sure who have), he will be less apt to trouble with such thoughts, not knowing what the issue of that unquietness may prove, and apprehending it may occasion their escaping quite out of his snare. And I do conceive this to be a safer method, of satisfying such as are perplexed with this fear in our days, than to be positive in stating that sin so, or limiting it to such circumstances, as shall make it impossible to be committed in this age of the world. For let it be seriously considered, whether it be altogether an un-supposable thing, that, with some in our days, there may be an equivalency, in point of light and evidence of the truth of Christianity, unto what these Jews had, whom our Saviour warns of the danger of this sin, at that time when he so warned them; his warning and cautioning them about it, implies that he judged them at least in a possibility, at that time, of incurring the guilt of it; if the text Matt. xii. do not also imply that he reckoned them, then, actually to have committed it. For it is said, ver. 25, he knew their thoughts, *i. e.* considered the temper of their minds, and thereupon said to them what follows concerning it. Let us consider wherein their advantage towards their being ascertained of the truth of the Christian religion, was greater than we now can have. It was, chiefly, in this respect greater, that they had a nearer and more immediate knowledge of the matter of fact, wherein that evidence which our Saviour refers to did consist. A more immediate way of knowing it they had; the most immediate the persons

whom he warns (or charges) seem not to have had ; for those Pharisees, it is said, heard of the cure of the demoniac, not that they saw it. They took it upon the (no doubt sufficiently credible) report of others. Now let it be further considered, what we have to balance this one single advantage. We have, to intelligent considering persons, rationally sufficient evidence of the same matter of fact. But how great things, that have since followed, have we the sufficiently certain knowledge of besides, beyond what they had in view, at that time ! As the wonderful death of our Lord, exactly according to prediction, in many respects, together with all the unforetold amazing circumstances that attended it ! his more wonderful resurrection, upon which so great a stress is laid for demonstrating the truth of the religion he taught : the destruction of Jerusalem, as he foretold, and the shattered condition of the Jewish nation, as was also foretold, ever since : the strange success of the gospel in the first, and some following ages, by so unlikely means, against the greatest opposition imaginable, both of Jews and pagans. Not to insist on the apostasy foretold, in the Christian church, with many more things that might be mentioned. Let it be considered whether the want of so immediate way of knowing some of these things be not abundantly compensated by the greatness of the other things that are however sufficiently known. And if such as have wit and leisure to consider these things in our days, are often pressed to consider them, have them frequently represented, and laid before their eyes, if such, I say, have in view as great evidence, upon the whole, of the truth of Christianity, as these Pharisees had ; it is then further to be considered, whether it be not possible that some such may equal the Jewish malice, against the holy design of our religion. To which I only say, the Lord grant that none may. But if there be really cause to apprehend such a danger, some other way should be thought of to cure the trouble of some, than by the danger and (too probable) ruin of others. However, none should themselves make their own case incurable, by con-

cluding that they have sinned that sin, or by believing they are, otherwise, forsaken and rejected of God; so as that he will never more assist their endeavour to repent, and turn to him through the Mediator.

If it be inquired here, since, as hath been shewn, some may be quite forsaken of God, while yet they live in the world; ought such to believe then they are not forsaken, and so believe an untruth that they may make it true, or try if they can better their condition by it? I answer, nor that neither. For that God will further assist an obstinate sinner, that hath long resisted his Spirit, and despised his mercy, is no matter of promise to him, and so no matter of faith. When he doth conquer, at length, any such, 'tis of mere unpromised favour (as was also shewn); whereof therefore he gives others no ground to despair; and for which they are deeply concerned, with great earnestness, to supplicate. But if it be said, how can they pray for that whereof they have no promise? and can have no faith, since what is not of faith is sin, Rom. xiv. 23. I answer, that passage of Scripture would, in this case, be much misapplied. It speaks not of faith concerning the certainty of any event to be expected, but the lawfulness of a work to be done, and of doubting, not concerning the event, but of my own act. Can any man in his wits doubt concerning his own act in this case? whether it be better to pray for the grace of God to save him, than slight it and perish? Nor are they without very encouraging promises concerning the event, that God will be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. And that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, Rom. x. 13, which promises, 'tis true, the context of both shews, do speak of believing prayer. They are to faith, not of it, and import, that God will reward and save the believer: not that he will give faith to the obstinate, contemptuous unbeliever. If he do this, 'tis (as was said) of unpromised bounty. But though they are not promises to give faith, they should induce it; and incline sinners to cast themselves down before the throne of so gracious a God, and

seek grace to help them in their need, in confidence that he will never reject penitent believing prayer. They, indeed, that for their former wilful sinning are utterly forsaken of God, will not thus apply themselves; but our question is not what they will do, but what they should. Because they would not, therefore they were forsaken, and because they yet will not, they are still and finally forsaken. Their refusal proceeds not from any discouragement God hath given them, but from the malignity of their own hearts. God hath not repealed his gospel towards them. The connexion continues firm between the perceptive and promissory parts of it. Their infidelity is not become their duty, but remains their heinous sin, and the more deeply heinous by how much their own malignity holds them more strongly in it.

Unto what also is discoursed concerning anger and grief (or other passions), ascribed to God, it will not be unfit here to add, that unless they be allowed to signify real aversion of will, no account is to be given what reality in him they can signify at all. For to say (what some do seem to satisfy themselves with) that they are to be understood *secundum effectum*, not *secundum affectum*, though true as to the negative part, is, as to the affirmative, very defective and short; for the effects of anger and grief, upon which those names are put, when spoken of God, are not themselves in him, but in us. But we are still at a loss what they signify in him. Such effects must have some cause. And if they be effects which he works, they must have some cause in himself that is before them, and productive of them. This account leaves us to seek what that cause is, that is signified by these names. That it cannot be any passion, as the same names are wont to signify with us, is out of question. Nor indeed do those names primarily, and most properly, signify passion in ourselves. The passion is consequently only by reason of that inferior nature in us, which is susceptible of it. But the aversion of our mind and will is before it, and in another subject, very separable from it, and possible to



be without it. In the blessed God we cannot understand any thing less is signified than real displeasure at the things whereat he is said to be angry or grieved.

Our shallow reason indeed is apt to suggest in these matters, Why is not that prevented that is so displeasing? And it would be said with equal reason in reference to all sin permitted to be in the world, Why was it not prevented? And what is to be said to this? Shall it be said that sin doth not displease God? that he hath no will against sin? it is not repugnant to his will? Yes; it is to his revealed will, to his law. But is that an untrue revelation? His law is not his will itself, but the *signum*, the discovery of his will. Now, is it an insignificant sign? a sign that signifies nothing? or to which there belong no correspondent *significatum*? *nothing that is signified by it*? Is that which is signified (for sure no one will say it signifies nothing) his real will, yea or no? who can deny it? That will, then (and a most calm, sedate, impassionate will it must be understood to be), sin, and consequently the consequent miseries of his creatures, are repugnant unto. And what will is that? 'Tis not a peremptory will concerning the event, for the event falls out otherwise; which were, upon that supposition, impossible; for who hath resisted his will? as was truly intimated by the personated questionist (Rom. ix. 19), but impertinently, when God's will of another (not a contrary) kind, *i. e.* concerning another object, was in the same breath referred unto, Why doth he yet find fault? 'Tis not the will of the event that is the measure of faultiness; for then there could not have been sin in the world, nor consequently misery, which only, by the Creator's pleasure, stands connected with it. For nothing could fall out against that irresistible will. The objector then destroys his own objection, so absurdly, and so manifestly, as not to deserve any other reply than that which he meets with. Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?

And what is the other object about which the divine will is also conversant? Matter of duty, and what stands

in connexion with it, not abstractly and separately, but as it is so connected, our felicity. This is objectively another will, as we justly distinguish divine acts, that respect the creature, by their indifferent objects. Against this will falls out all the sin and misery in the world.

All this seems plain and clear, but is not enough. For it may be further said, When God wills this or that to be my duty, doth he not will this event, viz. my doing it? otherwise wherein is his will withstood, or not fulfilled, in my not doing it? He willed this to be my duty, and it is so. I do not nor can hinder it from being so, yet I do it not, and that he willed not. If all that his will meant was that this should be my duty, but my doing it was not intended; his will is entirely accomplished, it hath its full effect, in that such things are constituted, and do remain my duty, upon his signification of this his will, my not doing it not being within the compass of the object, or the thing willed.

If it be said, he willed my doing it, *i. e.* that I should do it, not that I shall, the same answer will recur, viz. that his will hath still its full effect, this effect still remaining, that I should do it, but that I shall he willed not.

It may be said, I do plainly go against his will however; for his will was that I should do so or so, and I do not what he willed I should. 'Tis true, I go herein against his will, if he willed not only my obligation, but my action according to it. And indeed it seems altogether unreasonable, and unintelligible, that he should will to oblige me to that, which he doth not will me to do.

Therefore it seems out of question, that the holy God doth constantly and perpetually, in a true sense, will universal obedience, and the consequent felicity of all his creatures capable thereof; *i. e.* he doth will it with simple complacency, as what were highly grateful to him, simply considered by itself. Who can doubt, but that purity, holiness, blessedness, wheresoever they were to be beheld among his creatures, would be a pleasing and delightful spectacle to him, being most agreeable to the perfect

excellency, purity, and benignity of his own nature, and that their deformity and misery must be consequently displeasing? But he doth not efficaciously will every thing that he truly wills. He never willed the obedience of all his intelligent creatures so, as effectually to make them all obey, nor their happiness, so as to make them all be happy, as the event shews. Nothing can be more certain, than that he did not so will these things; for then nothing could have fallen out to the contrary, as we see much hath. Nor is it at all unworthy the love and goodness of his nature not so to have willed, with that effective will, the universal fulness, sinlessness, and felicity of all his intelligent creatures. The divine nature comprehends all excellencies in itself, and is not to be limited to that one only of benignity, or an aptness to acts of beneficence. For then it were not infinite, not absolutely perfect, and so not divine. All the acts of his will must be consequently conformable and agreeable to the most perfect wisdom. He doth all things according to the counsel of his will. He wills, 'tis true, the rectitude of our actions, and what would be consequent thereto, but he first, and more principally, wills the rectitude of his own. And he wills not only not to do an unrighteous, but not an inept, or unfit thing. We find he did not think it fit efficaciously to provide concerning all men, that they should be made obedient and happy, as he hath concerning some. That in the general he makes a difference, is to be attributed to his wisdom, *i. e.* his wisdom hath in the general made this determination, not to deal with all alike, and so we find it ascribed to his wisdom that he doth make a difference: and in what a transport is the holy apostle in the contemplation and celebration of it upon this account! Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But now when, in particular, he comes to make this difference between one person and another, there being no reason in the object to determine him this way, more than that, his designing some for the objects of special favour,

and waving others (as to such special favour), when all were in themselves alike ; in that case wisdom hath not so proper an exercise, but it is the work of free, unobliged sovereignty here to make the choice. " Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Ephes. i. 5.

Yet in the mean time, while God doth not efficaciously will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, doth it follow he wills it not really at all ? To say he wills it efficaciously, were to contradict experience, and his word ; to say he wills it not really, were equally to contradict his word. He doth will it, but not primarily, and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it, viz. that he so overpower all, as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation, why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeably to the reasonableness and fitness of them.

# UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS:

A DISCOURSE ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTION—

“WHAT MAY MOST HOPEFULLY BE ATTEMPTED TO ALLAY ANIMOSITIES AMONG PROTESTANTS,  
THAT OUR DIVISIONS MAY NOT BE OUR RUIN?”

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# UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS,

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*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*—Col. ii. 2.

THIS question is propounded to me ; “ What may most hopefully be attempted to allay animosities among protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin ? ” I must here, in the first place, tell you how I understand this question. 1. As to the *end*, the preventing our ruin ; I take the meaning chiefly to be, not the ruin of our estates, trade, houses, families ; not *our* ruin, in these respects, who are Christians, but our ruin as we are Christians, *i. e.* the ruin of our Christianity itself, or of the truly Christian interest among us. 2. As for the *means* inquired after, I understand not the question to intend, what is to be done or attempted by laws, and public constitutions, as if our business were to teach our absent rulers, or prescribe to them what they should do, to whom we have no present call, or opportunity, to apply ourselves. Nor again can it be thought our business, to discuss the several questions that are controverted among us, and shew, in each, what is the truth and right, wherewith every man’s conscience ought to be satisfied, and in which we should all meet and unite : as if we had the vanity to think of performing, by an hour’s discourse, what the voluminous writings of some ages have not performed. Much less are we to attempt the persuading of any to go against an already formed judgment in these points of difference, for the sake of union ; and to seek the peace of the church, by breaking their peace with God, and their own consciences.

But I take the question only to intend, what serious Christians may, and ought, to endeavour, in their private capacities, and agreeably with their own principles, towards the proposed end. And so I conceive the words read to you, contain the materials of a direct and full answer to the question. Which I reckon will appear,—by opening the case the apostle's words have reference to ; that will be found a case like our own ; and—by opening the words, whereby their suitableness to *that case* will be seen, and consequently to *our case* also.

1. The case which these words have reference to (as indeed the general aspect of the epistle, and in great part of the other apostolical letters, looks much the same way) was in short this: That a numerous sect was already sprung up, that began (so early) to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the Christian religion, and very much to disturb the peace of the Christian church. A sort they were of partly judaizing, partly paganizing Christians, the disciples, as they are reputed, of Simon Magus, who joined with the name Christian the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, with the impurities (even in worship) of the Gentiles, denying the more principal doctrines, and hating the holy design, of Christianity itself, while they seemed to have assumed, or to retain, the name, as it were on purpose the more effectually to wound and injure the Christian cause and interest. Men of high pretence to knowledge (whence they had the title of Gnostics), filched partly from the Jewish cabbalism, partly from the Pythagorean. By which pretence they insinuated the more plausibly with such as affected the knowledge of more hidden mysteries. Whereto the apostle seems to have reference, where he adds immediately after the text, that in Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, ver. 3. And says, he did purposely add it, lest any man should beguile them with enticing words ; intimating, there was no need to follow those vain pretenders, out of an affectation of sublimer knowledge, and forsake Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid.



Of the progress and genius of this sect, not only some of the fathers of the church give an account,\* but even a noted philosopher† among the heathens, who writes professedly against them (though not a word against Christians as such), both making it his business to refute their absurd doctrines (that the world was in its nature evil, and not made by God, but by some evil angel, &c.), and representing them as men of most immoral principles and practices; worse, both in respect of their notions and morals, than Epicurus himself. It appears this sort of men did, in the apostles' days, not only set themselves, with great art and industry, to pervert as many professors of Christianity as they could, but found means (as they might by their compliances with the Jews, who were then much spread, and numerous seated in sundry principal cities under the Roman power, and who were every where the bitterest enemies to Christianity) to raise persecution against them they could not pervert, which some passages seem to intimate in the epistle to the Galatians (who, as that whole epistle shews, were much leavened by this sect, insomuch that the apostle is put to travail as in birth again to have Christ formed in them, and to reduce them back to sincere Christianity), viz. that some leaders of this sect set the people's minds even against the apostle himself, that he began to be reputed by them as an enemy (chap. v. 16), and was persecuted under that notion, because he would not comply with them in the matter of circumcision (urged as an engagement to the whole law of Moses), chap. . 11. "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." And that they were as mischievous as they could be, to fellow-Christians, on the same account, biting and devouring them that received not their corrupting additions to Christianity, as the circumstances of the text shew, ver. 15.

How like a case this is to ours, with our popish enemies, need not tell you. And now in this case; when the

\* Clemens Alexandr. Irenæus, Epiphanius, &c.

† Plotinus, Ennead 2, l. 9.

faith of many was overthrown, so much hurt was already done, and the danger of greater was so manifest, partly by the most insinuating methods of seduction, partly by the terror of persecution, the great care was to secure the uncorrupted residue, and preserve unextinct the true Christian interest.

The urgency of this case puts the solicitous, concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words do intimate: I would you knew what conflict I have, and not for these Colossians only, but for them of Laodicea (which was not very remote from Colosse), and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: for it was a common case, and upon him lay the care of all the churches. So that hence his musing, meditative mind, could not but be revolving many thoughts, and casting about for expedients, how the threatening danger might be obviated and averted. And these in the text, which he fastens upon, and wherein his thoughts centre, how apt and proper they were to that case (and consequently to ours which so little differs) will be seen.

2. By our opening and viewing the import of the text itself: Wherein he,

1. Proposes to himself *the end* which he apprehended was most desirable, and above all things to be coveted for them; That their hearts might be comforted. A word of much larger signification than in vulgar acceptance it is understood to be. *Παρακαλέω* signifies (with profane as well as the sacred writers) not only to administer consolation to a grieved mind, but to exhort, quicken, excite, and animate, to plead and strive with dull and stupid, wavering and unresolved, minds. It was thought indeed comprehensive enough to express all the operations of the divine spirit upon the souls of men, when not only the Christian church, but the world, yet to be Christianized, was to be the subject of them, as we see, John, xvi. 8. In respect whereof that Holy Spirit hath his name of office, *the paraclite*, from this word. And it being the passive that is here used, it signifies not only the endeavours themselves, which

are used to the purpose here intended, but the effect of them wherein they all terminate, a lively, vigorous, confirmed state and habit of soul : and that not indefinite, but determined to one thing, the Christian faith and profession, which the apostle's drift and scope plainly shew. 'Tis not to be thought, he so earnestly coveted and strove, that they might be jocund, cheerful, abounding with joy and courage, in any course, right or wrong ; but that they might be encouraged, established, confirmed in their Christianity. And if the word he here uses were large enough to signify (as was noted above) all that was necessary to make men Christians, it may as well, all that is necessary to continue them such.

In short, the end which the apostle aims at, the *παρακλήσις* intended to these Christians, was their establishment and confirmed state in their Christianity, as the effect of all apostolical or ministerial exhortations, persuasions, encouragements, or any whatsoever endeavours ; made efficacious to that purpose by the powerful influence and operation of the Holy Ghost. And that it was no lower thing than this, we have sufficient evidence, by comparing the close of the foregoing chapter with the beginning of this. Where we find, chap. i. 28, the avowed design of his preaching, warning, and teaching in all wisdom, was that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. That whereas there were various arts and endeavours used, to adulterate the Christian religion, and pervert men from the simplicity of it, he might lose none, but to his very uttermost keep all in a possibility of being presented perfect in Christ Jesus at last, *i. e.* that they might be all entire, complete, and persevering Christians to the end. And for this he adds, ver. 29, he did labour, striving according to his working, which wrought in him mightily. All his labour, and the strivings of his soul, acted by divine power, and by a Spirit greater than his own, did aim at this end. And now hereupon he intimates how fervid these his strivings were, ch. ii. 1. I would you did but know (what it is not for me to say) *ἤλικον ἀγῶνα*, what an *agoniz* I en-

ture ! how great this my conflict is for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh ! And for what ? That their hearts might be comforted (as we read), meaning manifestly the same thing he had expressed before ; that notwithstanding all endeavours of others to the contrary, they might be complete and confirmed Christians to the last.

2. We have next to consider in the text the means, or what expedients the apostle conceives would be most effectually conducing to this blessed purpose. They are two,—mutual love to one another ;—and a clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel. The former is shortly and plainly expressed ; the other by a copious and most emphatical *periphrasis*, or circumlocution. He most earnestly covets to have them knit together by both *συμβιβασθέντων*, *compacted*, as the word imports, in the one love, *ἐν ἀγάπῃ*, and unto or into the other, as that particle signifies *εἰς πάντα*, &c.

1. Mutual love to one another : *q. d.* The thing were done, or much were done towards it, if they were knit together in love, compacted, made all of a piece, if by love they did firmly cohere, and cleave to one another : for then it would be one and all : and 'tis scarce ever supposable they should all agree to quit their religion at once. But if that were to be supposed, he adds another thing that would put all out of doubt.

2. A clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel. For the several expressions that follow are but a description of such a faith. Where we are to note,—what he would have them apprehend,—and the apprehensive principle.

1. What he would have them apprehend : viz. the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine, which he calls a mystery, both because it was so in itself, and 'tis often spoken of under that name, by our Lord himself, Matt. xiii. 11, and familiarly by this apostle, Rom. xvi. 25 ; Ephes. iii. 3, 9 ; Col. i. 26, and elsewhere ; and because of the high pretence of the Gnostics to the knowledge of mysteries, which sometimes he slights ; especially being unaccompanied with love, as, with them, it most eminently

was. "Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have no charity, I am nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 2. "Knowledge puffeth up, love edifies," chap. viii. 1. Sometimes, as here, he makes the sincere doctrine of the gospel to outvie theirs herein, intimating that such as made profession of it could have no temptation to go over to them for the knowledge of mysteries (unless a mystery of iniquity were more pleasing to them), whose very religion was that great mystery of godliness. "God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Now this mystery he, first, more generally characterizes, by calling it the mystery of God, a divine mystery, not made one by merely human fiction; and then he very distinctly specifies it in the following words, "and of the Father, and of Christ." Where the former *and* needs not be thought copulative, but exegetical, and might be read *even*, or *to wit*; or it may be read, *both*, as 'tis usual with the Greeks as well as Latins when the copulative is to be repeated, so to read the former. As if it were said, By the mystery of God I mean, not of God alone, and abstractedly considered, as if it were enough to you to be mere Deists; and that the whole superadded revelation concerning the Mediator, might be looked upon with indifferency or neglect (as by the Gnostics it was known then to be, and afterwards by some of their great leaders, in the substance of it, with downright hatred and opposition); but that which I so earnestly covet for you, and wherein I would have you unite, and be all one, in the acknowledgment of the whole mystery of God; *i. e.* both of the Father and of Christ.

2. The apprehensive principle; which we may, by a general name, call faith, and accommodately enough to the name here given us of its object, a mystery which is elsewhere called the mystery of faith (1 Tim. iii. 9), or a mystery to be believed: faith being the known principle of receiving the gospel revelation. But he here ex-

presses it by words that signify knowledge, *σύνεσις* and *ἐπίγνωσις*, thereby intimating that the faith of Christians is not to be a blind and unintelligent principle, but that though there were contained in the gospel mysteries never to be understood, if God had not afforded a special revelation of them on purpose ; yet being revealed, we ought to have a clear and distinct, as well as lively and practical, perception of them. By these two words, and the other expressions he joins in with the former, he seems to intimate two sorts of properties which belong to that faith of the gospel which he wishes to them.

1. The rectitude, clearness, and certainty of notion.

2. The efficacy, impressiveness, and immediate aptitude to have influence upon practice, which he would have it carry with it. The latter properties supposing and depending on the former, he there highly exaggerates the matter, and heaps together expressions that might with most lively emphasis set forth the kind of that knowledge which he conceives would be of so great use to them. He wishes them a *σύνεσις*, a clear, perspicacious knowledge, and an assurance, even to a *plerophory*, a *fulness of assurance*, in their knowledge of the truth of the gospel. Yea he wishes them the *riches*, *πλοῦτον*, yea and *all riches*, *πάντα πλοῦτον της πληροφορίας*, of that full assurance, or *plerophory* of understanding, and knowledge of that truth ; apprehending that this would certainly fix them in their faith and profession, so as they would never recede from it. As when in Christ's own days many went back and walked no more with him, John, vi. 66, that which retained others, so that when Christ asks, "Will ye also go away?" (verse 67), they presently answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" could entertain no such thought, was, that, besides what they believed of him was of greatest importance to them, "Thou hast the words of eternal life," verse 68. So their belief was with that assurance as to exclude all suspicion or doubt in the case : "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God," verse 69, and therefore neither canst want power to confer

eternal life, as all thy words do import thy design and promise to do, nor truth to make good thy own plain words. And then he also knew that such a *σύνεσις* or *knowledge* would produce, what he further wishes them, an *ἐπίγνωσις*, and *acknowledgment*, an inward, vital owning, a cordial embrace, a lively perception of the same blessed truths, which must needs further most abundantly contribute to this their so much desired joint and unanimous stability.

And now these are the two expedients by which he reckons they would be so closely compacted together as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them ; mutual love, and a clear, certain, operative faith of the gospel ; if, by the one, they did cohere with each other ; and by the other, adhere to God in Christ ; if the one might have with them the place, power, and bindingness of a cement, the other, of a continual inclination, yieldingness, and compliance to the magnetism of the centre, they would never so fall asunder as to give any enemies opportunity to be the successful authors, or the gratified spectators, of their ruin. Thus therefore I would sum up the sense of this scripture, and the answer to the question proposed.—“That the maintaining of sincere love among Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy in reference to the substantial of Christianity, are to be endeavoured as the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them, against such as design the ruin of the truly Christian interest.”—The case was at that time urging and important. A great and numerous party was formed, of such as did nauseate the simplicity of the Christian religion, and hate the true design of it. All the care was what course was most proper and suitable to preserve the rest. And you see what was then thought most proper. Counsel was not taken to this effect (and therefore Christians in a private capacity should not covet to have it so), “Let us bind them by certain devised preter-evangelical canons to things never thought fit to be enjoined by Christ himself, severely urge the strict and uniform observance of them, make the terms of Christian

communion straiter than he ever made them, add new rituals of our own to his institutions, and cut off from us all that (never so conscientiously) scruple them." No, this was the practice of their common enemies, and it was to narrow and weaken the too much already diminished Christian interest. The order mentioned ver. 5, might be comely enough, without things that were both unnecessary and offensive.

Nor was it consulted and resolved to agitate the controversy about this power and practice, in perpetual, endless disputations, and stigmatize them that should not be enlightened and satisfied in these matters, as schismatical and wilful: though they never so sincerely adhered to the doctrine, and observed the laws, of Christ, *i. e.* 'twas neither thought fit to urge the unsatisfied upon doubtful things against their consciences, nor to take order that continual endeavours should be used from age to age to satisfy them, or that the church should be always vexed with vain controversies about needless things; that, if they were never so lawful, might as well be let alone, without detriment to the Christian cause, and perhaps to its greater advantage. Yea, the attempt of imposing any thing upon the disciples but what was necessary, is judged a tempting of God (Acts, xv. 10), a bringing the matter to a trial of skill with him, whether he could keep the church quiet, when they took so direct a course to distemper and trouble it. But it was thought necessary, and sufficient, that all did unite, and were knit together in the mutual love of one another, and in a joint adherence to the great mysteries of faith and salvation.

In the same case, when there were so many antichrists abroad, and (it is likely) Ebion with his partakers made it their business to pervert the Christian doctrine, the same course is taken by the blessed apostle St John, only to endeavour the strengthening of these two vital principles, faith in Christ and love to fellow-Christians, as may be seen at large in his epistles. These he presses, as the great commandments, upon the observation whereof he seems to



account the safety and peace of the sincere did entirely depend. This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, 1 Epistle, iii. 23. He puts upon Christians no other distinguishing test, but Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God : and Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him (chap. v. 1) : is only solicitous that they did practise the commandment they had from the beginning, *i. e.* that they loved one another (2 Epist. 5), and that they did abide in the doctrine of Christ, ver. 9.

The prudence and piety of those unerring guides of the church (themselves under the certain guidance of the Spirit of truth), directed them to bring the things wherein they would have Christians unite, within as narrow a compass as was possible, neither multiplying articles of faith nor rites of worship. These two principles (as they were thought to answer the apostles) would fully answer our design and present enquiry. And we may adventure to say of them that they are both sufficient and necessary, the apt and the only means to heal and save us ; such as would effect our cure, and without which nothing will.

Nor shall I give other answer to the proposed question, than what may be deduced from these two, considered according to what they are in themselves, and what they naturally lead and tend unto. I shall consider them in the order wherein the apostle here mentions them, who you see reserves the more important of them to the latter place.

1. The sincere love of Christians to one another, would be a happy means of preserving the truly Christian interest among us. That this may be understood, we must rightly apprehend what kind of love it is that is here meant. It is specified by what we find in conjunction with it, the understanding and acknowledgment of the mystery of Christianity. Therefore it must be the love of Christians to one another as such. Whence we collect, lest we too much

extend the object of it on the one hand, or contract it on the other.

1. That it is not the love only which we owe to one another as men, or human creatures merely, that is intended here. That were too much to enlarge it, as to our present consideration of it. For under that common notion, we should be as much obliged to love the enemies we are to unite against, as the friends of religion we are to unite with, since all partake equally in human nature. It must be a more special love that shall have the desired influence in the present case. We cannot be peculiarly endeared and united to some more than to others, upon a reason that is common to them with others. We are to love them that are born of God, and are his children, otherwise than the children of men, or such of whom it may be said they are of their father the devil; them that appear to have been partakers of a divine nature at another rate, than them who have received a mere human, or also the diabolical nature, 1 John v. 1. Yet this peculiar love is not to be exclusive of the other which is common, but must suppose it, and be superadded to it, as the reason of it is superadded. For Christianity supposes humanity; and divine grace, human nature.

2. Nor is it a love to Christians of this or that party or denomination only. That were as much unduly to straiten and confine it. The love that is owing to Christians as such, as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to them who, in profession and practice, do own sincere and incorrupt Christianity. To limit our Christian love to a party of Christians, truly so called, is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It scatters what it should collect and gather. 'Tis to love factiously; and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due (for is there no love due to a disciple of Christ in the name of a disciple?) it is founded in falsehood, and a lie denies them to be of

the Christian community who really are so. It presumes to remove the ancient land-marks, not civil but sacred, and draws on, not the people's curse only, but that of God himself. 'Tis true (and who doubts it?) that I may and ought upon special reasons to love some more than others; as relation, acquaintance, obligation by favours received from them, more eminent degrees of true worth, and real goodness; but that signifies nothing to the withholding of that love which is due to a Christian as such, as that also ought not to prejudice the love I owe to a man, as he is a man.

Nor am I so promiscuously to distribute this holy love, as to place it at random, upon every one that thinks it convenient for him to call himself a Christian, though I ought to love the very profession, while I know not who sincerely make it, and do plainly see that Jews and Pagans were never worse enemies to Christ and his religion, than a great part of the Christian world. But let my apprehensions be once set right concerning the true essentials of Christianity (whether consisting in doctrinal or vital principles), then will my love be duly carried to all in whom they are found under one common notion, which I come actually to apply to this or that person, as particular occasions do occur. And so shall always be in a preparation of mind, actually to unite in Christian love with every such person, whenever such occasions do invite me to it. And do we now need to be told what such an impartial truly Christian love would do to our common preservation, and to prevent the ruin of the Christian interest?

1. How greatly would it contribute to the vigour of the Christian life! For so we should all equally "hold the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;" as afterwards in this chapter, ver. 19. Thus (as it is in that other parallel text of Scripture) speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that

which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love, Eph. iv. 15, 16. Obstructions that hinder the free circulation of blood and spirits, do not more certainly infer languishings in the natural body, than the want of such a diffusive love shuts up and shrivels the destitute parts, and hinders the diffusion of a nutritive vital influence, in the body of Christ.

2. It would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know, and even feel themselves knit together in love. How doth the revolt of any considerable part of an army discourage the rest! or if they be not entire, and of a piece! Mutual love animates them, as nothing more, when they are prepared to live and die together, and love hath before joined, whom now, their common danger also joins. They otherwise signify but as so many single persons, each one but caring and contriving how to shift for himself. Love makes them significant to one another. So as that every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest. It makes Christians the more resolute in their adherence to truth and goodness, when (from their not doubted love) they are sure of the help, the counsels, and prayers of the Christian community, and apprehend, by their declining, they shall grieve those whom they love, and who they know love them. If any imagine themselves intended to be given up, as sacrifices, to the rage of the common enemy, their hearts are the apter to sink, they are most exposed to temptations to prevaricate; and the rest will be apt to expect the like usage from them, if themselves be reduced to the like exigency, and be liable to the same temptations.

3. It would certainly, in our present case, extinguish or abate the so contrary unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another, as the celestial beams do the baser culinary fire, which burns more fervently when the sun hath less power. Then would debates, if there must be any, be managed without intemperate heat. We should be remote from being angry that we cannot convey our

own sentiments into another's mind ; which when we are, our business is the more remote ; we make ourselves less capable of reasoning aptly to convince, and (because anger begets anger, as love doth love) render the other less susceptible of conviction. Why are we yet to learn that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God ? What is gained by it ? So little doth angry contention about small matters avail, that even they that happen to have the better cause lose by it, and their advantage cannot recompense the damage and hurt that ensues to the church and to themselves. Our famous Davenant,\* speaking of the noted controversy between Stephen, bishop of Rome, who, he says, as much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit tear the church, and Cyprian, who with great lenity and Christian charity professes that he would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion, concludes that erring Cyprian deserved better of the church of Christ than orthodox Stephen. He thought him the schismatic, whom he thought in the right, and that his orthodoxy (as it was accompanied) was more mischievous to the church, than the other's error. Nor can a man do that hurt to others, without suffering it more principally. The distemper of his own spirit, what can recompense ! and how apt is it to grow in him ; and, while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others ! Whereupon, if the want of love hinders the nourishment of the body, much more do the things, which, when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency through the body, which necessarily wastes and tends to destroy it. How soon did the Christian church cease to be itself ! and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degenerate into insipid, spiritless formality, when once it became contentious ! It broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it ! which is grieved by nothing

\* Sent. ad. Dur.

more than by bitterness, wrath, anger, &c. as the connexion of these two verses intimates, Eph. iv. 30, 31. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And to the same purpose is that, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. By this means religion, once dispirited, loses its majesty and awfulness, and even tempts and invites the assaults and insultations of enemies.

4. It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship. If such a love did govern in us, we should be always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each other's burdens, to afford our mutual counsel and help to one another, even in our private affairs if called thereto; especially in that which is our common concern, the preserving and promoting the interest of religion; and to our uttermost strengthen each other's hands herein. It would engage us to a free, amicable conversation with one another, upon this account; would not let us do so absurd a thing as to confine our friendship to those of our own party, which we might as reasonably to men of our own stature, or to those whose voice, and hair, and look, and mien, were likest our own. It would make us not be ashamed to be seen in each other's company, or be shy of owning one another. We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet notes they were to other nations; *Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti*, *Not so much as to shew the way to one not of their religion*. There would be no partition-wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide, more and more, into one another's hearts. Whence also,

5. Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other. A mutual confidence would be begotten. We should no more suspect one another of ill designs upon each other,

than lest our right hand should wait an opportunity of cutting off the left. We should believe one another in our mutual professions, of whatsoever sort, both of kindness to one another, and that we really doubt and scruple the things which we say we do.

6. This would hence make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly to it. We are too prone many times to dislike things, for the disliked persons' sake who practise them. And a prevailing disaffection makes us unapt to understand one another; precludes our entrance into one another's mind and sense; which if love did once open, and inclined us more to consider the matters of difference themselves, than to imagine some reserved meaning and design of the persons that differ from us, 'tis likely we might find ourselves much nearer to one another, than we did apprehend we were; and that it were a much easier step for the one side to go quite over to the other. But if that cannot be,

7. It would make us much more apt to yield to one another, and abate all that ever we can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible, that if we cannot agree upon either extreme, we might at least meet in the middle. It would cause an emulation who should be larger in their grants to this purpose; as it was professed by Luther when so much was done at Marpurg towards an agreement between him and the Helvetians, that he would not allow that praise to the other party that they should be more desirous of peace and concord than he. Of which amicable conference, and of that afterwards at Wittenburg, and several other negotiations to that purpose, account is given by\* divers; and insisted on by some of our own great divines, as precedential to the concord they endeavoured between the Saxon and the Helvetian churches of later time, as Bishop Moreton, Bishop Hall, Bishop Davenant, in their several sentences or judgments written to Mr Dury upon that subject.

\* Hospinian. Histor. Sacramentar. Thuanus, &c. Though by Scultetus's account that pretence was too little answered.

And indeed when I have read the pacific writings of those eminent worthies, for the composing of those differences abroad, I could not but wonder that the same peaceable spirit did not endeavour with more effect the composing of our own much lesser differences at home. But the things of our peace were (as they still are) hid from our eyes, with the more visibly just severity, by how much they have been nearer us, and more obvious to the easy view of any but an averse eye. It is not for us to prescribe (as was said) to persons that are now in so eminent stations as these were at that time. But may we not hope to find with such (and where should we rather expect to find it?) that compassion and mercifulness in imitation of the blessed Jesus, their Lord and ours, as to consider and study the necessities of souls in these respects, and at least, willingly to connive at, and very heartily approve, some indulgences and abatements in the administrations of the inferior clergy, as they may not think fit themselves positively to order and enjoin? Otherwise I believe it could not but give some trouble to a conscientious conforming minister, if a sober pious person, sound in the faith, and of a regular life, should tell him he is willing to use his ministry, in some of the ordinances of Christ, if only he would abate or dispense with some annexed ceremony which in conscience he dare not use or admit of. I believe it would trouble such a minister to deal with a person of this character as a pagan because of his scruple, and put him upon considering whether he ought not rather to dispense with man's rule, than with God's. I know what the same Bishop Davenant hath expressly said, that "He that believes the things contained in the apostle's creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of Christians, nor be driven from communion with the other members of any church whatsoever."\* However, truly Christian love would do herein all that it can, supplying the rest by grief that it can do no more.

\* Ibid.



8. It would certainly make us abstain from mutual censures of one another as insincere for our remaining differences. Charity that thinks no evil, would make us not need the reproof, Rom. xiv. 4, Who art thou that judgest another's servant? The common aptness hereunto among us shews how little that divine principle rules in our hearts, that in defiance of our rule and the authority of the great God and our blessed Redeemer, to whom all judgment is committed, and who hath so expressly forbidden us to judge lest we be judged (Matt. vii. 1), we give ourselves so vast a liberty! and set no other bounds to our usurped licence of judging, than nature hath set to our power of thinking, *i. e.* think all the mischievous thoughts of them that differ from us, that we know how to devise or invent, as if we would say, "Our thoughts (and then by an easy advance, our tongues) are our own, who is Lord over us?" I animadvert not on this as the fault of one party, but wheresoever it lies, as God knows how diffused a poison this is, among them that are satisfied with the public constitutions towards them that dissent from them, and with these back again towards them, and with the several parties of both these towards one another. This uniting, knitting love would make us refrain, not merely from the restraint of God's laws in this case, but from a benign disposition, as that which the temper of our spirits would abhor from. So that such as are well content with the public forms and rites of worship, would have no inclination to judge them that apprehend not things with their understandings, nor relish with their taste, as persons that therefore have cut themselves off from Christ, and the body of Christ. They might learn better from the Cassandrian moderation, and from the avowed sentiments of that man\* (whose temper is better to be liked than his terms of union), who speaking of such as being formerly rejected (meaning the Protestants) for finding fault with abuses in the church, had by the urgency of their conscience altered somewhat in the way of their teaching, and the form of

\* Cassander de officio pii ac publicæ Tranquillitatis vere amantis viri.

their service, and are therefore said to have fallen off from the church, and are numbered among heretics and schismatics. It is, saith he, to be inquired how rightly and justly this is determined of them. For there is to be considered, as to the church, the head and the body. From the head there is no departure but by doctrine disagreeable to Christ the head; from the body there is no departure by diversity of rites and opinions, but only by the defect of charity. So that this learned Romanist neither thinks them heretics that hold the head, nor schismatics, for such differences as ours are, from the rest of the body, if love and charity towards them remain. And again, where this love remains, and bears rule, it can as little be, that they who are unsatisfied with the way of worship that more generally obtains, should censure them that are satisfied as insincere, merely because of this difference. It cannot permit that we should think all the black thoughts we can invent of them, as if because they have not our consciences they had none, or because they see not with our eyes they were therefore both utterly and wilfully blind. To be here more particular, the most, you know, are for the public way of worship; and of these, some are for it as tolerable only, others as the best way, and think all other ways of worshipping God in assemblies (being forbidden as they think by a just law) sinful. Others, dissenting, are of several sorts. Some think the conformity required of ministers sinful, because of previous terms required of them which they judge to be so, but not that which is required of the people. Of which sort, some that think it not simply unlawful, find it however less edifying to them, and though they can therefore partake in it at some times, think themselves more ordinarily bound to attend such other means as they find more conducing to their spiritual profit and advantage, judging they have an undoubted right from Christ, anciently allowed from age to age in the best times of the Christian church, and never justly taken from them, of choosing the pastors to whose ordinary care and conduct they shall commit their souls. Others judge

the public way simply unlawful, and therefore judge themselves bound to decline it wholly ; and are the more averse to any participation in it, as apprehending it to have no suitableness or aptitude to profit their souls : wherein they are the more confirmed, that they believe not God will ever bless the means which he hath not appointed. Now how apt all these are unto very severe censures of one another, he knows not the age, that is ignorant. One sort censuring the other as humoursome, factious, schismatical ; the others them back again, as formal, popishly affected, destitute of any savour of spiritual things, having nothing of God in them, or of the life and power of godliness.

Now is this suitable to the love that should rule among Christians ? or to the reverence we ought to have for that authority that forbids such judging ? It ought to be considered both that all have not the same understanding, nor the same gust and relish of things.

1. Not the same understanding. And therefore where conscience hath the same rule, it cannot have with every one the same actual latitude, that rule, being so very diversely understood, which different estimate of consciences, the apostle hath express reference to, in that large and most healing discourse of his, Rom. xiv. One (saith he, ver. 2) believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Nor doth he, in reference to such doubted things, determine what all should do, or not do, by particular rules, concerning every such case, that was then depending, which it seems he reckoned was not necessary, or that might afterwards fall out, which was little to be expected. But he lays down one general rule, against judging one another, which he presses with that authority, and such awful reasons, as might make a Christian heart tremble to be guilty of it.

And in reference to the mentioned differences among ourselves (as well as others no nearer to the substantials and vitals of our religion), there is somewhat else to be done than to conclude against a man's sincerity because of

such differing sentiments and practices, and which certainly would be done, if truly Christian love, or even justice itself, did take place as they ought; *i.e.* it would be considered what these several differing parties have to say for themselves, what reasons they may allege, and whether though they be not sufficient to justify their several opinions and practices (as all cannot be in the right), they be not such as by which a conscientious man, a sincere fearer of God, may be swayed, so as to take the way which he is found in by the ducture of an upright (though misguided) conscience, and not as being under the government of depraved vicious inclination. As those that can, and do, yield the conformity that is required of ministers, though perhaps they wish some things altered, why may it not be supposed they sincerely think (though it should be mistakingly) that the things more liable to exception are capable of a sense wherein they are not unlawful? and not being so, they think themselves bound to take the opportunity which they this way obtain of doing good to the souls of men? others also apprehending it lawful, how possible is it to them from a certain reverence they have for antiquity, and for our own first reformers, to think it best and fittest to be continued! Nor is it un-supposable that many of the laity may upon the same grounds have the same apprehensions.

Again, divers in the ministry judging the terms unlawful upon which only they can have liberty for the public exercise of it; is it not possible they may, with a sincere conscience, think themselves not therefore obliged wholly to renounce their calling and office, to which they were duly set apart, and had by their own solemn vow given up themselves; but to do so much of the work of it as they can have opportunity for? And whereas of the people, some may think the public forms and ways of worship not simply unlawful, but find them less edifying to them than other means which the providence of God affords them; and therefore do more ordinarily attend those, though sometimes also the other; why should it be thought

on the one hand, or the other, that it is so little possible they should be guided by reasonable and conscientious considerations herein, that nothing but corrupt inclination must be understood to govern them? Is it not supposable, that accounting the public worship substantially agreeable to divine institution, though in some accidentals too disagreeable, they may think there is more to incline them at some times to attend it, than totally to disown it? For what worship is there on earth that is in all things incorrupt? And they may apprehend it fit to testify their union with the sincere Christians, that may be stately under that form, and especially in a time when the contest is so high in the world, between them that profess the substance of reformed Christianity, and them that have so much deformed it; and may conceive it becoming them, at some times, to express their own unconfinedness to a party, and to use that liberty which, they think, should not be judged by another man's conscience, which yet they would have regard to, where there are not greater reasons to preponderate. They are indeed under a disadvantage (with them that are apt to use a greater liberty in their censures, than they do in their practice in these matters) when it falls out that their partial compliance is the means of their security from penalties; and their disadvantage is greater, whose judgment to this purpose hath not been formerly declared and made known. But they for shame ought to be silent whose total compliance gains them not only immunity, but great emoluments. And that perhaps yielded, not according to a former, but (at that time when the opportunity occurred) a new and altered judgment. They may however know themselves to be moved by greater ends than secular interest: and so may these we now speak of, and yet may think the preservation of their earthly portion, wherewith they are to glorify God in this world, not too little an end to be designed and endeavoured by lawful means. It were a very uncouth and sinful thing to do a spiritual action for a carnal end, but if the thing sincerely and supremely designed be the glory of God, that

is the most spiritual end : if it be not, that ought to be changed which is wrong, not that which is right ; the unlawful end, not the lawful action, if it be lawful ; if it be not, their good end will not justify their action, but it will their sincerity : which is all that this discourse intends.

And then for such as decline the public worship totally, as judging it simply unlawful ; is it not possible they may be led to that practice by somewhat else than humour and factious inclination ? Have they not that to say, which may at least seem solid and strong to a conscientious man ? How jealous God did heretofore shew himself in all the affairs of his worship ! How particular in the appointment even of the smallest things he would have appertain to it ? How unsuitable multiplied ceremonies are to the mature state of the church ! and how sensibly burdensome they were to the disciples of the first age as a yoke not to be borne ; and that therefore God himself, when the season of maturity, and the fulness of time came, thought fit to abrogate those of his own former appointment, with no (probable) design to allow men the liberty of substituting others in their room. Why is it not to be thought that the fear of the great God withholds them from doing what they judge would offend him ? and that, if they err, it is for fear of erring ? Why can nothing be thought on whereto to impute their practice, but peevish humour ? Especially if that be considered (which is common to these two last mentioned sorts of men) that they sensibly find other means more edifying to them, or expect them only to be so, if the other be thought unlawful. If they be thought merely lawful, and such as may therefore be used upon weighty reasons at some times, but are found less edifying, who can doubt but I ought to use for my soul (at least in an ordinary course) the aptest means that I can ordinarily have for the promoting its edification and salvation ? Do we not reckon ourselves to owe so much even to our bodies ? And what is another man's opinion to signify against my sense and constant experience ? Is there not such a thing as a mental *idiosyncrasy* (or peculiarity of

temper) as well as a bodily ? and whereto what is most agreeable, any man that is not destitute of ordinary understanding is the fittest judge himself: as every one, that is not a mere fool, is so much a physician as to know what diet suits him best.

And if it be said against the former of these two sorts, Are they not at all times obliged to use the means which are most edifying ? They may say, At all times when they have nothing to outweigh their own present edification. But it is not impossible that a conscientious judgment may esteem all the forementioned considerations concurring, to be of more weight than the greater advantage hoped to be gained in that one hour. Nor need any man be ashamed professedly to avow that which may seem the least of them, the saving of himself from temporal ruin. For he is to be accountable to God for what portion he hath intrusted him with of the good things of this life, and is not to throw it away without sufficient cause. Who sees not that more is allowed and ordinarily done without scruple or censure upon the like account ? as, to omit the hearing of a sermon, if at that time one's house be on fire, yea, or if it be to save my neighbour's, or the plucking of an ox or sheep out of a ditch on the Lord's day, when I might have been employed at that time in the solemn worship of God to my spiritual advantage. A mere commutation unto less advantage upon an equally or more urgent necessity is less than omission. And they that shall have learned, as our Saviour directs, " what that means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," will not condemn the guiltless.

Only such are concerned first to search well and be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of their action in itself, that they do it not with a self-condemning conscience, nor with a groundlessly self-justifying one. And then especially to see to it that their end be right ; God's interest, not their own, otherwise than in a due, entire subordination to his. We can never act innocently or comfortably in any thing, till he be in every thing more absolutely our all in all ; and

have much more reason to be scrupulous, and (if others knew our hearts) were much more liable to censure, that, in our common affairs, he is so much forgotten, that we live not more entirely to him ; which we little animadvert upon, and are very officious to cast notes out of our brother's eye, when this beam is in our own.

The design of mentioning these hints of reasons for so different judgments and practices, is not to shew which are strongest, and ought to prevail, which cannot be the business of so short a discourse as this, and so much of another nature ; but, to shew that while there is any thing colourable to be alleged for this or that way, true Christian love, compassion of common human frailty, and a duly humble sense of a man's own, would oblige him to think that conscience towards God may have a greater hand (though with some misguided itself) in guiding men the different ways they take, than is commonly thought. And to consider though such and such reasons seem not weighty to me, they may to some others, who are as much afraid of sinning against God as I, and perhaps their understandings as good in other matters as mine. It would be considered how really difficult the controversy is about the ceremonies, and some other parts of conformity. Perhaps few metaphysical questions are disputed with more subtilty than that controversy is managed with, by Archbishop Whitgift, Bishop Morton, Doctor Burgesse, Doctor Ames, Cartwright, Calderwood, and others. And how very easily possible and pardonable is it to unlearned persons, or of weaker intellectuals, being obliged in order to their practice to give a judgment in reference to these things one way or other, to judge amiss ! Why should we expect every sincerely pious man to be able to hit the very point of truth and right in matters that belong, as Bishop Davenant once said in another case, *non ad fidem fundamentalem, sed ad peritiam Theologicam, et fortasse, ne ad hanc quidem, sed aliquando ad curiositatem Theologorum*—not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of divines and perhaps not to this neither, but sometimes only to their



*curiosity.* What were to be done in reference to so nicely disputable things made part of the terms of Christian communion, is more the matter of our wish than hope, till by a gracious influence God better men's minds, or by a more deeply felt necessity bring us to understand what is to be done. Our case is ill when only *vexatio dat intellectum*, when *nothing but sorrow and suffering will make us wise*; which is very likely from the righteous hand of God to be our common lot.

In the mean time, 'tis hard to think that he cannot be a sincerely pious man whose understanding is not capable of so difficult things, as to make a certainly right judgment about them. *In absoluto et facili stat eternitas*, and why should not the communion of persons going into a blessed eternity have the same measure?

And besides the different size and capacity of men's understandings, and consequently of their conscientious determinations,

2. There are also as differing relishes of these things, which Christian love would oblige a man to consider with equanimity, so as thereupon to refrain hard censures. All good men have not the same relish of the various forms and modes of dispensing the truths and ordinances of Christ. Some of our suffering brethren in Q. Mary's days are said to have found great spiritual refreshing by the Common Prayer. And, in our own days, some may profess to have their hearts warmed, their affections raised and elevated, by it. They are no rule to us; but it would less become us, hereupon, to suspect their sincerity, than our own. Others again cannot relish such modes of worship, when in the ministry of such as use them not, they find a very sensible delight and savour.

And this, by the way, shews the great difference between such things as have their evidence and goodness from God himself, and those that borrow their recommendableness only from human device. All good men, in all the times and ages of the Christian church, have a constant value and love for the great substantials of religion, which have in

them that inward evidence and excellency, as command and captivate a rectified mind and heart; whereas the mere external forms of it, the outward dress and garb, are variously esteemed and despised, liked and disliked, by the same sort of men, *i. e.* by very sincere lovers of God, not only in divers times and ages, but even in the same time. How different hath the esteem been of the liturgic forms with them who bear the same mind, full of reverence and love towards religion itself; as that habit is thought decent at one time, which in another is despicably ridiculous; whereas a person in himself comely and graceful, is always accounted so, by all, and at all times.

Now this various gust and relish cannot but have influence, more remotely, upon the conscientious determination of our choice, concerning our usual way of worshipping God. For how should I edify by what is disgustful to me? Though it be true that our spiritual edification lies more in the informing of our judgments, and confirming our resolutions, than in the gusts and relishes of affection, yet who sees not that these are of great use even to the other? and that it is necessary that at least there be not a disgust or antipathy? What is constantly less grateful, will certainly be less nutritive. That is usually necessary to nourishment; though, alone, it be not sufficient; as it is in the matter of bodily repasts. Who can without great prejudice be bound to eat always of a food that he disrelishes, though he may without much inconvenience, for a valuable reason, do it at some time.

And they that think all this alleged difference is but fancy, shew they understand little of human nature, and less of religion; though they may have that in themselves too which they do not so distinctly reflect upon, even that peculiar gust and relish, which they make so little account of. For, have they not as great a disgust of the others' way as they have of theirs? Would they not as much regret to be tied to theirs? Have they not as great a liking of their own? And doth not common experience shew that there are as different mental relishes as bodily? How come

one man in the matters of literature to savour metaphysics? another mathematics, another history, and the like? and no man's genius can be forced in these things. Why may there not be the like difference in the matters of religion? And I would fain know what that religion is worth that is without a gust and savour, that is insipid and unpleasant? much more that would, being used in a constant course, this or that way, be nauseous and offensive?

If indeed men nauseate that which is necessary for them, the gospel, for instance, or religion itself, that is certainly such a distemper, as if the grace of God overcome it not, will be mortal to them; and we are not to think of relieving them, by withdrawing the offending object, which itself must be the means of their cure. But is there any parity between the substance of religion, which is of God's appointing, and the superadded modes of it, that are of our own?

Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to his divine principle of love, nothing (within our compass) more conducive to our end, the ceasing of our differences, which are most likely to die and vanish by neglect), or their ceasing to be inconvenient to us, than to bear calm and placid minds towards one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them. If I can contribute no way else to union, from this holy dictate and law of the spirit of love, I can at least abstain from censuring my fellow-Christians. It is the easiest thing in the world one would think not to do; especially not to do a thing of itself ungrateful to a well tempered mind; and a great privilege not to be obliged to judge another man's conscience and practice, when it is so easy to misjudge and do wrong. Most of all, when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another is of so high a nature, as the posture of his heart God-ward: a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of divine cognizance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere, and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these smaller

things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? No one can, with sincerity, differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear, as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty, just as they are; and then go on to assume (and a strange assuming it must be), But my understanding is so good and clear as, &c. 'Tis hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other, is greater; and whether both be more immoral, or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all; for how insolently doth such a man take upon him to make a new gospel! and other terms of salvation than God hath made! when his sentiments and determinations of things which God hath never made necessary, must be the measure and rule of life and death to men! How is the throne and judicial power of the Redeemer usurped which he hath founded in his blood! Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand; ver. 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living; ver. 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; ver. 11. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. One would think they that lay no restraint upon themselves in this matter of judging their brethren, upon every light occasion, reckon this chapter came by chance into the Bible. And that our Lord spake himself, at random, words that had no meaning, when he said, Matt. vii. 1, Judge not that you be not judged, &c. What man that fears God would not dread to be the framer of a new gospel, and of new terms of salvation? It is a great solace indeed to a sincere mind, but implies a severe rebuke, in the mean time, to such a self-assuming censorious spirit, that it may, in such a case, be so truly said, it is a much easier thing to please God than man.

They that find this measure will have the better of it, if they can abstain from retaliating, when as the reason of it is the same on both sides. For they may say, You are to remember I differ no more from you in this matter, than you do from me; and if I judge not you about it, what greater reason have you to judge me? And they have little reason to value such a man's judgment concerning their duty in a doubtful manner, who cannot see his own in so plain a case. The matter for which they judge me may be very doubtful, but nothing can be plainer than that they ought not so to judge.

9. A due Christian love would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them. Which urging may be two ways: either by application to our affections, or to our reason and judgment.

Some perhaps find it more suitable to their own temper and measure of understanding and conscience, to go the former way; and only vehemently persuade to do the thing, wherein the other shall comply with them, and in some sort justify the course which they have taken; without regard to the others' conscience, press them right or wrong to fall in with them; sometimes labouring to work upon their kindness, by flattery, sometimes upon their fear, by threats and menaces. Sincere love would certainly abhor to do this. Would it let me violate another's conscience any way? The love I bear to a fellow-Christian, if it be true, having for its measure that wherewith I love myself, would no more let me do it than hurt the apple of mine own eye. An inspired waking conscience is as tender a thing, and capable of a worse sort of hurt. If some have more latitude than I, and think what they may do, in present circumstances so far as they may, they must, would it not be the dictate of love patiently to admit it, especially when it comes to suffering? For let me put my own soul in his soul's stead; and would I be willing to suffer upon another man's conscience, and not upon my own! and for-

feit the consolations which in a suffering condition belong to them who for conscience towards God endure grief? would I, if I loved them, be content they had the grief, and did want the consolation? There will be still found in a state of suffering, somewhat that will prove a common cause to good men wherein they will most entirely agree, whatsoever smaller things they may differ in. As the pious bishops Ridley and Hooper well agreed upon a martyrdom at the stake, in the same important cause, who before had differed (somewhat angrily) about some ceremonies. Concerning which difference how pathological is the letter \* of the former of these to the other, when both were prisoners (the one at Oxford, the other at London) on the same account. But now, my dear brother (saith he), forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the grounds and substantial points of our religion; against the which the world so furiously rageth in these our days, howsoever, in time past, by certain by-matters and circumstances of religion, your wisdom, and my simplicity (I grant) have a little jarred; each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment. Now, I say, be you assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and as I am persuaded shall, by the grace of God, abide in us for evermore.

Again, if others have less latitude; it would be far from us to add to the affliction they are liable to, upon that very account, by a vexatious urging and importuning them. Especially to do it with insulting threats and menaces, and labour to overawe their brethren, against their consciences, into the embracing of their sentiments and way. Is it possible a Christian should not understand how necessary it is to every one's duty and peace that he exactly follow that direction of the apostle's, and esteem it most sacred, Rom. xiv. 5. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind? and that we firmly resolve never to do any thing

\* Fox. Martyr.

with regret or a misgiving heart, at least. Not against a prevailing doubt, for in very doubtful cases to be rid of all *formido oppositi* or *suspicion* that the matter may be otherwise, is perhaps impossible to me; but to do any thing against the preponderating inclination of my judgment and conscience, were great wickedness, and such as, if it were known, would make me unfit for any communion whatsoever. And I do here appeal to you who most severely blame any of us for our dissent from you, whether if we should thus declare to you, "That 'tis truly against our consciences to communicate with you upon your terms, we believe we should greatly offend God in it, and draw upon us his displeasure, but yet to please you, and prevent our temporal inconvenience, or ruin, we will do it." I appeal to you, I say, whether we should not hereby make ourselves incapable of any Christian communion with you or any others? This is then the plain state of the case, and you do even put these words into our mouths: "If we follow the dictate of our consciences, we must decline you; if we go against it, you must decline us; supposing we declare it, if we declare it not, we have nothing to qualify us for your communion but hypocrisy and dissimulation! and what do you gain by such an accession to the church? You have gained, in any such case, not half the man, the outside, the carcass only, or the shadow of the man, *i. e.* when you have debauched our consciences, when you have spoiled us, and made us worth nothing, then we are yours, wherein you shew nothing of love, either to us, or to yourselves!"

Others again, that are themselves men of more reason and conscience, take the somewhat more manly and Christian course, and bend themselves by argument to convince the reason, and satisfy the consciences, of such as differ from them. But herein also there may be an excess that is unprofitable and grievous to those they would work upon by this course, and from which therefore Christian love, studying the peace and quiet of their brethren, would restrain them. I say, from the ungrateful excess of such

an endeavour ; for I would fain know, can there not herein be an excess ? Is it not supposable that they who differ from me, in such lesser things, may be sometime arrived to a settlement and fixedness of judgment in them, as well as I ? Is it not possible they have weighed the moments of things as much as I have done ? Is such a cause infinite ? Is it not possible that all may have been said in it which is to be said, and the matter have been sifted to the very bran ? So that all my further arguings may serve but to argue my vain self-confidence, or aboundingness in my own sense, as if all wisdom were to die with me. Or what if they serve at length but to shew the incapacity of the subject to be wrought upon, and the different complexion of his mind I am treating with. All cannot receive all things : we cannot make our sentiments enter with every one. Perhaps they shew the weakness of his understanding : and then hath that direction of the apostle no authority with us ? Him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv. 1. He whom we account our weaker brother, and of slower understanding, must be received (not cast out of our communion), and because God himself hath received him, as ver. 3 (*q. d.* Is he thought fit for God's communion, notwithstanding his unsatisfied scruple, and is he unfit for yours ?) and he is not to be vexed and importuned with continual disputation, if that apostolical precept be of any value with us. Sometime at least, we should think we have tried in such a case as far as is fit, and driven the nail as far as it will go. Is it not possible such a matter may be agitated beyond the value of it, and that more time and pains may be spent upon it than it is worth ? The obscurity and perplexity of the controversy shew the less necessity. Things most necessary are most plain. Must we always, in matters of confessedly little moment, be inculcating the same thing, rolling endlessly the returning stone, and obtruding our offensive dogma ? Perhaps as no good is done, we do much hurt. When is the saw of disputation long drawn about one thing without ill effects ? reason, having at length



spent its strength, grows (as weak people are) peevish and froward; degenerates into anger and clamour. In greater differences than our present ones, between the protestant churches abroad; some, of more prudent and peaceable minds, have earnestly pressed the laying aside of disputes, and putting a period, by consent, to their theological wars. *Solitarum disputationum labyrinthos ne ingredi quidem conentur*,\* said a great divine, in his days, in reference to those controversies that he would have had composed by an amicable brotherly conference. And that king of Navarre, who, at that time, seemed highly concerned for the peace and welfare of the reformed churches (afterwards Henry the Fourth of France), in his negociations with divers princes to that purpose, gave special instructions to his ambassador much to insist upon this, *That, till other remedies could be used, an end might be put to bitter contentions and disputations, that Christian love and a brotherly union might be restored.*† And who sees not how much this would conduce to peace and union in our case too? who sees it not, that is a hearty lover of peace? and that is not intent upon continuing and keeping a-foot a controversy, not so much as a means to that, but as an end, contending for contention's sake, and as a thing which he loves and delights in for itself? I am sure love to our brethren would not let us continually molest and importune them to no purpose. And 'tis fit they that urge to us, these are little things which they importune us about, should know we have great things to mind, of eternal concernment to us. And that we cannot be always at leisure, to mind little things, beyond the proportion of our little time on earth, and the little value of the things themselves.

10. Sincere love restored and exercised more among us, would certainly make us forbear reviling and exposing one

\* Davenant Sent. ad Dureum.

† Ut acerbis illis contentionibus, quibus, et verbis rixati sunt inter se Theologi, et scriptis: et ejusmodi disputationibus silentio tandem finis imponatur, ut Christiana charitas, et animorum fraterna conjunctio revocetur. Mandat. Hen. Reg. Navar. Jacobo Sigurizæ Legato suo, &c. Apud Col-dastum.

another, and the industrious seeking one another's ruin. For such as can allow themselves to do any thing that hath this tendency; not to preserve public order, but to gratify their private ill-will, not in a sudden heat and passion, but deliberately, and so as to pursue a formed design to this purpose; if such men were capable of being reasoned with (though it were to as good purpose to talk to a storm, or reason with a whirlwind, or a flame of fire), I would ask them, "What are you altogether unatoneable? will nothing divert you from this pursuit? If any thing, what will? What more gentle thing than our destruction do you seek, or will content you? Is it our communion? And do you so recommend yourselves? Do you not know Cain is said to have been of that wicked one who slew his brother? 1 John iii. 10. And that whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him? Is it not said, John viii. 44, That such are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do, who was a murderer from the beginning? And in the forementioned 1 John iii. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. If all were like you, under what notion were we to unite with them?" The apostle tells us, 1 Cor. x. 20, 21, I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils; ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. And in good earnest incarnate devils (though that text do not directly speak of such) have too much of devil in them, to be participants in a communion, that can seem desirable, or is likely to be grateful to serious Christians. I must avow it to all the world, it is not this or that external form I so much consider in the matter of Christian union and communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself. How can I endure to approach those holy mysteries, wherein all are to drink into one spirit, and declare their union with the God of love, with the Emmanuel,

God most nearly approaching us, God with us, collecting and gathering us in unto him as our common centre, whence the blessed spirit of holy love is to diffuse itself through the whole body, all enlivened by that spirit, and formed by it unto all kindness, benignity, goodness, and sweetness! With what significancy can I do so (though I were never so well satisfied with the external forms and modes myself), if it be apparent (I say, if apparent) I must cast in my lot and join myself with them (were they generally such), whose souls are under the dominion of the quite contrary spirit, that fills them with malignity, with mischievous dispositions and purposes, towards many a sincere lover of God, that cannot be satisfied with those forms and modes, and who decline them only from a sense of duty to God, and a fear of offending against the high authority of their blessed, glorious Redeemer!

I know many are apt to justify themselves in their animosity and bitterness of spirit towards others, upon a pretence that they bear the same disaffected mind towards them. But besides that it is the most manifest and indefensible injustice, if they charge the innocent, or such as they are not sure are guilty, if their own wrath and enmity be so potent in them as to enable their tainted vicious imagination to create its object, or so to disguise and falsely clothe it, as to render it such to themselves, as whereupon they may more plausibly pour out their fury. I say, besides that, how contrary is this vindictive spirit to the rules and spirit of the Christian religion! Is this to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and despitefully use us, &c.? How unlike the example of our blessed Lord when, even in dying agonies, he breathed forth these words and his soul almost at once, Father, forgive them, &c., or of the holy martyr Stephen, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! How unlike is that aptness to the retaliating of injuries, to the Christian temper which the renowned Calvin discovers in an epistle to Bullenger, speaking of Luther's severity towards him. If Luther a thousand times (saith he) call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of

God; which passage both Bishop Moreton and Bishop Davenant magnify him for; and the former saith, he herein spake so calmly, so placidly, so indulgently, as if it were not a man, but humanity itself, that uttered the words.

Yea, and such retaliation is what paganism itself hath declaimed against. A noted philosopher\* urges that against it, that, one would think, should not need to be suggested to Christians, somewhat so prudential as might not only work upon the principle of love to others, but even that of self-love, that then the evil must perpetually circulate, and so must again and again return upon ourselves. As indeed if that must be the measure, to revile them that revile us, and render evil for evil, railing for railing (1 Pet. ii. 23; chap. iii. 9), we should never have done. It were a course which once begun, could, by that rule, never find an end.

This then is the first part of the answer to the proposed question, What may be most hopefully done, &c. The endeavour of having our hearts knit together in love would surely do much towards it. And this is agreeable to any the most private capacity. No man can pretend his sphere is too narrow (if his soul be not) for the exercise of love towards fellow-Christians. And I hope 'tis agreeable to all our principles. Sure no man will say 'tis against his conscience to love his brother. And the same must be said of,

2. That other expedient, the endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the gospel, which was to make the other part of the answer to our question. And though this is the more important part, it is also so very evident, that we do not need to make this discourse swell to a bulk too unproportionable to the rest it is to be joined with by speaking largely to it.

Although we have not the name of faith in this text, we have the thing. It is not named, but it is described, so as that it may easily be understood, both what it is, and how necessary to our purpose.

1. What it is, or what measure and degree of it, that

\* Maxim. Tyr. Dissert. 2.

would be of such great use in such a case. We are told with great emphasis, The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Such as whereby,

1. Our understandings are duly enlightened so as mentally to entertain aright the doctrine of the gospel, *i. e.* 1. Distinctly to apprehend the meaning and design of this mysterious revelation of God in Christ. 2. And to be fully assured of the truth of it.

2. Such again, as whereby our hearts are overcome, so as practically and vitally to receive it, *i. e.* to acknowledge, receive, resign, intrust, and subject ourselves unto God in Christ revealed in it.

2. And of how vast importance this is towards our establishment, the confirming, fortifying, and uniting of our hearts, and our joint preservation in our Christian state (the main thing we are to design, and be solicitous for), we may see in these particulars.

1. Hereby we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite. That union is not like to be firm and lasting, the centre whereof is a trifle. It must be somewhat that is of itself apt to attract and hold our hearts strongly to it. To attempt with excessive earnestness a union in external formalities that have not a value and goodness in themselves, when the labour and difficulty is so great, and the advantage so little, how hopeless and insignificant would it be! The mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ, how potently and constantly attractive would it be, if aright understood and acknowledged! Here we should understand is our life and our all.

2. Hereby we should, in comparison, apprehend all things else to be little. And so our differences about little things would languish and vanish. We should not only know, but consider and feelingly apprehend, that we agree in far greater things than we differ in: and thence be more strongly inclined to hold together, by the things wherein we agree, than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ.

3. Hereby our religion would revive, and become a vital powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God, and awful to men.

1. More grateful to God, who is not pleased with the stench of carcasses, or with the dead shows of religion instead of the living substance. We should hereupon not be deserted of the divine presence, which we cannot but reckon will retire, when we entertain him but with insipid formalities. What became of the Christian interest in the world, when Christians had so sensibly diverted from minding the great things of religion to little minute circumstances, about which they affected to busy themselves, or to the pursuit of worldly advantages and delights?

2. More awful to men. They who are tempted to despise the faint languid appearances of an impotent inefficacious, spiritless religion, discern a majesty in that which is visibly living, powerful, and productive of suitable fruits. Who that shall consider the state of the Christian church, and the gradual declining of religion for that three hundred years from Constantine's time to that of Phocas, but shall see cause at once to lament the sin and folly of men, and adore the righteous severity of God? For as Christians grew gradually to be loose, wanton, sensual, and their leaders contentious, luxurious, covetous, proud, ambitious affecters of domination, so was the Christian church gradually forsaken of the divine presence. Inasmuch as that at the same time when Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of universal bishop, in defiance of the severe sentence of his predecessor Gregory the Great, sprang up the dreadful delusion of Mahomet.\* And so spread itself to this day, through Asia, Africa, and too considerable a part of Europe, that where Christians were twenty or thirty to one, there was now scarce one Christian to twenty or thirty Mahometans or grosser pagans. And what between the Mahometan infatuation, and the Popish tyranny, good Lord? what is Christendom become? when by the one,

\* Berewood's Inquiries.

the very name is lost, and by the other, little else left but the name ?

4. Hereby we shall be enabled most resolutely to suffer being called to it, when it is for the great things of the Gospel, the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, clearly and with assurance understood and acknowledged. Such a faith will not be without its pleasant relishes. 'Tis an uncomfortable thing to suffer either for the mere spiritless, uncertain, inoperative notions and opinions, or for the unenlivened outward forms of religion, that we never felt to do us good, in which we never tasted sweetness, or felt power, that we were really nothing ever the better for. But who will hesitate at suffering for so great things as the substantials of the Gospel, which he hath clearly understood, whereof he is fully assured, and which he hath practically acknowledged and embraced, so as to feel the energy and power of them, and relish their delicious sweetness in his soul ? And though by such suffering he himself perish from off this earth, his religion lives, is spread the more in the present age, and propagated to after-ages ; so seminal and fruitful a thing is the blood of martyrs ! as hath always been observed. And as such a faith of the mystery of the gospel appears to have this tendency to the best, firmest, and most lasting union among Christians, and the consequent preservation of the Christian interest, this mystery being more generally considered only ; so this tendency of it would be more distinctly seen if we should consider the more eminent and remarkable parts of it ; the mystery of the Redeemer's person, the Emmanuel, God uniting himself with the nature of man ; his office, as reconciler of God and man to each other ; his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice to slay all enmity ; his victory and conquest over it, wherein is founded his universal empire over all ; his triumphant entrance into heaven, whither he is to collect all that ever loved, trusted, and obeyed him, to dwell and be conversant together in his eternal love and praises. How directly do all these tend to

endear and bind the hearts and souls of Christians to God and him, and one another in everlasting bonds.

Thus then we have the answer to our question in the two parts of the text. The former pointing out to us the subjects of our union, with the uniting principle by which they are to be combined with one another; the other the centre of it, with the uniting principle whereby they are all to be united in that centre.

*Use.* And what now remains, but that we lament the decay of these two principles, and, to our uttermost, endeavour the revival of them.

1. We have great cause to lament their decay; for how visible is it! and how destructive to the common truly Christian interest! It was once the usual cognizance of those of this holy profession, "See how these Christians love one another, and even refuse not to die for each other!" Now it may be, "How do they hate! and are like to die and perish by the hands of one another!" Our Lord himself gave it them to be their distinguishing character, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you love one another." Good Lord! what are they now to be known by?

And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing is the faith of Christians in this age become! How little are the ascertaining grounds of it understood, or endeavoured to be understood? Most content themselves to profess it only as the religion of their country, and which was delivered to them by their forefathers. And so are Christians but upon the same terms as other nations are Mahometans, or more gross pagans, as a worthy writer some time since took notice.\* How few make it their business to see things with their own eyes, to believe, and be sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! How far are we from the riches of the full assurance of understanding! How little practical and governing is the faith of the most! How little doth it import of an acknowledg-

\* Pink's Trial of a Christian's love to Christ.



ment of the mystery of God, viz. of the Father, and of Christ! How little effectual is it! which it can be but in proportion to the grounds upon which it rests. When the gospel is received, not as the word of man, but of God, it works effectually in them that so believe it; 1 Thess. ii. 13.

2. Let us endeavour the revival of these principles. This is that in reference whereto we need no human laws. We need not edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice, loving one another, and cleaving with a more grounded lively faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience in this matter. And as to this mutual love: what if others will not do their parts to make it so? What, shall we only love them that love us, and be fair to them that are fair to us, salute them that salute us? Do not even the publicans the same? What then do we more than others? as was the just expostulation of our Saviour upon this supposition, Matt. v. 47.

And let us endeavour the more thorough deep radication of our faith, that it may be more lively and fruitful: which this apostle you see (not forgetting his scope and aim) further presses in the following verses, testifying his joy for what he understood there was of it among these Christians. "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ," ver. 5. And exhorting them to pursue the same course: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving," ver. 6, 7.

And what also, must we suspend the exercise and improvement of our faith in the great mysteries of the gospel, till all others will agree upon the same thing? Let us do our own part, so as we may be able to say, "*Per me non stetit, It was not my fault*, but Christians had been combined, and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had been a more lively,

powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand." We shall have abundant consolation in our own souls, if we can acquit ourselves, that as to these two things, we lamented the decay and loss, and endeavoured the restitution of them, and therein, as much as in us was, of the Christian interest.

THE

CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION,

IN TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE MERCHANTS' LECTURE, IN BROAD STREET.



## THE PREFACE TO THE READERS.

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THIS title no body can think is meant to condemn all contention about matters of religion as carnal ; but since there is too much which is apparently so, it only signifies it to be the design of the following discourse to shew what contention that is, and when, or in what case, though it hath religion for its object, it may not have it for its principle, but that very frequently, the lust of the flesh hides itself under that specious name. And to shew wherein, while it affects to hide, yet unawares it discovers itself, in the management of affairs of that sacred kind. Thus it often really is ; and then is that noble cause as ignobly served, as when (according to that\* father's observation) a man proves to be unfaithful even for the faith, and sacrilegious for religion.

When in one place (Jude, 3) Christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith ; and in another (2 Tim. ii. 24) we are told the servant of the Lord must not strive ; 'tis plain there is a contention for religion, which is a duty, and there is a contention even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle in this context, out of which our discourse arises, doth deservedly expose by the name of flesh, and of the lust, or of the works thereof ; such as wrath, variance, envy, hatred, &c. Whence it is easy to collect in what sense it is said in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive, viz. as that striving excludes the gentleness, the aptness to instruct, and the patience, which are in the same place enjoined, where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to collect, too, in what sense we ought

\* Cypr. de Simpliciter. Præl.

to contend for the faith earnestly, *i. e.* with all that earnestness which will consist with these, not with such as excludes them : as earnestly as you will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity towards them we strive with. We ought, we see (in the mentioned place), to be patient towards all men. Towards fellow-Christians there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly kindness.

The difference is very great, and most discernible in the effects, between the church's contention against enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour. The latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian Church hath grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious, and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the gospel, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt but which only did afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness ; and it hath diverted to lesser things (or invented such as were, otherwise, none at all), about which the contentious, disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.

Thereby hath it grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the Spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing, like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become, and long been in it, a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties ; each of which will now be the church, enclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian Church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if he were to be so enclosed or confined : and hence it is said, Lo, here is Christ, or there he is, till he is scarce to found any where ; but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies,

he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there. Yet also how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement ! And how few will apprehend and consider the true cause ! I will now adventure to offer these things to serious consideration.

1. Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin ? When I say *make to itself*, this more peculiarly concerns those who form their own communions, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause. They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask, "Whose is this table ? Is it the table of this or that man, or party of men ? or is it the Lord's table ?" Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these ?

2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one ? This will best be understood by considering what his limits are. Nothing seems plainer than that it was his mind, Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians, as such ; visible Christianity their visible communion. It will here then be enquired (as in all reason it should) what Christianity is. And if it be, every one will understand the enquiry concerning that, as they would concerning any thing else, what is its essence ? or what are its essentials, or wherein doth it consist ? Not what are all the several accidents it may admit of ? as you would do, if it were enquired, What is humanity ? Now here it will be readily acknowledged that Christianity (as all things else that are of moral consideration) must be estimated more principally by its end, and that its final reference is not to this world, but to the world to come, and to a happy state there. And that, considering the miserable state wherein it finds the souls of men here, and the greater misery they are hereafter liable

to, it must design their present recovery, and finally, their eternal salvation.

That in order hereto it must propound to men some things necessary to be believed, some things necessary to be done. And that both must intend the making of them good in order to the making them happy, or the saving of them from eternal misery. That both are sufficiently propounded by the kind and great Author of this constitution, Christ himself, in his word or Gospel. That this Gospel, besides many incidental things, expressly represents some things as of absolute necessity to salvation, by which are settled the very terms of life and death unto sinners ; and as a principal, most comprehensive, and most fundamental thing to all the rest, requires men's resigning and subjecting themselves unto him ; or putting themselves by solemn covenant into his hands, or under his conduct, to be by him brought to God, and made finally happy in him.

Whatsoever therefore is of absolute necessity to this end is essential to Christianity. Christians then are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency, with their children, yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have arrived to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but apart by themselves. They that have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, that have devoted themselves to God in Christ, and live in their general course conformably to his holy rules, are visibly personal covenanters. 'Tis plainly the mind of Christ, that those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state ; and particularly, unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood, and wherein the new testament or covenant hath its solemn obligation, and wherein as *fœderati*, or *persons in covenant*, they have more express communion with him, and one another.

They that are yet unacquainted with the most necessary



things of Christian religion, are to be held as catechumens under instruction, if they be willing. They that live licentiously in the state of penitents, till they give that proof of their serious repentance, as that their profession thereof appear not to be slight and ludicrous; they that refuse to learn, or be reformed, that live in open hostility against the known laws of Christ; are not visible Christians, are not visibly in the way of salvation. Visible subjection and visible rebellion are inconsistencies. If therefore any society of men, professedly Christians, do make other limits of their communion; admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, excluding them whom it would admit; especially, if the alteration be not only by the making those things necessary which he hath not revealed or enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not revealed or enjoined at all; and so is not only to add to Christian religion taken at large, but even to its essentials; this is substantially to change the evangelical covenant, to make it another thing, to break Christ's constitution, and set up another. If they be little things only that we add, we must know that there is *nihil minimum* in religion. What, if as little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion? The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven. And is, as much as in us lies, to make things of highest necessity depend not only upon things of no necessity, but that are, in our religion, perfect nullities, not having any place there at all. And hereupon is, in effect, to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians, you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship; we will, as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation. And upon the same ground upon which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary devised measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received no where. And if their measures differ, they all exclude one another; and hence,

so many churches, so many Christendoms. If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest die. Whereas the Holy Scriptures speak with such severity as we know they do, of the altering of man's landmarks, what may we think of altering God's? And the sin is still the greater, if the things of highest necessity are overlooked in the meantime as trifles, titling of mint is stood upon, but judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God passed over (as Matt. xxiii. 23, Luke xi. 42), infidels poured in upon the church! wolves and bears under the name of sheep, and the lambs of Christ (which he requires to be fed) thrown out into the wilderness!

3. But if we suppose it a sin, and so heinous a one, how far doth the guilt of it spread! How few among the several sorts and parties of Christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible Christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such!

4. How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church! And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this wasting evil be redressed! or that our glorious Redeemer, who is head of all things to the church, should ever own it by visible favours, should protect, cherish, enlarge it, or make it spread in the world (and how little it is naturally in any probability of doing so!) or that he should treat it as his, while it is so little itself, and so little one! In the present (most deplorable) state of things, private (that is, carnal) interest is the thing every where designed, by one party, and another. And by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endeavouring it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party. So that there can be no united prayers nor joint endeavours for any truly common good; but what seems desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest. Thus for thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a

multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing ; broken and parcelled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions. The measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were genuine and primitive, *i. e.* from substantial Christianity, and the things that must concur to make up that. Instead of sound knowledge of the few, clear, and great things of religion, a great many doubtful opinions ; the taking one side in a disputed point ; the determination of a logical question, understanding, or saying one understands (whether we do or no), a metaphysical nicety ; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shews itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense. Instead of reverent, decent, grave worship ; affected, scenical, ludicrous formalities, uncouth gesticulations, disgusted countenances, with I know not what empty shows of a forced and feigned devotion ; which things also were to serve instead of orderly, unreprouvable conversation, of serving God, and of doing good to other men ; and to expiate the crimes of a very bad one, to make amends, and atone for the lewdest, the most licentious, and most mischievous practices.

In sum ; not only are things most alien from real Christianity added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it ; yea, and things most destructive of it, indulged and magnified in opposition to it. This is too generally the state of the carnalized Christian church. And never were there more fervent contentions among all sorts, whose notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred.

The word of God tells us that to be carnally minded is death. These contests seem therefore to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass, or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim and apparel gorgeously a languishing man, in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life. But if any endeavour to that purpose were yet to be used, what should it be ? That any man should go about to propose to the

Christian church, were both presumptuous and hopeless. We can only speak our wishes to men, and offer them in solemn supplications to God. And it were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what, in particular, to pray for ; it being out of question that such men would not be guilty of so much hypocrisy, as, to their uttermost, not seriously to endeavour, what they durst adventure and thought it necessary to make the subject of their prayers. And one would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, not only in general to pray for the true spiritual welfare of the church of Christ in the world ; but so far to be particular, as to pray in order thereto, that it may be more entirely one ; Eph. iv. 4. We are told, There is one body, and one Spirit. That the Spirit is but one, we are sure is true in fact : and so we are that the body animated by that Spirit, as it is such, can be but one also. But the apostle's business in that place, is not merely to assert such a union, as there already was, but also to persuade to such a one as there yet was not ; *i. e.* that it might be more entire and complete than hitherto it was ; and that such a unity might be preserved in the bond of peace ; and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ ; implying plainly enough, that the less it was one the less it would grow. Which also is sufficiently evident in itself. For it is first plain in the nature of the thing, that by how much it is more divided and multiform, it will appear the less considerable in the world, and so be less apt to attract and draw in others. Yea, and its appearance and aspect will not only be less inviting and attractive ; but it will be offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against Christianity itself. Which appears the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, when he was leaving the world (John, xvii. 21), That they all might be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also might be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Implying manifestly, that if they did not appear one, it would strongly tempt the

world to infidelity. Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request; for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity. Who sees not therefore that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? for it can scarce admit to be called a society in its present torn and shattered state.

And again, its divisions being (as they cannot be other than) criminal, the effect of indulged carnality, and designed to serve the carnal interest of this or that party, in opposition to the rest; they hereby not only offend and give scandal to the world, who thereupon discern nothing of peculiar excellency in the Christian profession, when under it they see men driving but such low designs, as they themselves (more honestly) do without any such veil; but they offend the Spirit of Christ too, who, thereupon, in great degrees, withdraws itself; not totally, which could not consist with the promise (Matt. xxviii. 20), I am with you always, unto the end of the world; but unto such degrees as shall testify displeasure. And hence is the growth of the church obstructed, not only naturally, but penally too. Whence it is most evident, that they cannot with judgment pray for the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ, who pray not for its union; nor with sincerity, who to their uttermost endeavour it not also. Nor can there be true seriousness, insomuch, but the consideration must ensue, what course is most likely to serve so desirable an end. And since necessary things are most plain, and less liable to dispute and doubt; and it is matter of fact, obvious to every observing eye, that the disceptations and divisions in the Christian church, which are, and have been, from age to age, do for the most part arise from the addition of unnecessary things to it, which belong not to its constitution; and which while some think lawful only, and at best but an ornament to it, others think sinful

and a deformity; it cannot hence but appear a thing much to be desired, and endeavoured, that these occasions of offence and division might cease, and be removed. Which even they that think such additions to be, for the matter of them, lawful, might yet see reason enough to desire and to endeavour should be taken away; yea, though they apprehend them of some use; it being so manifest that the hurt which accrues by them is unspeakably more. And besides, one would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment, that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity. Christian communion being of Christians as such.

But this amputation is, according to the present posture of men's minds all the Christian world over, a thing equally to be desired and despaired of: as a general union therefore is, in the mean time. We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things. For those that insist upon terms that we think not simply unlawful, while yet they are different, in several Christian societies; we cannot, therein, unite with any; but we must, for ought we know, divide from as many. That only which the present state of things admits of, is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious Christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree: that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party, in the things wherein they differ: that for actual and local communion (which we cannot have with all the Christians in the world, and can have comparatively but with a few), we join with them that come nearest us, *i. e.* that we judge come nearest to our common rule: that (as some means hereto) we especially labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals, as for which all these profess to have a common reverence; that while our union cannot as yet be so extensive as it ought, it may be as extensive as we can; that the gospel

be not hindered, and that our ministry may be the more successful and profitable to the promoting of the common salvation, among those that attend upon it. Such schemes or collections of doctrines, reduced into an order (as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth, as it lies in the Holy Scriptures, is as gold in the mass), may be of use (as they have always been used in the church in all ages) more distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments (though the use is less, that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to oneself), provided they be avowed to be looked upon but as a *mensura mensurata*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*; and so that we only own them as agreeable to the Scriptures. And again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition; which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself. And that for the things we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence. This, through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenuous freedom one with another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt, concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments, they held very different opinions, which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other; and have given and received satisfaction, they intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of Socinian, Pelagian, Popish, Arminian or Antinomian errors. That fraudulent and unjust way of making the estimate, being justly exploded, that whosoever shall in some things that touch not the main points of difference, say as some other of these do, must therefore be of their minds throughout. Which rule of judging would make any Christian be taken for a Jew, a Mahometan, or a Pagan; there being no intelligent Christian, but must say many things that they do.

But it is to be hoped this engine of the devil's is by the

mercy of God broken, so as that the people shall be no more frightened from attending to the ministry of such (be their denomination what it will) as use apt and proper methods to awaken, convince, and save souls, by being told they are Antinomians or Arminians, &c. It being upon inquiry found, that persons so and so charged, by the rash folly of some that understand nothing of the difference, besides the different sound of those odious names, do really detest the doctrines imputed to them. And that furthermore, while we look upon an agreement therein as a sufficient character of one sound in the faith, we do not profess to reckon every one of the things therein contained (without distinguishing their importance) necessary to that purpose. And do never intend our communion shall be limited by other bounds than only an agreement in those things for doctrinals, which we take to be of such importance and necessity, as without the belief whereof a man cannot be a sincere Christian. Which certainly cannot but be a very few less disputed things, among them that profess to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, and that will allow them to be interpreted according to the ordinary ways of interpreting other writings. That for matters of practice in the worship of God, we be satisfied, not to be obliged to do things, which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise, but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly. That we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit to receive further information about doubtful things. That we cherish in our souls a universal sincere love to Christians as such; and to men as men. That we studiously endeavour in our several stations the doing the most general good we can. And that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ, by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice, own the very substance of Christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we



shall, in this divided state of the Christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep, as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And do we yet entertain in our minds any hope that the Christian religion shall spread, and be more generally propagated through the world? Or do we desire it should? Or do we dread that it should not, through our default? Let us then look back to the years of ancient time, and consider what it was when it grew and increased mightily; when without other advantages than its own self-recommending excellency, it every where made its own way, subdued nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most fervent oppositions and persecutions; when the professors and preachers of it triumphed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the blood of Jesus, and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives unto the death. When as Pliny writing to Trajan in favour of the Christians,\* intimates to him, they were every where so increased both in cities and countries, that the Pagan temples had lain almost quite desolate, and that there had scarce been any to buy off their sacrifices. When (about a hundred years after) Tertullian representing in apology for them, their peaceableness, and how easy it were, otherwise, to them to relieve themselves of their sufferings, says they were become so numerous in the empire,† that if it were possible to them to withdraw themselves into some remote, obscure place, they who were left would even tremble at their own solitude. Christianity was then all life and spirit. The Christian Church in those days flourished in purity, power, and vigour. But when for the space of about three hundred years together it had enjoyed the protection and benignity of Christian emperors; and was hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not content with itself, and its own native comeliness, but affected to shine in a borrowed lustre and ornature, when (as harlots are wont) it began to paint, to be fond of gay attire, and devise things for

\* Plin. Epist.

† Apol. contra Gent.

deckings to itself most alien from its original state and constitution; (and which afterwards became the matter of bloody contentions and cruelties;) when it grew ambitious of secular pomp, splendour, grandeur, and power, then was it so far forsaken of God, and his Spirit, that within a very few years after Boniface the Third had obtained of the emperor Phocas the title of universal bishop, whereby popish tyranny and superstition became more fully *regnant* in the church (*i. e.* within less than twenty years), began the senseless delusion of Mahometanism to spring up without the church; and assisted by the incredible accession of force and arms, came at length to prevail against it (now gradually sinking more and more into vice and ignorance) unto that degree, that in process of time, what Christianity had gained from paganism, it lost, in a great measure, unto Mahometanism;\* so that in several parts of Christendom, where were reckoned thirty Christians for one pagan, there came to be thirty Mahometans for one Christian. And how next to unchristian the Christian world is, in the nearer countries (very generally protestant as well as popish) is too well known; and in the remoter, divers writers inform us.†

Let it now therefore be considered for how many sad centuries of years Christianity hath been at an amazing stand! got no ground upon the whole, but rather lost much. Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power, conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world? Who that understands this, would not with deepest concern, and anxiety of spirit, inquire into the cause? And what cause can be so obvious to our inquiry, as a luxurious and a contentious carnality; which both go together, and which have enfeebled, dispirited, and lost its self-diffusing life and strength? What we cannot remedy, let us at least see, and lament!

And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of

\* See in Brerewood's Inquiries.

† Ludolphus's *Æthiop. Hist.* and divers others.

that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For can it content us that Christianity should appear, and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended, and come down into our world! have put on man! have died upon a cross! have ascended that he might fill all things! diffuse spirit, light, and life through the world! have appointed prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers for the publishing his everlasting gospel; and at length leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them? distinguished only from the rest of the world, by certain peculiar notions, and by some different rites of worship; otherwise as flagitious, as sensual, as impious towards God, as full of wrath, hatred, malice, and mischievous design towards one another, as any pagans or infidels ever were! and yet that they should expect to be saved, only because they are called Christian! What a representation of Christian religion is this!

And thus it will be reckoned of, till it come to be understood more generally, and more openly avowed, that Christianity is not only a system of doctrines (and those reducible within a little compass), but of precepts also, not concerning the modes of worship only, but men's ordinary practice; and that not only respect their external actions, but which are designed to regulate and reform their minds and spirits, and do lay their first obligation there, must subdue their inordinate appetites and passions, render them holy and harmless (Phil. ii. 15, 16), the sons of God, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life, &c. The whole frame of the Christian institution being animated by the Divine Spirit, into whose name we are baptized (as well as into that of the Father and the Son), and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted.

Let this be taken for Christianity, and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it

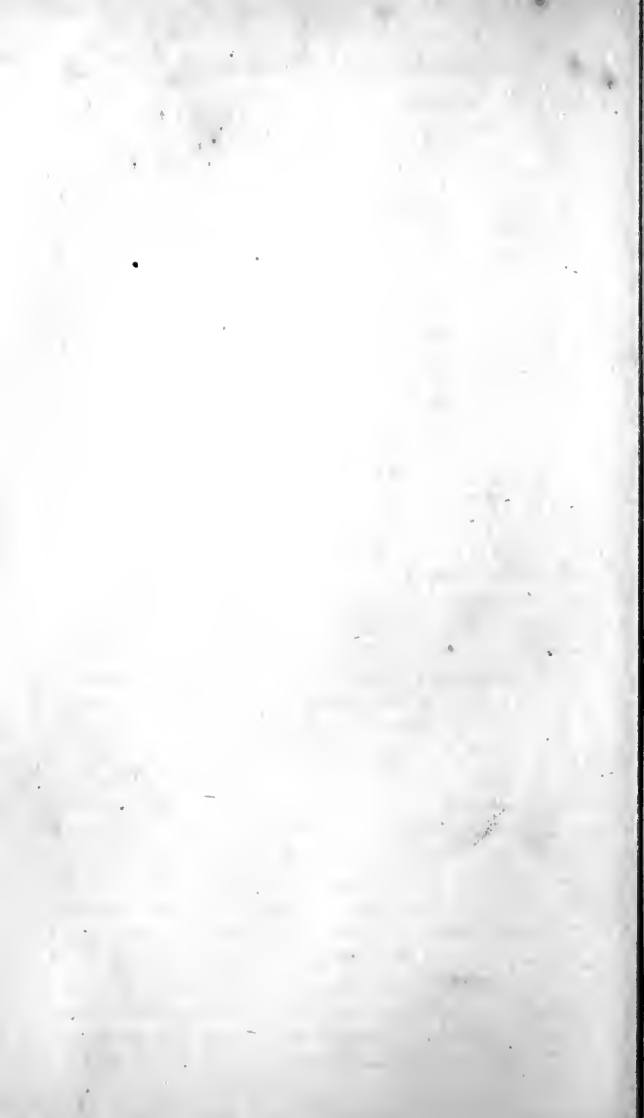
will not always be put to vie (but as upon equal terms) with Mahometanism, Judaism, paganism, mere deism, or whatsoever else shall exalt itself into a competition with it. And let whatsoever comes not within this compass, or is not truly and primitively Christian, be resected and cut off from it, and so it will appear an entire self-agreeable thing; and the Christian church be but one. While it is not so, it will be the business and design of the most, only to promote the interest of this or that party. And if their sense were put into plain words, this it would be, "I am for my church, or the church whercof I am, whatever becomes of the church of Christ." And so will a zealous endeavour for so narrow an interest, as that of a divided party, engage and engross all the attention of their minds, and their religion be summed up in contention, and such only as hath its root in that division which (on the one side at least, and in great part too probably on both sides) chiefly proceeds from mere carnality. And what is it but religious contention, for the most part, that hath filled the Christian world with blood and ruins for many by-past ages? Carnal contention, under this most specious pretence, as being conversant about spiritual or religious concernments, is the thing animadverted on (though in gentler instances, as later occasions did require) in the following sermons. It was little imagined when they were delivered from the pulpit, they should ever have been made more public. I have in this publication of them partly yielded to the opinion of divers, who judged they might possibly be useful to more than those who heard them, and to them further upon review. But have more complied with a sort of necessity laid upon me, by being told if they were not published by me, the thing would be done (as it could) from broken mistaken notes, without me. My own memorials and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one, so often in the week, engaged in such work. I have, as I could, by my own recollection, and by such help as I have otherwise had, endeavoured a full account of what was spoken, and am very confident nothing material is

omitted. (Some ingeminations or varied expressions of the same thing, that are pardonable, if not useful to a hearer, but not so grateful and less needful to a reader, I reckon not such.) But divers passages (though not distinct heads) that were intended, but through want of time omitted, I have inserted in the places to which they did belong. Wherein none can think there is any wrong done. I am sensible the introductive part should have been in some respects otherwise methodized. But I am content to let it go as it is, though I find by the notes that were brought me, that some things were somewhat transposed (otherwise than was intended) in the delivery, from a memory not the most faithful.

If it do any good, it must be from the supply of the good Spirit of God, which I admonish all you that read seriously to seek, and ask from him, who hath promised, thereupon, it shall be given. The very expectation whereof will prevent reading with a vain mind, or ill design, and the consequent danger of receiving hurt by what you read.

Yours in our common Lord,

J. H.



## CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION.

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“ *This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*”—Gal. v. 16.

THE last time I spake to you from these words, having largely opened before the import of *walking in the Spirit*, I undertook to shew you how *the flesh* here is to be understood, against the lusts whereof such walking in the Spirit is the prescribed remedy. In the general you have been told, that flesh is here to be taken morally, and in that latitude, as to signify all sorts of moral evil, or the general depravedness of our corrupt nature; for though sometimes, in the moral acceptation, the sense is limited (as hath formerly been showed) to grosser sins, in contradistinction to more refined, as 2 Cor. vii. 1, and 1 John ii. 16, yet sometimes also it is so far extended, as to signify all sins, as Col. ii. 11, compared with Rom. vi. 6. And in this context it is plain the apostle comprehends sins of both these sorts under this one expression.

But what particular evils he more especially intended here to censure and caution these Galatian Christians against, under this one name, cannot better be understood than by consulting this context itself; in which, though we cannot say we have a full enumeration, we have yet very many instances, of the carnalities against which this remedy is directed. Some of them more gross (as we have told you they might be distinguished), adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, revellings; and some other that may seem

more refined, not as having less, but only a more subtle, malignity in them; such as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, &c. It may here be thought strange that such sins as these should be animadverted upon in Christian churches (as this epistle is inscribed to such, the churches of Galatia, chap. i. 2), so soon after the gospel was come among them, the apostle himself thought it strange, for you find him wondering at it, chap. i. 6. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel. Yea, and after that, with the gospel, they had received the Spirit too. For 'tis said, chap. iii. 2, 3. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? And are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, do you think to be made perfect by the flesh?

We are, therefore, to consider what sort of persons and doctrines they were that had corrupted and depraved those churches; and whereby it will be the more apprehensible by what kind of insinuations they so far prevailed: and we may collect, in very great part, what they were, from divers passages of this epistle itself; and, indeed, from this very context. Some would have us think the persons were of that sect called Gnostics, from their pretended and highly boasted knowledge. We have no evidence that this sect was so early known by this name; but it is very likely they were that sort of men that were afterwards so called. The characters here given them in this and the other apostolical epistles, do much agree with what divers of the more ancient Christian writers, and one pagan one (Plotinus), say of that sect. Which pagan, an interpreter, and great admirer of his,* would fain have pass for a Christian, because living in a time when the controversy between Christianity and paganism was at the height, he says nothing against Christianity itself, but speaks very much against these pseudo-Christians, whom, though that author mentions not by that name, this his interpreter often

* Marsil. Ficinus.

doth it for him, inserting "The Gnostics" even when he is but translating into the body of the work itself.

But this less concerns us. It is, however, out of question, that this sort of men, very anciently called Gnostics, did highly vaunt their great knowledge. A very tempting specious pretence! Though their sublimer notions (about the Æons, &c.) were imaginations only: fancy and not knowledge, or γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος, *knowledge misnamed*, or falsely so called (as we may borrow the apostle's expression, 1 Tim. vi. 20, though those inventions were later), and could only serve to fill the minds of their proselytes with wind and vanity.

But their doctrines upon which the apostle animadverts in this epistle, we may collect from the manifest scope and design of it; and that was to assert *justification by faith without the works of the law*, which they greatly perverted; and *sanctification by the Spirit of Christ*, or the doctrine of the *new creature*, which they even quite subverted. With which false doctrines they conjoined a most impurely vicious life and practice; falling in much with the Jews in their corrupt doctrines, and with the pagans in their licentious practice. Which must be equally tempting to carnal minds.

And this may make it appear less strange, that all these sorts of carnality that are here mentioned in this context, from verse 15 to 21, should, in reference to the same sort of men, be so put together. For it is evident they were partly a judaizing and partly a paganizing sort of Christians; as (for ends of their own) they affected to call themselves. They held it lawful for Christians to join with pagans in their solemnities of worship, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols. It is notorious how gross impurities and immoralities were in those days incorporated into the paganish worship; such as made it sufficiently reasonable that idolatry should have in conjunction with it fornication and adultery, uncleanness and lasciviousness. And for the addition of witchcraft, it was not unaccountable, there being also sor-

ceries, magical rites, and diabolical incantations observed to have been intermingled with the *sacra* of the pagans. And for which these (mismamed) Christians might have the greater kindness also, for the sake of Simon Magus, the father of their sect, by whom the affectation thereof was transmitted to some of his noted followers, that thought it a glorious thing to vie with their predecessor in this sort of excellency.

Nor is it alien from this purpose to take notice, that those diabolical rites are said to have obtained among the paganish idolaters, of drinking the warm blood of their sacrifices, and of eating things strangled with the blood in them, upon the imagination that in their so doing, they did partake of the very spirit of their gods whom they worshipped; and 'tis not altogether un-supposable that the devil might, in some unusual manner, enter into them at those times, more violently agitating their blood and other humours; in the higher ferments whereof, if by the direct influence of the great enemy of mankind, quarrels and murders (as was not unlikely) should also sometimes ensue, it could not but heighten the sport and triumphs of hell.

And that the decree of the apostles and elders, Acts xv., might have such a reference, prohibiting these things conjunctly, idolatry and fornication, and things strangled, and blood, that they should by no means mingle with the pagans in these horrid rites, a learned modern writer of our own hath rendered very probable.* And hereto those vehement dehortations of the apostle must answerably be understood to refer, 1 Cor. x. 11, remonstrating to them, that they could not have fellowship with the Lord's table, and the table of devils. And I would not, says he, that you should have fellowship with devils. For though he did not judge it unlawful to eat of the *idolytha*, *i. e.* things offered to idols, being sold in the shambles, he yet most earnestly protests against their presuming to mingle and partake in

* Dr Spencer de Ritibus Hebræorum.

the horrid diabolical rites and impure practices that were wont to be used at their festivals in the idol's temples.

All thoughts of being by their Christianity obliged and enabled unto strict purity and holiness of heart and life, were out of doors with these seducers, and endeavoured to be extinguished in such as they could work to a compliance with them ; whereof the apostle seemed deeply apprehensive, when he so earnestly inculcates, that in Christ Jesus (or in the Christian state) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were of any avail, but a new creature, and faith working by love.

But it must seem of all things the most unaccountable and incongruous, that men of so profligate sentiments and practices should be for introducing a justification by the works of the law, in opposition to that by the faith of Christ. 'Tis manifest they hated the holy design of Christian religion which they professed ; and professed it, that they might have better opportunity to undermine it. Hereupon (not opening at once all the arcana of their way) they carry answerably to persons and occasions as they occurred ; and as the apostle was all things to all, that he might save some ; so were they, that they might pervert and destroy. To the Christian Jews one thing, to the Christian Gentiles another. In this their doctrine they did most plausibly judaize ; in their impure practices they verged more to paganism. Pretending to Christian converts from among them, that Christ never intended to tie them to strict severities, or hold them under an uneasy bondage ; whereto the apostle seems to refer, chap. v. 13, Ye have been called (he grants) to liberty, but use not (saith he) your liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

Thus we must suppose that they differently applied themselves to such as they designed to make their proselytes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves in the one of these to one sort of men, and to another sort in the other. In dealing with the Jewish Christians they not only denied the doctrine of justification by faith (opposing thereto that

of justification by the works of the law), but calumniated it too, as if it intended to infer a liberty to sin, and make Christianity subservient to wickedness, whereof they knew their own to be more guilty. A piece of monstrous impudence (but usual with men of such foreheads) to endeavour the averting that charge from themselves, to which they were most manifestly liable, by first charging it on the innocent.

Hereto the apostle hath manifest reference, when having first asserted against them justification by faith only, Gal. ii. 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. He then vindicates the assertion against their imputation, that it made Christ a patron to men's sins: If (saith he) while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, and am in and with him dead unto all sin, so as not to be under the dominion of any; and death never more had dominion over him, when he had once died. And whereas they thus objecting against the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, that it ministered unto sin, or made Christ a minister thereunto, were liable to have the objection retorted upon them, being a sort of men themselves so very infamously wicked; for this they had a double *salvo*, both of which the apostle doth industriously refute. That is, from the two parts of the law given by Moses, and the two sorts of the works of the law enjoined thereby, that is, the moral and ritual or ceremonial part. In reference to the former, they fall in with those Jewish conceits of the merit of their good works, done from the principle of free will; and that in order to their justification this merit was to be measured by the preponderation of

their good works to their bad,* and that it was possible that one good work in some cases might turn the scale; that is, if they were equal before. Now this the apostle recurs to, by showing that they that were under the law were under a curse; for that if they continued not in all things written in the law to do them, all they did was nothing, as you may see, chap. iii. of this epistle, ver. 10.

And then as to the ritual or ceremonial part, because their sacrifices were in great part expiatory of sin, and divers of their other performances carried a great show of sanctity and piety in them; which their expiatory sacrifices could only be, as they were representative of the one propitiation, and their other observances were nothing to their sanctity, if the thing they were designed to signify, did not accompany the sign; they imagined they were not to signify its presence, but to supply its absence. This notion did obtain even with the stricter sort of them, the Pharisees themselves, who thereupon made very light of the weightier matters of the law, reckoning that though they were guilty of many immoralities in practice, their exact observance of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Moses, would go far to make an amends; and that their paying tithe of mint, annis, and cummin, would serve instead of judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, which they are said to pass over as very light and small matters. See Matt. xxiii. 23, compared with Luke xi. 42. And herein the apostle contests with these Galatian Christians, not only with vehemency, but with some kind of wonder, that when gospel light had come among them, and that having known God, or rather been known of him, as chap. iv. 9, they should attribute any thing to so beggarly rudiments as these were; that is, being circumcised, and keeping days, and months, and years, &c. the things whereon they laid so great stress. And because they did so, he tells them in that 4th chapter, that he was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain among them.

In sum therefore, he makes it his business to evidence

* See at large to this purpose Smith's Select Discourses upon this subject.

to them, that both their justification and their sanctification must be conjoined and arise together out of one and the same root, Christ himself, and by faith in him (without the works of the law) as that which must vitally unite them with him, and that thereby they should become actually interested in all his fulness ; that fulness of righteousness which was to be found only in him, and no where but in him ; and withal, in that fulness of spirit and life, and holy influence, which also was only in him ; so as that the soul being united by this faith with Christ, must presently die to sin and live to God, chap. ii. 19, 20. And at the same time when he delivered a man from the law as dead to it, he became to him a continual living spring of all the duty which God did by his holy rule require and call for, and render the whole life of such a man a life of devotedness to God.

And 'tis here by the way worth the while to observe how the apostle himself expounds that phrase of being dead to the law by being delivered from it, Rom. vii. 1-6. And no man can be said to be delivered from any thing, as it is a good or an advantage to him, but as it is an evil, and doth him hurt. And the law hurts no man as a rule of life. But as to one staid under the full power of it, 'tis a bar against that great blessing of the Spirit (chap. iii. 13, 14.), which by its yet abiding curse it keeps off from him, hereby occasioning his continuance in sin, and then condemning him for it. Whereupon how clear is the current of the discourse in these words, viz. By the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God ; I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, *q. d.* The law itself hath slain me, and killed all my hopes and expectations from it: the same law that slew Christ, hath slain me. I am crucified with him ; which supposes his being in him by that faith by which he was to live ever after. In this faith stood his marriage to Christ, who succeeds into the room of the law, as the case is stated, Rom. vii. 1-3, &c. They that were settled, in reference to each other, in the conjugal state, as the law and the sinner were ; upon the death of the one

(whichsoever it be) the relation ceases, and so the obligation which depended upon that relation. And thereupon, says he, the law itself having given me my death's wound, and killed me as to it, in the article of dying, I join myself to Christ, and yield to be crucified with him, but therein acquire with him a new life. Nevertheless I live. And how? Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me. And this life I now thus live is a life of pure and absolute devotedness to God; terminated upon his interest and glory, as the *end* of it, governed by his declared will, as the *rule* of it; *i. e.* in sum, 'tis a holy life, or (as before) 'tis a living to God. Whereupon he so copiously distinguishes, chap. iii., between Jews and Jews, those that were born after the flesh, and those born of the Spirit, the sons of the bond-woman, and of the free (as he allegorically speaks), signifying the latter only born into this new state of life. By all which he shews the connexion to be most necessary and inviolable, between being justified by faith in Christ, and a life of holiness; so little opposite were these to one another, that one and the same faith was to infer both.

But now, that the large extent of this holiness of life might more fully appear, the apostle signifies, that it must not only exclude those grosser lusts and works of the flesh, but also such, as because they might seem somewhat more refined, might be reckoned by some less criminal, he therefore inserts divers of this other kind also; and the state of the case did equally require it. For it appears (as it might well be supposed) that so far as any were tainted with the false notions, and with inclinations to the impure practices before mentioned, they were filled with animosities, with wrath, envyings, and hatred towards them that had not received the taint; and they might have too much place with these back again towards them. Whereupon there could not but be very great and high ferments in these churches. Nothing therefore could be more requisite, or seasonable, than that several instances of this sort of car-

nality should be put into this catalogue, viz. hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, &c. For they were not to be thought (as was said) more refined, as having less; but a more subtle energy, or penetrative power of malignity in them. Nor indeed hath Christianity and the Christian church suffered more by any sorts of evils, than by those of this sort. Others destroy particular persons; these, besides their doing so, do more directly hurt the community, and tend to waste and destroy the church.

Now as to those grosser carnalities mentioned in this context, I did formerly say somewhat briefly, and so I did as to that which seems the central one among those of this latter sort, viz. that of heresy: which I considered according to what it doth import in itself, and did design also to consider it in this its concomitancy, viz. of the things here mentioned in so near conjunction, and that are of nearer affinity with it, hatred, envyings, and the like. I have indeed been since in some suspense whether I should pursue that intention or no; but upon serious consideration, and solemn looking up to heaven for direction, I have determined not to let this sort of carnality pass without just animadversion. For I consider that I speak to a Christian assembly, who must be understood all to profess equal and impartial reverence to the word of God, as to a revelation come down from heaven, for our direction and conduct thither. And therefore none dare, upon serious thoughts, allow in themselves any kind of regret or disgust as to so material and important a part of this holy word. We are assured the words of God will do good to them that walk uprightly, that is, to upright-hearted ones; who it must therefore be supposed will walk or deal uprightly in their attendance thereunto. And I cannot but hope that God will graciously help us to speak and hear with that uprightness and integrity of heart, that this word of his may do good to some, without doing hurt to any.

In speaking therefore to this sort of carnality (for we must mention it by such a term as the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to put upon it), I shall *first* note to you some

previous things more generally, and then shall, *secondly*, let you see what appearances there may be of it in such a case as the apostle's present discourse hath reference unto.

First, It will be of use to us, more generally, to note these few things :

1. That the several expressions of it which we find in this context, in closer connexion with heresy, as it were guarding it before and behind, viz. hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, do all note but one radical evil, and do all agree in one root. Whereupon it will be the less needful to insist upon them severally, or to give you the criticism of each word by itself, which it were a great deal easier to do, than it will be useful, or of any avail to us. What I shall say therefore will be more general ; but will however give you the occasion of casting your eye upon the particulars, whereby you will have the more distinct account of that carnality, which is here referred to by the apostle.

2. This is needful to be noted too, that this precept of the apostle, considered as a prescription against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, has more immediate and direct reference to this sort of carnality. This is plain, if you will but again peruse the words as they lie in their closest connexion. For when he had said in the 14th verse, "That all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'" (most of all, no doubt, one's Christian neighbour), he adds, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not devoured one of another." Then immediately come in the words of the text, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh:" *q. d.* The lust of the flesh will be working this way, putting you upon biting and devouring one another. According as sentiments begin to differ, and minds are divided, inclinations will carry one this way, and another that ; and then you will be too prone to be at biting, and be ready to fall to devouring one another. Now I have no better remedy to prescribe to you against

both than this, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." I should have been a very unfaithful interpreter of this context to you, if I had not taken notice of this so immediate connexion.

3. This is further to be noted, that this sort of carnality that lies in strifes, in emulations, in envyings, in hatred, &c., may come to have its occasion of being exercised, of working, lusting, and exerting itself about the doctrines of the gospel; than which nothing is more evident, in that you find that these things are put in connexion with heresies, which must be understood to be a corruption of gospel doctrine. Very true indeed it is, that that word heresy, among the more ancient philosophers, was used in a more gentle, and no way infamous sense, signifying only this or that sect of philosophers. But the word coming to be borrowed and transferred by sacred writers into the Holy Scriptures, there it is mostly taken in a very ill sense (though not always), as signifying error or corruption in doctrine, of a very high and destructive nature, as Tit. iii. 10, 11; 2 Pet. ii. 1. For though all heresy be error, or carry error in it; yet all error is not heresy: that must be such error as strikes at the root, and is conjunct with heart-disaffection and malignity (as was noted the last time), standing in opposition to faith, which is not a merely mental thing, but lies very principally in the heart. Doctrinal matters are however here referred unto, even in the very notion of heresy, and therefore about those matters these carnalities may have place. For when the several passions here mentioned are raised, and do tumultuate in the breasts of this and that particular person, they soon and easily spread and propagate themselves to others, so as to infect the community. And then it comes to the forming of it into parties, or dividing it into two sides, as the word *διχαστασίαι* (which we translate *seditions*) signifies; the one stated and posited as in a hostile posture against the other, till at length the matter arrive to that height and pitch of contumacious and fixed obstinacy, as in matters so important as the apostle's discourse reflects upon, will

complete the notion of heresies, viz. on one side, at least ; not, perhaps, without great faultiness on the other, which comes next to be noted.

4. As such carnality may have place and exercise about gospel doctrine, so it is very possible it may shew itself on both sides, even on their part who have the *truth* with them, as well as on theirs who oppose it, and make it their business to propagate the contrary error or false doctrine. The very defence of truth itself may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent.

I am, you know, by mere providence, in the series and tract of a discourse long continued upon this context, led to say what I now do ; and I have therefore the more hope, that through the blessing of God, it may be of some use to us. But this comes most directly under our notice ; and let it be noted, that whereas in such contests both sides are wont to be confident they are in the right ; neither the one nor the other may be over-confident or careless of not being in the wrong, in what may be of equal or greater importance than the matters themselves, disputed among them that agree in the substantials of religion, or that hold the head, can be. Let us, I say, deeply consider it, that such sinful carnality may have place, and exercise not only about religious concernments, but even on that side where the truth lies ; which is from hence evident, that the apostle immediately before the text, as I have noted, says, If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not bitten and consumed one of another. A great aptitude he therefore observed there was, to be biting on both sides, even where the truth lay, and where it lay not.

For we are here further to observe, that whereas our apostle sadly considered that many among these Christians of Galatia were lapsed, and fallen from the purity and sincerity of religion ; he apprehended too, that they who were not so fallen, took not the best course for the recovery of them that were. Which that admonition of his must

mean, chap. vi. 1, 2, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It seems he reckoned that the sounder part among them, and that ought (and 'tis like thought themselves) to be more spiritual, while they shewed not more of a spirit of meekness towards the lapsed, were not so spiritual as they should be, and discovered more carnality than became them, more wrath and bitterness of spirit than could comport with the law of Christ. They will be little awed by this, and be apt for all this to indulge their own furious passions, that think he hath no law. But though one were never so sure he hath the truth on his side, 'tis in itself a dreadful thing, to whosoever shall allow himself the liberty seriously to think of it. For what must we conceive of such truth, that is to be defended in some cases, I say, that in some cases ought to be so? We must surely conceive of it as a divine, a sacred thing, a heaven-born thing, a thing of heavenly descent, part of a revelation immediately come forth from the very bosom of God; so is the whole gospel revelation to be looked upon. Now here is carnality that lusts; such a kind of carnality as the context speaks of, wrath, strife, hatred, &c. Here is such carnality, lusting, actually lusting, seeking prey, ravening for food. And what doth it feed upon? No meaner thing than divine truth! evangelical doctrines! Monstrous thought! Consider, I beseech you, my friends, what this comes to? The feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine! I must have my lust satisfied, says the proud, contentious spirit: wrath burns, anger boils; sacred things are not spared, but fallen upon, as the prepared food of lust. It will be fed, they are not forborn. All reverence of God is forgotten, heaven is ravaged, the most sacred mysteries of God's own kingdom are violated, and torn this way and that (O horrid thing!) by harpies, vultures, by most fierce and furious lusts. And if a man would know, recognise, take knowledge of the most deeply

inward sensations and intention of his own heart, thus it is, I must now apply my thoughts, bend my mind, to consider a revelation come from heaven: and what, for the end for which it was given, to enlighten, purify, quicken my soul towards God, renew and form it for God, to serve and enjoy him? no, but on purpose to feed, to gratify a lust! We can (too often) make neither better nor worse of it, but just so it is.

These things being premised, I would now go on a little more particularly to shew you, wherein carnality may appear exerting itself, even about such things; or what will be manifest indications of such a carnality, as is here referred unto, acting about, or in reference to, the things of God, the most sacred and important truths and doctrines of his gospel.

1. *First*, When in comparison of some less things, wherein we find occasion or pretence to differ, little account is made of the incomparably greater things, wherein all serious Christians are agreed, and wherein they really cannot but be agreed. Let it be considered, whether pains be not taken to devise some matter or other to contend about (that shews a great disposition); and then having found out some minuter things about which to differ, our differences, as little as they are, quite swallow up our agreements. The whole gospel signifies nothing (though full of the most glorious wonders), in comparison of some punctilios, either that we have invented, or that it may be doubted whether there be any thing in them or nothing. Here is some mystery in all this! A lust is to be gratified; an appetite to contend. This winds and wriggles this way and that, loth to appear but under some specious disguise of zeal for truth, indignation against false doctrine, or the like; but it bewrays itself, and unawares, shews its ugly serpentine head. For if the thing chosen out to be the matter of contest be thought worth so much, when it is manifestly either, in comparison, little, or nothing but a figment, why are not the things on all hands most confessedly great and most evident, more highly esteemed, loved, relished, and with

gust and delight fed upon? Why do not the greater things signify more to unite us in love and communion with all that agree with us in them, than the lesser things to divide us, about which we disagree? Indeed the disagreements were in themselves vastly great between the untainted Christians of these Galatian churches, and that horrid sect that the apostle's discourse has manifest reference unto. Blessed be God there are not such disagreements amongst us. But while there is less taint of error in our minds (as to these things), are we not concerned to take heed there be not as great a taint of this vicious carnality in our hearts? It speaks too much of it; when having devised a difference, we are prone to overlook and make little account of the great things wherein we are entirely and most professedly agreed.

If we consider the things which the doctrinal part of this epistle doth more expressly refer to, as I have noted already, how great things in reference hereto are we fully agreed in! We are all agreed, that a sinner, an apostate lapsed creature, can never be saved and brought to a blessed state, but he must be justified, and he must be sanctified. He must be justified, to make his state safe; he must be sanctified, to make the temper of his spirit good, capable of communion with God in this world, and of final eternal blessedness with him in the other. We are agreed, that such justification and such sanctification are both the effects of most absolutely free and sovereign grace; that none could be ever justified, but by freest grace; that none can ever be sanctified but by freest grace, most absolutely and most sovereignly free. We are agreed, that the highest perfection of sanctification that can ever possibly be attained unto, signifies nothing at all to deserve, to procure by merit our justification. We are agreed, that both, as they are from the most free and sovereign grace, so do come through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the alone Mediator between God and man: that the righteousness is entirely and only Christ's, by which we are justified: that the Spirit is most entirely and only Christ's, by which we are sanctified;

according to that in 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. Such as are mentioned there were before the grossest and vilest of sinners, fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, &c. "And such (saith the apostle) were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

You cannot but be in all these agreed. We are agreed, that whoever does sincerely, evangelically believe in God through Christ, receives Christ, is united with him, or is in him : who doth by serious repentance turn to God, whose heart is won to love him in truth as his highest and best good, who is conformed to the image of his Son ; and who having been made willing in the day of his power, doth now render a sincere obedience to him ; every such one is in a safe state, accepted with God, has found grace in his eyes.

For no words of Scripture can be plainer, than that they that believe on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John, iii. 16, yea, that they have it, ver. 36. That life is begun with them which is never to end, or which is in the sure way to be continued till it become everlasting ; that they that repent, and turn from all their transgressions, their iniquities shall not be their ruin (Ezek. xviii. 30) ; that God hath prepared the things which eye hath not seen—for them that love him, and will give them the crown of life according to his own promise (1 Cor. ii. 9 ; James, i. 12) ; that Christ doth become the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him (Heb. v. 9) ; that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. viii. 1) ; that it must turn wholly to the praise of the glory of his grace, that God makes them accepted in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. We do all agree, that they that do never believe, they that never repent, they that never love God, they that are never brought to obey him, that live in enmity and rebellion against him to the last breath, must needs be in a lost state, are never justified, never accepted

with God, are liable unto coming and abiding wrath, and remain under condemnation, John, iii. 16, 36 ; Luke, xiii. 3 ; Col. iii. 6. We agree, that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience, even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all, as any cause of such a person's acceptance with God ; they do characterize the accepted person, but they cause it not, they deserve nothing ; nay, they could not, if they were perfect. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us ; the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us, have any causative influence to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They were never meant for that purpose, nor have any aptitude or accommodateness thereunto. They cannot make us never to have sinned ; nor can atone for our having done so. We cannot but be agreed in this, for 'tis plain, and carries its own evidence in itself : *i. e.* suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin, that very moment, by some extraordinary, powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul, how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner ? Now where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them ; things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers unto highest acts of love, gratitude, and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure as often as we think of them ; an indisposition of mind to take notice of, and consider such things, so as to improve and use them to the great purposes of the Christian life, as incentives to the love of God, an entire devoting of ourselves to him, vigorous and diligent serving of him, and walking holily and comfortably with him in our daily

course, through a greater disposition to contend about we well know not what besides, too plainly shews much of that carnal disaffection, which the apostle doth here animadvert upon. There are other things belonging to this same purpose that I find I cannot reach to at this time.

SERMON II.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."—
Gal. v. 16.

I HAVE begun to shew you by what indications much carnality may appear, and shew itself in and about spiritual matters; as (for instance), in the controverting, yea, even in the defending, the truths of the gospel; and intend now to proceed. You have heard it does so.

1. When Christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed though never so great, in comparison of the much less things wherein they differ; as all serious Christians must be understood to agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to differ in. I lately mentioned to you sundry great agreements that I cannot doubt to be very common with serious and intelligent Christians, which I shall not now stay to repeat, but add,

2. Such carnality shews itself, when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon some unscriptural words in delivering Scripture doctrine. Here we may take carnality as the apostle doth, 1 Cor. iii. 3. While there are divisions among you, are you not carnal, and walk (or act) as men? There is more of the man in it than of the Christian; when we can make a shift to divide about a word, and that (in the present use of it) devised only by man; when words that are merely of human stamp, and used in no such sense, or to no such purpose in Scripture, however they may be significant, yet too great a stress and weight is laid upon them, either by too stiffly adhering to them on the one hand, or too vehemently

decrying them on the other hand; while, perhaps (and it is a certain and a known case) the meaning may be the same on both sides, and would be so, or would appear to be so, if such and such words were waived, and others more understood were chosen, and used in the room of them. It is true, we are not to think (and no man of sense can) that we are obliged never to use other words in such matters, but such as the translators of the Bible have hit on in their version of it, as if that must consecrate those words, and leave all other under a profane character; but if it appear that any word of a doubtful signification is misunderstood by many, creates offence, and through some fixed, immovable prejudice, or prepossession that some other notion of it hath obtained in the minds of many, it will always be otherwise understood by them than we intend, let it rather go for a *nehushtan*, than that the peace of the church should be broken, and men's minds be disturbed and disquieted by it. This is the case, when any such words as might be arbitrarily used or laid aside, are made so necessary, or so destructive, as if all religion were saved or lost by them: when one so cries up such a word, as if he would say, "The heavens must fall if I have not my word." And another decries it as much, as if he said, "They must fall if it be admitted, or if I have not mine." Sure there must be in this case that forbidden *λογομαχία*, of which the apostle speaks in that, 1 Tim. vi. 4, which they are usually most apt to be guilty of, that are also guilty of what is put in conjunction therewith, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; with these falls in this strife of words: whether that be to be understood objectively, or instrumentally, strife about words, or wordy strifes, I shall not here determine. But that whole context is worth our considering, ver. 3, 4, 5. If any man teach otherwise, do *ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ*, teach other or *alien* things, or after another or *alien* manner, and consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness: 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife,

railings, evil surmisings, 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. And therewith agrees what we find also mentioned, with the charge of avoiding them, 2 Tim. ii. 23. Foolish and unlearned questions that gender strifes. Some may fancy they make themselves considerable for learning by such altercations; but the apostle slurs that conceit, calling them unlearned. So I remember Seneca* says of the Greeks (calling it their disease) that they made much ado with certain idle questions (as, how many rowers belonged to the vessel that carried Ulysses? and such like, that he there mentions), whereby, says he, they did not appear more learned, but only more troublesome.

3. When we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications, in the use even of Scripture words, placing them as some may do, upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves. There are words in the Scripture revelation, that it may be the one or the other of disagreeing persons may apply to one thing, when the other (perhaps truly) thinks they belong more properly to another. There is an inconvenience in this: the case is much as if one should have an idea of all the streets of London, in his mind as they lie, but he mistakes the names, and transposes them. As for instance, calls Cheap-side Cornhill, or Cornhill Cheap-side. He does not speak so intelligibly to another, but at the same time may have the same idea in his mind of London that another has. And this however, when it occurs in religious disceptations, ought to be considered (though there be an inconvenience in it) with indulgence, as knowing we are all liable to mistakes in greater matters. And as it is possible there may be somewhat of carnality, some perverseness, some cloud arising from infirm flesh that darkens the mind, and occasions it so to mistake; so 'tis much greater, not to be able to bear in another such a mistake.

* De Brev. Vitæ.

4. When there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture revelation contains and carries in it ; but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another. This is a matter indeed of greater importance ; there can be no true scheme given of gospel truths and doctrines, if such their references and respects to one another be not rightly understood. But an entire true scheme of Christian doctrines will not enter into all minds ; and for the most part they are particular passages, or particular truths, that strike hearts, and that God makes use of to do souls good by. And if so entire a scheme will not enter into the minds of many, whether through their darkness or ignorance, or whether through any thing of prejudice, that was as it were forelaid in their minds ; nothing remains but to be patient of it, and to do them what good we can, even upon their own terms, and in the way wherein they are capable of it. There was such an obstruction in minds among these Corinthians, even upon this very account of their carnality, as we see in that 3d of the 1st epistle, that the apostle tells them, I could not speak to you as spiritual (it must be understood comparatively) ; but as unto carnal ; and therefore, as a wise instructor, thought it needful to keep back, to withhold some things from them that he reckoned might be meat to them, solid meat, strong meat, because they had been hitherto unable to bear it, nor were yet able. It is in that case needful rather somewhat to ἐπέχειν, to withhold some things, or suspend, than by a continued and too urgent inculcation to frustrate one's own design ; and while we would have all enter into less capable minds, to have nothing enter. It may sometimes be, that when too much is endeavoured at once to be borne in upon them against an invincible obstruction, we only engage them to fortify the more strongly, and shut out all ; and so we defeat ourselves. They gain nothing, and our whole design is frustrated and lost. In all our applications to the souls of men, there must be patient waiting, and very gradual endeavours used, without force and furious striving ; yea, in

our having to do with such as are yet the very vassals and captives of the devil. So the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. ii. 24. The servant of the Lord should not strive, but be patient towards (even all) men, and wait (even in reference to them that are hitherto altogether impenitent), when God will give them repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, that are led captive by him at his will. Much more are such methods to be used towards them, who call on the name of our Lord out of a pure heart, as he speaks a little above in the same context, ver. 22. And consider the extent and endearingness of this character. 'Tis to be deplored that it extends not further ; but so far as it doth extend, God forbid it should not have a most persuasive efficacy and power upon our spirits, to make us follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, even with all them that bear that character, *i. e.* that call on the Lord with a pure heart ; their Lord (as 'tis elsewhere) as well as ours ; be they of what party, or denomination, soever.

5. Much of this carnality appears about such matters, when we are over intent to mould and square gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond ; that is, when we aim, beyond what things can admit, to stretch (or rather to shrink and contract) God's transactions with men, unto the scheme and model of our own abstract notions and definitions, or of merely human, civil, or political economies, administrations, and transactions ; such I mean as obtain among men towards one another ; and so labour to have the same measures take place throughout in reference to divine things, as do in human. Whereby more than is needful, useful (or indeed so much as possible to agree and quadrate), of logic, metaphysics, and of civil and other law, is introduced into theology. Illustrations indeed may be taken thence, but not strict measures. It is impossible sometimes they should be so. Divers things are taken among men in such notions, as, in delivering the doctrine of the gospel cannot have a full and adequate place : they often will not

exactly agree or correspond. As if, in speaking of God's pardoning and justifying a sinner, we should take our measures of pardon and justification strictly from what obtains amongst men, we shall find a great difference and disagreement. For plain it is, that, according to human measures, the same person cannot be both pardoned and justified. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified, cannot be pardoned. But according to divine and gospel measures both are truly said of the same person. In the one case there is an inconsistency, in the other a fair agreement of the same things. He that is at a human bar a justified person, needs no pardon, his case admits of none ; if he were justified, pardon were absurdly talked of ; and so if he were pardoned, that does plainly imply that he was not justified. It is quite otherwise if you bring these things to the gospel, and God's dealing with sinners. I cannot now spend time in shewing you distinctly how these things do lie, and are very capable of being accommodated, in the sinner's case ; some resemblance will appear, not an exact or entire correspondency. The instance, however, serves our present purpose, to shew that God's procedure and methods in his dispensations towards men, will not in all things square with human measures.

Again, if we speak of the doctrine of God's covenant in Jesus Christ, we cannot take our measures from human covenants that pass between man and man, especially one private man and another ; for there the persons are under no obligation before their mutual consent. It is not so between God and man : God's covenants are laws as well as covenants ; and so a man is, before he consents, obliged to consent. Therefore here again it appears gospel doctrines are not to be exactly measured by human models. Nor should this be too earnestly endeavoured, we should not too much set our minds upon it ; 'tis to offer at a thing in its own nature not practicable, and there is too much of man in it.

6. When there is a discernible proneness to oppose the

great things of the gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one, above or against another. It is too plain this may more commonly come under observation, than it doth under that reprehension which it deserves. For instance, those two great things that I mentioned at first, justification and sanctification, both very great things, of most apparent and confessed necessity to the salvation and blessedness of the souls of men ; justification, that a man's state may be good ; sanctification, that the temper of his soul may become so. But is it not too common to magnify one of these above or against the other ? To contend and dispute with great fervour concerning the higher value and excellency, the dignity or precedency, of this or that, and to which the preference belongs ; to be so much taken up about the one, as seldom to think of the other ; and it may be not well to savour and relish the mention of it ? Some are so taken up about the business of justification (that admirable vouchsafement of grace to sinners !) that they care not to hear of sanctification ; and so all their religion is foreign to them, or lies in somewhat without them, or in a mere relative thing, that alters not their spirits. A strange religion ! that makes a man nothing the better man ; or notwithstanding which, he is, in the habitual frame of his soul, as bad as ever, vain, earthly, worldly-minded, proud, passionate, wrathful, malicious, vindictive, false, deceitful perhaps (for that is not worse than the rest) very impurely sensual. But, no man can tell why, nor to be sure he himself, he takes himself to be a justified person : and perhaps his imagination of it raises in him a sort of rapturous, unaccountable joy, without ground or root, and which will not only wither, but turn (without a seasonable and merciful change) into endless horror, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth ! A fearful and most surprising issue and disappointment of a high and unmisgiving confidence, and expectation to be saved ! With others, whose temper, circumstances, or temptations, have less inclined them to rejoicing, their religion is made up of tormenting anxieties and fears, and consists in the daily

revolving of perpetual endless doubts, whether they are justified or no ; without any direct, formed design of being or doing good ; by which they might, in due time, come to have more truly comfortable apprehensions of the goodness of their state. They more care to be pardoned for being bad, than to become good !

Again, on the other hand, there may be some so wholly taken up about what they are in themselves to be and do, and in the earnest, but too abstract, or less evangelical (and therefore less fruitful), endeavour after higher pitches of sanctity, without due reference to the grace, Spirit, and blood of a Redeemer, that they neglect and look not after their justification, and acceptance with God in him ; nor do relish and savour, as they ought, the doctrine of the gospel herein. These do more incline to a philosophical (and scarcely Christian) Christianity ; forgetting Christ to be their Redeemer, their Lord, and vital Head, and that they are (or ought to be) under his conduct, and through his mediation, daily tending to God and blessedness.

But now upon the whole, when there appears an aptness or disposition to separate these two, justification and sanctification, from one another, or either of them from abiding in Christ ; or to oppose them to one another, or contend about the priority of the one or the other (when no doubt they go together), and about the preference or excellency of the one above the other, which is the more considerable thing : herein appears much carnality of mind, an unsound, injudicious distempered spirit. And 'tis a like case, as if a malefactor at the same time is under sentence by which he is condemned to die, and under a most dangerous disease, that appears very probably mortal to him : he has a compassionate prince, willing to save his life, and he at once vouchsafes him his pardon, and provides a very skilful and able physician for the curing of his disease : the wretched creature hearing of this, falls a disputing which of these is the greatest favour, to have my disease cured, or, to have my crime pardoned ; and in the heat of the dispute he neglects both, looks after neither. This is indeed less sup-

possible, in the instanced case ; but how great a distemper doth it shew, that it should be so, in this, which is of inexpressibly greater importance !

And now further it is agreed on all hands, that faith in a Redeemer is necessary to salvation, with those that are adult, and capable of attending to the gospel revelation ; but here, what disputes are there raised ! with what fervour are they managed, concerning the place of it, or the kind of that necessity which this faith is of, in order to the safe state of a sinner ! A like case again, as if such a condemned malefactor is told of his prince's professed, gracious intentions towards him, but he doubts the sincerity of his professions. He gives him all desirable assurances, and tells him, Do but trust me, and all shall be well. But he presently falls a disputing, Yea, but how am I to consider this trust ? (we suppose it only such a trust as may be fitly enough placed upon a man) ; which way is it to contribute towards my safety or welfare ? Is it to be an instrument or a condition ? How absurd an abuse were this of the clemency of a propitious prince ! If there were a public proclamation of pardon to many offenders at once concerned together, and they all agree only to disagree, to vie with one another in their skill in criticising upon the words, or in disputing the method, contending about the order and coherence of parts, and make it their business not thankfully to accept, but cavil at, to tear and mangle and pluck in pieces the proclamation, and defeat the kind design and gracious tender of their prince ? What clemency would not this provoke to the highest resentment and indignation ! And what now can be stranger, or more perverse, than that a revelation from heaven of so much good will to men, in the substance so plain, and that so directly concerns the salvation of souls, should be so torn and mangled ? considered for no purpose less than that for which it was vouchsafed, and that the very end itself should be in so great part eluded, that was so kindly designed in it ? Though yet the endeavour of salving difficulties that occur, by earnest prayer, diligent study, and by amicable and placid conference among brethren,

or comparing of sentiments, sincerely designed for a clearer understanding the frame of the gospel truth, or how it may be with most advantage represented to men for the promoting of the common salvation, can be liable to no just reprehension, being managed with that reverence that so sacred things challenge, and with a due sense of our own ignorance and imperfection. That only which is blameable in this case, and whereof I reckon no account can be given, or defence made, is that when, for the substance, the gospel propounds and lays before us so plain a way wherein men are to endeavour the saving of their souls, as wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err, *i. e.* that there must be repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed heart, a holy life. One comes and pretends to shew that order of these things one way, so as to compose a scheme of them that is represented as most necessary to be observed and held to. No, saith another, I'll give you a righter scheme of salvation, another way, and mightily presses the necessity of that, and the dangerous mistakes of the other. And thus they cover a plain way with thorns and briers, do not instruct, but perplex and distract whom they should direct, create distinctions and oppositions of scheme to scheme, not only without necessity, but almost without a difference, and yet insist with vehemency, and lay men's salvation upon their understanding the matter so or so, when it is hoped thousands have been saved, that never heard of the one scheme or the other, as they are distinguished and opposed to each other. Who can justify this? Again, in the

7th place, When any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion, as very sacred and highly spiritual (as they account), with no other design, than that under that pretence they may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty. It was the very genius of this sort of men against whom this epistle was meant, whether they were then called Gnostics it matters not. The name well agreed to them, and they were known by it afterwards. They were men of much pretence to know-

ledge and sublime notions, as they counted them. And herein lay their religion; and under this pretence they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness. And it is now the same case when any do take up with mere notions, which they are zealous for, accounting them very highly spiritual; and under pretext of these, they indulge the carnality of their hearts, if not of their lives and practices too; and their fine notion (as they account it), which they (more uncertainly) father upon the Spirit of truth, must be substituted in the room of all that love, meekness, humility, heavenliness, self-denial, which are the most certain and undoubted fruits of this blessed Spirit: when under the pretence of being notional men, and of knowing a great deal more than most others do, any neglect their own spirits, and suffer pride, avarice, ambition, vindictiveness, and falsehood, to shelter themselves under the thin cobweb of a few fine-spun notions; and they can now hereupon live at random, with more ease to their own minds, and, they think, with better reputation as to other men.

Here is a glittering shew only of an airy, imagined, pretended spirituality, drawn over (but which doth not hide) corrupt, rotten, putrid flesh. Have you never known such a case, when it might be said, there goes a proud, ambitious man, a covetous man, a false man, a malicious man: but he is a man of rare and singular notions, knows a great deal more than most others do; and this must atone for all his crimes with God and man, and both quiet his conscience and salve his credit together! And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion (though he never so ineptly make it) when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead, *i. e.* to supply the room for him of all real religion and morality. And if ye have happened upon such notions as are really true, and revealed by God himself, by how much the more certainly divine they be, so much the greater is the wickedness, so basely to prostitute sacred things, truths that are the very offspring of heaven, unto

so vile purposes. It were fault enough to make them serve different or other purposes than they are capable of, *i. e.* to supply the room of religion and real goodness. What an indignity is that to religion, to suppose an empty spiritless opinion can fill up its place! a thing that does a man no good, for which his mind and spirit is nothing the better! much more, that shelters what is so very bad! Can this serve for religion? That religion that consists with being proud, with being deceitful, with being malicious, with being revengeful, learn, learn to despise such a religion! Much more that is taken up to veil over these, and exclude all real goodness! Again,

8. When, in the maintaining any doctrine of the gospel in opposition to other men, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say. Or again, if we charge their opinions whom we oppose with consequences which they disclaim, professing, it may be, rather to disclaim their former opinion, and change their judgment, than admit such consequences, if they could discern any connexion between the one and the other. This surely argues a mighty disposition to contend, when we will quarrel with one that is really of our own mind; for herein he appears to be virtually already of the same mind in a greater matter, at least, than he differs with us about; because no man charges another's opinion with a consequence, designing thereby to oblige him to change his opinion; but as supposing it to be an agreed thing between them both, that the consequence is worse than the opinion. When therefore the consequence I charge is disclaimed by him whom I oppose, either it is justly charged, or it is not. If it be not, his opinion may be true, notwithstanding what I herein say to the contrary, and I am certainly so far in an error. But if it be justly charged, being yet disclaimed, we are formally agreed concerning the consequence, and are virtually agreed concerning the disputed point too, because he professedly disavows it upon supposition such a consequence would follow, which yet perhaps he sees not; and so the agreement must be much

greater than the difference. And yet commonly this signifies nothing in order to peace : that is, it is not enough, that I see the same things that you do, unless I also see them too with your eyes.

9. When such disputes do arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity. What dreadful carnality is here ! Most deservedly so called, if you only consider flesh or carnality as an unreasonable, a brutal thing. For what can be more unreasonable or unaccountable than to fall out with another man, because he thinks not as I do, or receives not my sentiments, as I also do not receive his. Is it not to be considered, that he no further differs from me than I do from him ? If there be cause of anger, upon this account, on one side, there is the same cause on the other too ; and then whither shall this grow ? And how little can this avail upon a rational estimate ? Can any good come of it ? doth it tend to the clearing of truth ? Shall we see the better through the clouds and dust we raised ? Is a good cause served by it ? or do we think it possible the wrath of man should ever work the righteousness of God ? And when such carnalities as these do exert themselves, and the hot steams and fumes arise, which the apostle here calls the lusts of the flesh, the flesh lusting to envy, lusting to wrath ; what is the product (or even the productive cause) but that sort of fire which is without light ? And you know what fire that resembles ! And if a man once find any fervour of this kind stir or kindle in his breast, if he rightly consider, he would no more cherish it, than one would do a brand thrown into his bosom from the infernal fire. One should think in this case, What have I stirring within me ? something a-kin to hell ! Can this conduce to the service of divine and heavenly truth ? And let it be sadly considered : our being, upon such accounts, angry with one another, is a dismal token of God's being angry with us all, and a provoking cause of it too. Methinks that should be a qualmy thought ! and strike our souls with a strange damp ! Shall I indulge that in myself, that is a mark upon me of divine dis-

pleasure ; and upon all in whom it is found ? To have his Holy Spirit retire, that blessed Spirit of love, and of a sound mind, and to leave us under the power of rebellious lusting flesh ! Can this be grateful, or not be a dismaying, frightful thing ? And whereas a right scheme of gospel doctrine is the thing pretended to be striven for, I beseech you consider : The more entirely, and the more deeply, the true scheme of gospel doctrine is inlaid in a man's soul, the more certainly it must form it into all meekness, humility, gentleness, love, kindness, and benignity towards fellow-Christians of whatsoever denomination ; not confined, not limited (as that of the Pharisees) unto their own party ; but diffusing and spreading itself to all that bear the character and cognisance of Christ. The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Spirit of greater amplitude ; extends and diffuses itself through the whole body of Christ.

Nor can any man more effectually disgrace his own cause, or make sure to worst himself in it, than by defending it wrathfully. For admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his error, probably a thousand times worse. I go about therefore to take away a mote from his eye, having a beam in my own ; or am more concerned for a misplaced hair upon his head, than I am for a fiery ulcer in my own breast. We are not, 'tis true, to be so stoical to condemn the natural passion of anger, as such, for sinful. But if it exceeds its cause, and sets not with the sun, it becomes strange, unhallowed fire. But again, in the

10th place, There is still a further appearance of great carnality in such cases, when any do adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ : when they ascend the tribunal, usurp the throne, pass sentence upon them, as men of no conscience, or of no sincerity, or uprightness of heart with God. As if theirs were to be the universal conscience, the measure of all consciences ; and he that cannot be governed by their conscience must have none at all : or he be stark blind towards truth, towards God, and towards himself,

that sees not every thing they see, or fancy themselves to see.

This is a most high usurpation upon divine prerogative; and how can any insensibly slide into such an evil as this, in the face of so plain and so awful a text of Scripture, that so severely animadverts upon it? that 14th to the Romans, and sundry verses of it. With what reverence and dread should it strike a man's soul in such a case! When we have the rights of the Redeemer asserted in those whom he hath bought with his blood. And are told that "for this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living," ver. 9. And it's thereupon further said to us, "Who art thou that judgest another's servant," as ver. 10. "Why dost thou judge thy brother, or set at nought thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." We are all of us his, he both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of all, as Acts x. 36. And here of dead and living, *i. e.* that he might be owner of all, which is the first notion of *Dominus* or *Lord*, and in both worlds, the visible and the invisible; that into which many are dead, and deceased from hence, and so to us become invisible; and many that, yet surviving, are still visible to us. So ample is his dominion! And because the *jus imperii*, the right of government, of which judgment is the last, conclusive act, hath for its foundation the *jus domini*, the right of lordship; 'tis therefore asserted to him as the *corona* (the crown) and complement, the very summity of his acquired rights, that he is to finish all things by the last judgment, which must pass upon both the already dead and the yet living. Thus is the ground of the expostulation laid, Who art thou who presumest to justle him out of this his supreme and most sacred right? Perhaps the matter disputed about may be doubtful, but there is no doubt concerning this incommunicable authority of our Lord Christ, or concerning his law against such judging, Matt. vii. 1. And to run into certain sin, in a furious chasing of uncertain error! what considera-

tion, what tenderness of offending, of affronting him, and of hazarding our own souls, is there in all this ?

To judge other men's consciences, is of so near affinity with governing them, that they that can allow themselves to do the former, want only power, not will or inclination, to offer at the other too. Which puts the matter out of doubt, that when men of this temper complain of such usurpation, 'tis not that they think it an offence in itself, but against them only ; and that no consciences ought to be free, but their own. The proof of an honest and equal mind herein is, when we judge this to be evil, not being hurt by it ; or abhor to hurt others in this kind, when we have power to do it. Upon which account that passage is memorable of the emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny, more grievous than to affect dominion over men's consciences ; and that they who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven. A considerable saying from so great a prince, that lived and died in the Roman communion. What shall be thought of any such protestants, that without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences (and consequently of their states God-ward), which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to overrule or govern ?

11. When we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves. That is, do expect that our minds be taken for standards to all minds ; as if *we*, of all mankind, were exempt from error, or the possibility of being mistaken. A certain sort of *φιλαυτία* or *αυθάδεια*, an excess of love and admiration of ourselves, or over-pleasèdness with ourselves, too much self-complacency, is the true (though very deep and most hidden) root of our common mischief in such cases. We wrap up ourselves within ourselves, and then we are all the world. Do only compare ourselves with ourselves, never letting it enter into our minds, that others have their sentiments too, perhaps wiser than ours ; but abound in our own sense ; and while

(as the apostle in that case says) we are not wise, and perhaps are the only persons that think ourselves so, we yet take upon us, as if we were fit to dictate to the world, to all Christians and to all mankind; or as if we only were the men, and wisdom must die with us.

This is a sort of evil, than which there is none more common and none less observed; none wherewith the guilty are so little apt to charge themselves, or admit conviction of it. For, I pray, do but consider; all the several differing parties amongst us do with one voice pretend to be for peace; but how, and upon what terms? Why, that all the rest are presently to be of their mind; and that is all the peace that most are for. For where (scarce any where) is the man to be found, or how great a rarity is he, that entertains the thought "That there may, for ought I know, be much to be redressed and corrected in my apprehensions of things, to make me capable of falling in with that truth which ought to be common to all." There is an expectation with many, of a good time and state of things, before this world end, when all shall be of one mind and judgment; but the most think it must be by all men's becoming of their mind and judgment. And of this self-conceit it is usually a harder thing to fasten conviction upon men, than of most other evils. We have more hope in speaking against drunkenness, murder, or any the grossest kind of wickedness; for there the conscience of the guilty falls in, and takes part with the reprovcr. But we can more easily, and more frequently do (though not frequently enough), observe the faults of the inferior faculties or of our external actions, than of the faculty itself which should observe. Our mind, which is naturally like our eye, is, in this, too like, *i. e.* that it can see every thing but itself. It doth not, by using it, preserve its peculiar self-reflecting power; is blind towards itself, beyond what naturally belongs to it. An object may be too near our bodily eye to be seen. Our mind is herein too bodily, too much carnalized, sunk too deep into flesh. It is the next thing to itself; and here, not by its primitive nature

(by which as an intellectual sun it could revert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself), but by depravation, it for the most part sees nothing ; or doth worse, thinks itself to see what is not to be seen, certain imaginary excellencies, which make the man his own idol ; an object of a sort of adoration to himself ; and of scorn and derision (most probably to every one else.) In this case every man is, however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right ; amidst the so vast a variety of apprehensions and sentiments no one suspects himself to be in the wrong. All are for the truth, and they are all for peace and union. By which some indeed more gently, mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways (as in great kindness to themselves they take for granted all men's are but their own) and come wholly over to them. Others, that have not breasts capable of even so much charity than this, not only are as much lovers and admirers of themselves, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world that durst adventure to do so. The meaning, therefore, of their being for peace, is, that they would have all destroyed that are not of their minds ; and then (as the Roman historian speaks) *Quando solitudinem fecere appellant pacem ; when they have made a desolation, so that they themselves are left alone in the world, that they will call peace.*

But you will say, What is to be done ? or what would I persuade in this case of differing apprehensions and ways still remaining among Christians ? I answer, Not presently to unbelieve all that ever a man hath believed before ; or to abandon on the sudden his former sentiments, or to find fault with himself for having thought them right. For 'tis a contradiction to be of any opinion, and not then to think it right. Nor, therefore, is it scepticism, by any means, that I would advise to ; as if there were nothing to be thought certain, but this ; that whereas the greatest and most necessary things in religion are most plain, that is, either most plain in themselves, or most expressly re-

vealed in the word of God. Here let us be stedfast ourselves, without being severe towards other men. Other things, that are more matter of doubt, and dispute by how much the less plain they are, we should count so much the less necessary. In reference, therefore, to these less momentous things, about which there is with us most of jangling, there ought always to be great modesty and distrust of our own understandings, and a continued readiness to receive information, with constant looking up to the Father of Lights for further illumination, and a resolution, wherein we, with others, have attained, to walk by the same rule, minding the same (agreed) things, hoping God will reveal his mind to the otherwise minded in his own time, as the apostle in Phil. iii. 16, 17. But to hasten to a close, I further add in the

Last place, Such carnality greatly shews itself in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept afoot, and the contests continued without either limit or rational design. This shews a deep tincture, and is a plain indication of a mind, to a very great degree carnalized, when a mighty pleasure is taken to see the saw drawn, and the ball kept up. And if the question be asked, Pray how long? So little of reasonable answer can be given that it might as well be said in plain terms, Till all words be spent, till speech or language fail, till Elias come, or doomsday come. So that if there were never so much reason to commend the having said somewhat in defence of this or that disputed point, we might yet say, as Seneca did of Cicero's so much over-praising his own consulship "I blame him not for praising it without cause, but for doing it without end;" or that he could never give over or tell when he had said enough. Upon the same terms upon which it is now so much desired such disputes should be continued, when what is truly enough is already said, they might as well wish they always should. Which signifies, that when we say, we would have men contend for truth, we wish it not so much for truth's sake, as for the contention's sake. By all means, say they, strive for

the truth: not that they care so much for truth as for the strife. For in some circumstances there is not an end in view, that is rationally to be designed or served by it, on this side the end of all things. Nor consequently any good principle that is to be exercised or gratified thereby. What is needful to be said in the matters already referred to, for the informing and satisfying of tractable minds sincerely willing to understand the truth, lies within a little compass. And when, in controversy, that is once said which truly belongs to the very point in question, the rest is commonly trifling and reflection, or the perplexing of the matter more, and darkening the counsel by words without knowledge. If love to truth be alleged for the principle that prompts men to covet so continual altercations about it, I would say this shews more want of love to it. For hereby they are diverted from that which renders it most of all amiable, and for which it ought chiefly to be loved. As it is the truth according to godliness, and by which we are to be sanctified, and begotten more and more (as of an immortal seed, into the divine likeness.) Experience shews how little disputes better men's spirits. If we love divine truth, why do we not feed and live upon it, and enjoy its pleasant relishes? but relish gravel more, or chaff and bran? For thither the agitation of continued controversies about it doth soon sift it, the grain of flour (the kidney of the wheat) being passed away, and gone from us. Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending if, either by severity or mercy (one may say rather than not otherwise, by merciful severity), God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent, when the fervour of men's spirits is such, as to carry them over all Scripture directions, and animadversions, that they signify nothing with them; only make it their business each one to animate the more vogued champions of their own party into the highest ferments, and cry, Dispute, dispute, write, write, preach, preach one against another;

let not the business go over so, do not keep silence. Thus are many, as the apostle speaks, puffed up for one against another, 1 Cor. iv. 6. And what, has such a text of Scripture as that no edge, no point, by which to lance, to pierce such a tumour? No; when the humour is once up, and has enwrapt men's hearts; is settled there, and hath obdured them to a brawny hardness; such texts of Scripture, though so mighty pat and apposite, are esteemed by them but as leviathan esteems spears and swords, like straw and rotten wood, they do not enter into men's hearts. A strange kind of obduration!

And how supposable is it, that they who are so puffed up for others, may also, through the known corruption of nature even in the best, do herein not a little to the puffing up of them too. The apostle's concluding of this chapter with those cautions, Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another, immediately upon his renewing of the precept (ver. 25) of walking in the Spirit, and immediately before those words (chap. vi. 1), If a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, shews how he understood the case to be with these Galatian Christians, that as to doctrinals were yet sound and un-fallen: that there was yet such carnality working in their continued contests (though for the truth), such pride, such affectation of vain-glory, such wrathfulness, as shewed it was not mere love to truth that kept up the contest, but some such worse principles. Nothing is plainer than that principles and ends measure one another. And when that is done, or coveted to be done, that serves no good end; or is so done, as not to serve, but destroy or hinder, any end that is truly good; the principle must be very bad that moves the wheel. Disorderly eccentric motions bewray their principle and end together. When the carriage and conduct of an affair, that carries with it the appearance of serving the truth, is impetuous, eager, precipitant; when there is no good end in view of the present so modified endeavour; when enough is agreed already to serve the

most important ends, unity among brethren, the salvation of souls, and yet things are further insisted on, unnecessary to either, yea, prejudicial to both, and upon which the weight and stress of either of these cannot be laid without sin ; it too plainly appears vain-glory to oneself, or the slurring of a (designed) adversary is the end ; and then the principle is proportionable. Yet, even in the light, and when matters are thus open and in view, oppositions are pushed on, and men's spirits rise to that pitch, as to bear down whatever is proposed, only with design to make their career a little slower ; yea, and they are apt, rather than hearken, to put opprobrious names and characters upon them that are not altogether so furious as themselves.

Nor have they themselves the patience to consider consequences, and whither these things tend ; *i. e.* that God is provoked, that the souls of men are endangered, greatly endangered. I have found in my own conversation, that some, even in distress, in agonies, have said, "Lord, be merciful to us, I know not which way to go ; one preaches one thing, another preaches the quite contrary." I know they mistake ; we do generally in substance preach the same gospel. Thanks be to God, his gospel is not confined to a few men, or to this or that party of men. But, in the mean time, it is a thing of very ill consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way, who should rather be strengthened.

It is not considered, that where the danger is less of an utter ruin to the souls of men, there is, however, occasioned a great languor and enfeeblement. They should be considered and treated, not only as being weak, but lest they should be made so. When they are diverted from the proper means of improvement and growth, and their minds are alienated from those means, being otherwise engaged, an ill habit is contracted ; and when the distemper hath seized some, it spreads, and soon infects more. Nutriment is dispensed from the head through the body, by the co-operation of the several parts, as those texts,

Eph. iv. 16 ; Col. ii. 19, do with great emphasis and elegance speak. Understand it so, that how far soever there is or ought to be actual communion, every limb and joint contributes something to the strength and vigour of the rest. So is nourishment ministered and spreads itself in the body to its edifying itself in love : which love if it fail, a universal languor cannot but ensue, the free circulation of vital spirits being obstructed and stopped. And those that are most sensible, if they be not so much otherwise damnified, cannot, when they observe it, but be grieved, and take it bitterly to heart, when the tokens appear to their view of a general decay. The living members of any body are pained, when the body is wasted and rent ; dead or stupified and benumbed members feel it not, are unapprehensive. But above all, it ought to be considered (and how little is it !), that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and doth (as we may fear it will more) sensibly retire ; the gospel in which it is wont to breathe is trifled with ; the glorious gospel, the gospel of the grace of God (can men find nothing else to play with), by which that blessed Spirit hath begotten many a soul to God, and nourished them unto life eternal. That precious thing designed for so great and sacred purposes (as pampered wanton children do with their food), they dally with, or quarrel about it, or squander and throw it away. How can this but offend ? The self-procured distempers which did precede, and those that ensue, increase the offence. When 'tis said, Eph. iv. 30, " Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God"—and presently subjoined, ver. 31, " Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away." Is it not left to us to collect, that these things do more peculiarly grieve the Spirit ? that Spirit of grace, of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity ? There is but one body, and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence in the body. What can you think of that Spirit that feels every where ? that is in the body a universal sentient ? How can that Spirit but be grieved ? Passion it is not capable of, but just and sedate displicency, that

matters should be so. How should any of us like it to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part ! Though with him real commotion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.

But where this angry, tumefied, proud flesh is the governing thing, none of these tremendous consequences or considerations, while it is so, take any place. The litigious quarrelsome genius will throw off all, will find no leisure or room for a calm thought : but though the course in which we are engaged should be ready to set on fire the whole course of nature, will be still for casting abroad firebrands, and arrows, and death ; and make us think this fine sport ! If indeed there were room for any cooler thoughts, one would think such as these should not lie remote. How little any of us know, or are capable of knowing, in this our present state ! that they that think they know most, or are most conceited of their own knowledge, know nothing as they ought to know ; that they that are most apt to contend, do most of all fight in the dark ; that it is too possible there may be much knowledge without love ; how little such knowledge is worth ! that it profits nothing ; that it hurts, puffs up, when love edifies ; that the devils know more than any of us, while their want of love, or their hellish malignity, makes them devils ; that as by pride comes contention, so humility would contribute more to peace (and to the discerning of truth too), than the most fervent disceptation ; that there is no hope of proselyting the world to my opinion or way ; that if I cannot be quiet till I have made such and such of my mind, I shall still be unquiet if others are not of it, *i. e.* always ; that if some one's judgment must be a standard to the world, there are thousands fitter for it than mine ; that they that in their angry contests think to shame their adversary, do commonly most of all shame themselves.

But to close all, I pray let us consider, we are, professedly, going to heaven, that region of light, and life, and purity, and love. It well, indeed, becomes them that are

upon the way thither, modestly to inquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in divine knowledge, are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such inquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto (besides their usefulness in the way thither.) We shall carry truth and the knowledge of God to heaven with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy, if we have their beginnings here, with whatsoever else of real permanent excellency, that hath a settled, fixed seat and place in our souls now; and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-Christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us?

Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.

A TWO-FOLD DISCOURSE.



FIRST—OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

SECONDLY—OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

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MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."—Col. i. 21.

It is a great and wonderful context, whereof these words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into ; but presently to fall on the consideration of the words themselves, which briefly represent to us the wretched and horrid state of men yet unconverted and not brought home to God, and the happy state of those that are reduced and brought home to him. The former, in those words, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." The latter, in these words, "Yet now hath he reconciled." I shall apply my discourse to the former part of the words, and thence observe—that men in their unconverted state are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works. This I shall endeavour,—1. To explain, and shew you the meaning of it ;—2. To evince, and let you see the truth of it ;—3. Apply it.

1. For the meaning of it, 'tis evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon and referred unto. You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. They were so, before they were turned to God ; he writes to those Colossians as to converts, to them that were saints, and faithful brethren in Christ (v. 2), to them that were now believers in Christ, and lovers of the saints (v. 4), telling them, they sometime had been enemies by wicked works. Before conversion, they had (as is elsewhere said) their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God ; walking as other

Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Ephes. iv. 18, compared with the preceding verse. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world, they are alienated from, and enemies to, God by wicked works. We are to consider what this *alienation* from God doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God ; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies people of another country, you were like people of another country. Of such a different language, manners, and behaviour they that are converted are to you, and you to them ; you are estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you, men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the gospel, John, viii. 43. What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes, Job, xxi. 14. They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Man, who was originally made for the service of God, and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him. The next word to be taken notice of, is *enemies*, which may seem to add somewhat to the former word alienated ; there is not only no inclination towards God, but there is a disinclination ; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The carnal mind is enmity to God, and the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and chosen : men in their unconverted state, are not only strangers to God, but enemies against God, and that in their minds. A most fearful case, full of astonishment, that the very mind of man, the offspring of God, the paternal mind, as a heathen called him, that this most excellent part or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity, and envenomed with enmity against the glorious, ever-blessed God ! that the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts should be set against God, who gave him this power to think ! Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved,

they know not God, and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him, and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and disaffected to him. *By wicked works*, which must have a double reference: 1. Former wicked works, as done by them: 2. Future wicked works, as resolved on by them.

1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God.

2. Future wicked works, as resolved on to be done. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God and a course of sin are inconsistent things, 1 Cor. xv. 34. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God." This is the condemnation (John, iii. 19), that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, because they will not have their course altered, they resolve to do as they have done, and that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity are against the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself: as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions.

1. As he claims to be their Owner, when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their Proprietor, or one to whom

they belong ; but they say they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves, and look on God as our Owner ; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, We will be our own ; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. Our tongues are our own, Psal. xii. 4. Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves, our bodies, strength, time, parts, &c., are our own, and who is Lord over us ?

2. If you consider God under the notion of a Ruler, as well as an Owner. Why should not God rule over and govern his own ? But this, the spirit of man can by no means comport withal, though 'tis but reasonable, that he who gave men their beings, should give them laws ; and that he who gave life, should also give the rule of life ; but this man, in his degenerate state, will by no means admit of. There are two things considerable in the will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withal. The sovereignty and the holiness of it.

1. The sovereignty of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign, man must look on God's will to be above his will ; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God ; he will not submit to the will of God as superior to his will. And then,

2. There is the holiness of God's will. His law is a holy law ; and the renewed man therefore loves it ; but because 'tis holy therefore the unregenerate man dislikes it.

3. *Lastly*, God is considered under the notion of our end or last end, as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God in the hearts of unregenerate men in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God, every one sets up for himself. I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself. Therefore when God is represented as our end, as in the 1 Cor. x. 31, Whether ye eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God ; and as it is in the 2 Cor. v. 15, No man is to live to himself, &c.—

The great design of our being delivered from the law (viz. as a cursing, condemning law) is that we may live to God (Gal. ii. 19), I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; this the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up, as the great idol in opposition to God, all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God, in this respect. Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should be the sense of our soul towards him, so it was with the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. 25, Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c., but says the unregenerate soul, the world is better to me than God. And it is upon this account that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it. Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now in the

2d place, To evince the truth of this doctrine, and that by two heads of arguments,—Partly from ourselves, and partly from God.

1. From ourselves. 'Tis an alienation and enmity of mind that keeps men off from God, and reconciliation with him; which will plainly appear,

1. If we consider that our minds are capable of knowing God. Such a thing is the mind of man, which was originally made for such an exercise, as to be taken up, principally, with things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated perfection, in whom all power, wisdom, and goodness do meet; who fills heaven and earth, and from everlasting was God. Our minds tell us, that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God; 'tis in the capacity of man's nature to mind God, as well as to mind vanity; but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed, but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears, in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully. That they

are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns this cause, Rom. i. 28. They liked not to retain God in their knowledge. 'Tis not grateful to them, Job, xxi. 14. We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world, and all things therein, 2 Pet. iii. 5. For this they are willingly ignorant of, &c. They will not know God, though his visible works shew his invisible power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20. Now this can signify nothing but alienation, and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God, and his ways, being alienated from God, through the blindness of their hearts, Eph. iv. 18. This heart-blindness is chosen and voluntary blindness, signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature. But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is consequently in it, appears evidently in two sorts of persons.

1. In many that are of the more knowing and inquisitive sort, who do all they can to make themselves notional atheists; to blot or rase the notion of God out of their minds. Of them I shall say little here, they do their utmost, but in vain; it will stick as close to them as their thinking power. But their attempt shews their enmity, for they are content to admit the grossest absurdities into their minds, rather than permit that notion to remain unmolested there: rather imagine such a curious frame of things, as this world is, to have come by chance; than that it had a wise, just, holy, as well as powerful maker. They would count it an absurdity, even unto madness, to think the exquisite picture of a man or a tree to have happened by chance; and can allow themselves to be so absurd, as to think a man himself or a tree to be casual productions. Is not this the height of enmity?

2. In the unthinking generality. Of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostasy, 'tis said they are fools,

as is the usual language of Scripture concerning wicked or unconverted men ; and that such fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet they say in their hearts, no God ; *i. e.* not there is none, for there is no *is* in the Hebrew text. The words may rather go in the optative form than the indicative, O that there were none ! The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts ; if it do, they only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts, and constant practice, that while they own a God, they never fear nor love him accordingly. And they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness ; and so think they need no reconciliation to him ; he and they are well agreed already. Sometimes think of him as merciless, and irreconcilable ; and therefore never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do seldom think of God, when as a thought of God may be as soon thought as any other, and would cost us as little. Why not as well on God as upon any of those vanities about which they are commonly employed ? 'Tis a wonderful thing to consider, how man is capable of forming a thought ! how a thought arises in our minds ! And how sad is it to consider, that though God hath given to man a thinking power, yet he will not think of him ! God hath given to man a mind that can think, and think on him, as well as on any thing else. My body cannot think, if my mind and spirit is gone ; though God gave man the power of thought, yet men will not use or employ their thoughts otherwise than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the spirit of man within him, hath put an immortal spirit into him, whence a spring of thoughts might ascend heavenwards. When we have thousands of objects to choose of, we think of any thing rather than God ! and not only turn this way or that, besides him, but tend continually downwards in opposition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God, the serious mention of his name is distasteful. Whence can

this proceed, that a thought of God cast in, is thrown out, as fire from one's bosom? whence is it, but from the enmity of mind that is in man against God?

4. It further appears hence, that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love, but whether God be a friend or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas in his favour is life in the account of holy and good men (Ps. xxx. 5), yea, they judge his loving-kindness is better than life without it, Ps. lxiii. 3. When men shall go from day to day, without considering whether God hath a favour for them or not; whether they are accepted or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes or not, &c. What doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be, but they would greatly value his love.

5. That men do so little converse and walk with God, doth speak a fixed alienation of mind, and enmity against God. Walking with God includes knowing and minding him; but it adds all other motions of soul towards him, together with continuance, and approving ourselves to him, therein. Now agreement is required to walk with God (Amos, iii. 3). Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Hos. iii. 3. Men walk not with God, because they are not come to an agreement with him; God's agreement with us, and ours with him, is that we may walk together. If we walk not with God, it is because there is no agreement; and what doth that import, but an alienation of mind from God? Says God, I would not have you live in the world at so great a distance from me, I would walk with you and have you walk with me; and for this end I would come to an agreement with you. But sinners will not come to any agreement with God, and thence it comes to pass that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lie down at night without God, and the reason is because there are

no agreements, and that denotes enmity, especially considering,

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear, and reverence of God, &c. (which is included in walking with God), what inconvenience is in this, what business will this hinder? When a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No business will go on the worse for it, it will not detract from the success of our affairs; 1 Cor. vii. 24. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world, but what you may do with God, as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer, how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God, and unacquaintedness with him; Job, xxxv. 10. But no one saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night. They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than to cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter. When men will endure the greatest extremity, rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind. As obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity. And for this I shall only instance in two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed which I mention, and insist upon (though briefly) as things that concern the constant and daily practice of every Christian,—1. A course of prayer to God, in secret; 2. And having our conversation in heaven. How express are both of these precepts, in the same chapter; the former, Matt. vi. 6, the latter, ver. 19, 20, 21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What, to refuse to pray, and pour out our souls to him in secret; to refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven; what doth this signify, but

aversion, and a disaffected heart? Let us consider each of them severally and apart by itself. We are a Christian assembly, how should it startle us to be (any of us) convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

1. For prayer, 'tis a charge laid upon all persons considered in their single and personal capacity, Matt. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. I fear that most of them, who bear the Christian name, carry the matter so, as if there were no such place in the Bible. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son, who came out of his bosom, that he will be sought unto; and that not only publicly but secretly and daily; that as we are taught by our Lord himself, to pray for our daily bread, and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses, we are also to pray in secret, to him that sees in secret; can such commands be constantly neglected and disobeyed, and not signify the contrary bent of our will; especially when we consider, that it is enjoined us for our own good? It would be profane to say, What profit is it to us to call upon the Almighty? But it is most justly to be said, What profit is it to the Almighty, that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to ourselves. If we know not how to pray in a corner, confessing our sins, and supplicating for mercy, we cannot but live miserable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it, but from an enmity of mind? To a friend we can unbosom ourselves, not to an enemy.

I might also enlarge upon family prayer, but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer with them too. But if either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shews it is not love, or any lively affection, that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only. And a miserably mistaken, deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that he cannot

perceive whether your heart be with him, or against him. And so instead of worshipping, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him; and all this while, how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God! I would, saith the blessed God, have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives; and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day, according to Matt. vi. 19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but treasures in heaven, &c. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." And so we are led to the other precept mentioned before.

2. As to a heavenly conversation, God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for an inheritance in light (Col. i. 12), and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become meet for that inheritance. Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state? How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called Christians, if he, who is our Lord and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above, &c., shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven every day in our thoughts, why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity, at the best? Why is it? No other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the gospel; which can be resolvable into nothing else, but such an enmity. The design of the gospel is to bring us into a

union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men, by his own Son, that there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, Give me Christ, or I am lost? none can reconcile me to God, but Christ? You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled (2 Cor. v. 20), but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

2. Another head of arguments may be taken from several considerations, that we may have of God in this matter: whence it will appear, that nothing but enmity, on our parts, keeps us at that distance from God, as we generally are at. And consider to that purpose,

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the element of love. Why are men at that distance from him, who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part, 1 John, iv. 16. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." What can our so great distance from this God signify, from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness, but the most horrid kind, and the highest pitch of enmity? Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves? This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world, from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated, and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him, in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing and serving him, Prov. viii. 31. In the foreser height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them, to rejoice in the habitable parts of this

earth, and to have his delights with the sons of men. Thus also in the 2 Chron. vi. 18, do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration on this account: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth," &c. And the Psalmist, Ps. lxxviii. 18. That "gifts are given to the rebellious (the most insolent of enemies), that the Lord God might dwell among them." How admirable and unconceivable a wonder is this! "The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth!" And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him, "Depart from us," Job, xxi. 14. 'Tis thus, from age to age, and generation to generation, which shews God's goodness on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Ps. xiv. and liii. the beginning of each.

3. Consider the forbearance of God towards you, while you are continually at his mercy. With what patience doth he spare you, though your own hearts must tell you that you are offending creatures, and whom he can destroy in a moment! He spares you, that neglect him. He is not willing that you should perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be saved; by which he calls and leads you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4. On God's part, here is a kind intention; but on man's part, nothing but persevering enmity.

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it, Acts, xvii. 25, 26. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him," Ps. lxxviii. 19. "He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He gives us all things richly to enjoy," Acts, xiv. 17. "God leaves not himself without witness, that he doth men good. He gives men rain from heaven," when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholds it. 'Tis a great thing to understand the

loving-kindness of the Lord (Ps. cvii. 42), his wonderful works towards the children of men ; to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies ; 'tis bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself, Hos. xi. 4. 'Tis drawing us with those cords of a man, with bands of love ; which plainly shews what the case requires, that the minds and hearts of men are very averse, and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the rest, is God's sending his Son into the world, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon ; and that in him he is reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. Doth not reconciliation suppose enmity ? as here, and in the text, " You that were enemies in your minds—yet hath he reconciled." As we have noted that on our parts our withstanding, and too commonly frustrating, its overtures, speaks enmity and obstinacy therein ; so on his part those overtures themselves speak it too. Here is the greatest kindness and good-will on God's part, that can be conceived ; but it presupposes, what we are evincing, ill-will in us. " Christ came to seek and save that which was lost." What a lost state was our state ! what to be engaged in a war against him that made us ! " Woe to him that strives with his Maker," Isa. xlv. 9. Fallen man is little apprehensive of it now, if we continue unreconciled to the last, at death it will be understood what a lost state we are in. Upon this account it will then appear. But this was our state before, when it appeared not ; in this state Christ pitied us, when we had no pity for ourselves. Christ came not into the world to save men only at the hour of their death, from hell ; but to raise up to himself a willing people, that may serve and glorify God, in their life on earth. He is, for this purpose, intent on this reconciling design ; and how earnest, how alluring were his solicitations, in the

days of his flesh ! “ Come to me all ye that are weary—He that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.” How pathetic his lamentations for the unreconcilable ! “ O that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace”—And his blood was shed at last, as the blood of propitiation, of a reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us ; and thereupon also, as in this context. “ Having made peace by the blood of his cross (ver. 20), to vanquish our enmity, to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds”—ver, 21, 22.

6. Consider Christ sending, and continuing, from age to age, the gospel in the world ; the design whereof may be understood by the manifest import and substance of it, and by the titles given to it, as it reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Peace-maker, in his person, nature, offices, acts, sufferings, and performances. As it contains the great commands of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with the promises of pardon, and eternal life, with whatsoever is requisite to our present good state God-ward, and our final blessedness in him, as also the various enforcements of such precepts, and confirmations of such promises, with copious explications of the one and the other. And as it is called, the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor. v. 18. The word wherein peace is preached, by Jesus Christ, Acts, x. 36. The gospel of peace, and of glad tidings (Rom. x. 15), as that very word gospel signifies.

This gospel was, in its clearer manifestation, at the fulness of time, introduced with great magnificence and solemnity into the world, as the law had been, by the ministry of angels. When the Sun of righteousness, the light of the world, was arising, and dawning upon it ; then did a multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men, Luke, ii. 13, 14. But this gospel is not a more express declaration of God's good-will towards men, than their deportment under it, their continuing to live as without God in the world, is of their ill-will, disaffection, and enmity against God.

7. And, lastly, the strivings of the Spirit, in the hearts of

ministers preaching the gospel, and with the souls of men, to whom it is preached, shew that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

1. God's giving forth his Spirit to ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily, Colos. i. ult. What need of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18. Sometimes they are ready to breathe out their own souls towards them, among whom they labour, 1 Thess. ii. 8. Sometimes represented as travailing in birth, with them that are committed to their charge, Gal. iv. 19. There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire; the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God, and godliness, and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men, against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?

2. The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them; sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear, and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and beseeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit, Acts, vii. 51. Which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction, and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there

were not counter-striving ; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation ! that such a Spirit is striven against ! 'Tis the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity, which a wicked man doth despite unto, Heb. x. 29. How vile and horrid a thing, to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite ? As if the sinner should say, Thou wouldst turn me to God, but I will not be turned ! The blessed God says, " Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you," Prov. i. 23. There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue ; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist or slight those foregoing good motions of that holy Spirit ; this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity, in a high degree ? That the Spirit needs strive so much, that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth ; with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome.

We come now to the application, wherein the subject would admit and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within necessary limits. Two things I shall take notice of, as very necessary to be remarked, and most amazingly strange and wonderful, by way of introduction to some further use.

1. That ever the spirit of man, a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Maker but a Parent, styled the Father of spirits, should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster ! What ! to be a hater of God ; the most excellent and all-comprehending good ! and thy own Father ! " Hear, O heavens—and earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isa. i. 2. " Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this ! and be horribly afraid ; be ye very desolate !" As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight ! An

intelligent spirit, hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature ! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer man transformed into the most hideous shapes, 'twere a trifle, in comparison with this deformity of thy soul.

2. That it should be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it ! What self-loathing creatures would men be could they see themselves ! so as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God ; but men are generally well-pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain, they will not see it ; when all the mentioned indications shew it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God. God charges them, and doth he not know them ? The pagan world, they are God-haters (Rom. i. 30), even with a hellish hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name, are apt to admit this true of the Gentiles : but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that they had "both seen and hated him and his Father ?" John, xv. 24. How remote was it from Jews, who boasted themselves God's peculiar people, to think themselves haters of God ! And what were they, of whom he says by the prophet, "My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me" (which is presupposed), Zech. xi. 8, and most justly ; for can there be a more loath something than to abhor goodness itself ? What ! the most perfect benignity. And those Cretians had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply that they might be sound in it ; and of whom he says that "professing to know God, in works they denied him being abominable," Tit. i. 16. Hence is our labour lost, in beseeching men to be reconciled to God, while they own no enmity. Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world God-ward that they are "alienated from him, and enemies in their minds towards him, by wicked works ;" it is there beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves (as the toad is not offended at its own poisonous nature), and are hereupon apt to think that God

observes it not, nor is displeas'd with them for it. It is strange they should not observe it in themselves, upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves, and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, and that these may be, either more manifest, or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that being, in which they are in the highest and most absolute perfection, must be of God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God much of your time? that your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him, as you have had? that you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him, in your ordinary course? that the thoughts of him have been ungrateful, and very little welcome, or pleasant to you? that you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation, placed on him, as the object? that you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? that you have not thought of approving yourself to him, in your designs and actions, but lived as without him in the world? That you have not designed the pleasing or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? that the gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, rais'd some fear, or some desires now and then in your souls, you have suppress'd, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God, and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a disaffection to God, by all this, in yourselves? What is so near a man as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? "Know ye not your own selves?" as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves, upon any such account; and consequently, think themselves, in such respects, very

innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them. Now these two things being premised, will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it so evidently appears, that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent, that God is not well pleased with them. No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns that, in the inward temper of men's minds, wherewith he is not well pleased; viz. this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity, that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin; the ill posture of their minds they think a harmless, innocent thing. But this he remonstrates against, takes notice of with dislike and displeasure; and is counterworking this spirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his Spirit of love, and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames and thunderbolts; yet he observes, and approves not the course and current of their thoughts and affections: though he permit them, sometimes without sensible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him; yet he declares it to be wickedness: The wicked have not God in all their thoughts, Psalm x. 4. He expostulates about it, Wherefore do the wicked contemn God, v. 13, threatens them with hell for their forgetting him, Ps. ix. 17, yet sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not see, or disallow any thing of that kind, Ps. xciv. 7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness! though 'tis more than intimated to be destructive, Jer. iv. 14. Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved: *q. d.* thou art lost if thy heart be not purged. Yea, when it is so plain in itself, that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized, as a mind, dwelling in flesh, can be! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds and

spirits; why else is he called the heart-searching God? and knows that this is the principal and most horrid wickedness that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God, and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man. Simon Magus's wickedness lay in his thought; it is said to him, "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee," Acts, viii. 22. And when the prophet exhorts (as before) Jer. iv. 14, to wash the heart from wickedness, he adds, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" And our Saviour tells us, "Out of the heart, first, proceed evil thoughts, and then all the other wickednesses after mentioned; murders, adulteries," &c. Matt. xv. 19. And that enmity and alienation of mind, that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil; and, by consequence, lets them loose to every thing else that offends him, and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness (as what is more hellish than enmity against God), they are notwithstanding wont to say, they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration. A doctrine, at which most men do wonder, which our Saviour intimates, when he says, John, iii. 7, Marvel not at it, viz. that I said you must be born again. But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? what will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind God-ward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body, in this temper, full of disaffection towards the ever-blessed God, before whose bright glory and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear; though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror! and say within thee, "This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! to whom I was always a willing stranger!" whose admirable grace never allured, or won my heart! who, in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leisure to regard it. The love of this world, which I might

have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" I must now hear from him that just and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, "Depart from me, I know thee not." And into how horrid society must I now go! The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, more glorious things than ever entered into the heart, are all prepared for lovers of God. And for whom can everlasting fire be prepared, but for the devil and his angels, and such other accursed God-haters, as I have been? Matt. xxv. 41. Recollect yourselves, consider the present posture and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him, from whence proceeds your departing from him, and saying to him, Depart from us. But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts, concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee: They say now to God, "Depart from us," Job, xxi. 14, and God will then say to them, "Depart from me," Matt. xxv. 41. That man's soul must thus perish, who lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants in the soul divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John, iii. 3, 5. A man must have a new heart and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, The things which eye hath not seen—and a crown of life are prepared, and promised to them that love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9; James, i. 12. You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regeneration and change. It is the mind of man; for you are enemies in your minds by wicked works. We are to be renewed, in the spirit of our minds (Ephes. iv. 23), to be

transformed by the renewing of our minds, &c. Rom. xii. 2. You that have not considered what regeneration is, I tell you, 'tis to have your minds altered and changed; that whereas you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour and delight in the things of God, Rom. viii. 5, 7. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is the mind, therefore, not as speculative merely, but as practical, and active, that must be renewed. Inquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual, and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God, than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity against God. You will only mind earthly things (Phil. iii. 19, 20), with the neglect of God, and heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place, hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God; because you have been alienated and enemies against him by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt, in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler, that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state? or without knowing whether we are reconciled or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the sun is not to go down on your wrath; and is your enmity against God a juster or more tolerable thing? O let not the sun go down before you have made your peace. And for your encouragement, consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peacemaker, the maker up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the

enmity that lies in your minds against God ; and by his blood, he causes divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided, and given you notice of such a reconciler, 2 Cor. v. 19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Bless God that he hath sent and settled one among you, on this errand, to beseech you to be reconciled to God, ver. 20. Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven ; and blessed is the man who can say, I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled ; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him. How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God, under a gospel of reconciliation ! while the voice of the gospel of grace is calling upon you, Return and live ; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? beware of dying unreconciled, under such a gospel. When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God and Christ ; and pray that you may be renewed, in the spirit of your mind, Eph. iv. 23. Let a holy resolution be taken up at last (after many neglects), as was by the poor distressed prodigal, after he had long lived a wandering life (Luke, xv. 18 ; and onward), I will arise and go to my Father, &c., and you will find God a merciful Father, ready to receive you, and with joy. Oh the joyful meeting between a returning soul and a sin-pardoning God ! When once your strangeness and your enmity are overcome, and you are come into a state of amity and friendship with God ; then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent, in a holy humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

OF
RECONCILIATION

BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, &c.—Col. i. 21, 22.

WE have, from the former words of this text, shewn the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that as such they are alienated and enemies in their mind, by wicked works, and come now to shew, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. You now hath he reconciled, &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told, that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. lv. 9. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event? and would expect to hear, why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. Yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts, immediately came down upon them, and destroyed them in a moment; who would not say, So I thought, who could expect otherwise? But that it should be said, such as were alienated from

God, and his very enemies in their mind, by wicked works, those hath his own Son reconciled ! into what a transport of wonder and praises would this cast any considering mind ! with what amazement would it make us cry out, O what hath God wrought, what wonders can the power of divine grace bring about ! How unexpected, how surprising a thing is this ! Especially when we also consider how this was brought to pass, the Son of God effected it in the body of his own flesh, through death. He died for it ! rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty ; which could not be other than their own ruin and eternal death ; he chose himself to die for them. This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider ; and we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out, in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some other world. But when we understand, as for the former part, this is the common case of men on earth, and therefore that it was our own case, to have been alienated from God and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works ; and as to the latter part, that to us the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled, in this strange way ! in what agonies, in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former, if we cannot say the latter ! And if we can, in what a transport ! in what raptures of admiration, joy, and praise, should we say it ! Any of us who hath heard, or now reads these words, even me who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet me now hath he reconciled ! Can you say so ? how should your heart leap, and spring within you, at the reciting of these words ! And if you cannot as yet say this, with particular application, and it does not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you . for think with yourself, if with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me ?

and upon the one account, or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words. And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of,—1. Of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer: reconciliation with God. “You hath he reconciled.”—2. The wonderful way wherein he hath effected it: “In the body of his flesh, through death.”

1. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it; and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle’s present discourse, and the nature of the thing, lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be seen of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful, or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears, in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle’s discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first, as Creator, affirming that all things visible and invisible were made by him, and for him, as ver. 16. And then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostasy and revolt of some creatures; others, also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection, he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, ver 17. Now the representation of his performance, as a Reconciler, had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on one side,

leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation, in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, "you that were enemies," might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that shew how this reconciliation is brought about "in the body of his flesh through death," signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; viz. on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, viz. by our Lord Jesus's offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to shew.) Now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place, intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God also; as hereafter we shall shew. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident; reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agreement of both, as that which now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation, it is always mutual; unless the one party deceive, or impose upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not; which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation, of men to God, and of God to them.

1. Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being any way a cause of his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be

profitable to himself; is it a gain to him, if we be righteous?" Job, xxii. 2, 3. "What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man," ch. xxxv. 7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by any thing we can do. And know, sinner, he is before-hand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When, therefore, out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John, iv. 19. But take this aright, that thou mayst not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his gospel truly speaks him reconcilable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shews his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is before-hand with them whom he finally saves, he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcilable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his gospel; and hereby his Spirit, working in and by this gospel of his grace, he overcomes them, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him, whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, who is love, 1 John, iv. 16. This is friendly, complacential love, that freely converses and holds communion with the beloved, so that they dwell in him, and he in them, as in the same place.

It is profane, therefore, and an insolent presumption, for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do

even weary him with their words, when they say, "Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them," Mal. ii. 17. 'Tis an affront to his excellent Majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper and posture of their souls towards him. "He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him; he hates the workers of iniquity," Psal. v. 4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge. If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace when he walks in the imagination of his heart, God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man," Deut. xxix. 19, 20. And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him, a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcilable, or say in his heart, God will never shew me mercy. It is as much as to say, that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore, though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon gospel terms reconcilable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this, that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it, inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; "You hath he reconciled"—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. v. 18. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ;" but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity changes our

hearts, and turns them to him ; then is reconciled to us, as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you, our reconciliation to God ; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by shewing the very point wherein it lies ; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text, “ you hath he reconciled,” is an historical passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta*, a great thing effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions ; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and shew you what God hath done for your soul, in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man’s unregenerate state ; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you ; viz. how God hath dealt with you, in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought ; it being useful, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things we shall mention, were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down ; for God’s method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them ; we shall repeat

them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after; and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction, with deep and inward sense, wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging oneself, particularly, with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts toward him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external shew and appearance, by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is, because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (*ore tenus*, or in *outward appearance*) shew much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But what can be said to that convictive query; How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me? when in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth: Will an outward appearance and show of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God? Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known,

and set in view to the eye of the mind ; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred. What ! can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God, the all-comprehending Being ! and with whom all have to do ! the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made ; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory ? Towards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, in whom all live, and move, and have their being, who is, therefore, not far from any one of us ; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must, if they accept him not, be taken for refusers ? A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt ! and carries in it downright enmity ; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, viz. that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John, viii. 54, 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a not liking to retain God in their knowledge, as Rom. i. 28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were, the apostle there speaks ; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not ; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the fore-cited passage, John, viii. 54, 55. For these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. x. 18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things says, " I know you that you have not the love of God in you," as our Saviour tells the Jews ; who is more likely to be mistaken ? John, v. 42. And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations ? If you say you are lovers of God : and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches hearts and reins (Rev. ii. 18, 23),

says, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you;" how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to control your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case, with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 218, to p. 234. And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise), viz. disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord: to lay up our treasure, not on earth but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Matt. vi. 19, 21. This I choose to insist upon, in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently and faithfully observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned, that they whose hearts are on earth, and not in heaven, have no treasure in heaven. And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God, than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God concerning you, or to what he would have it be, and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost, and miserable for ever? The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that mind earthly things, that is, that savour them most (as the word signifies), and it must be understood as excluding the

savour of better things, that is, who only savour them, and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things ; such are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, *i. e.* to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to procure for his redeemed a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design, as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it ; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love, and upon which his heart was set with so much earnestness ! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be at enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7, even as it is death, v. 6. But to whom ? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be ; for that is spiritual, ch. vii. 14, and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal ; and here lies the contrariety, much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin and death (chap. viii. 2) ; which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the mean time, they that are after the flesh do only savour the things of the flesh ; as they that after the Spirit do the things of the Spirit, v. 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, v. 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are in the flesh, or under a prevailing carnality, cannot please God ; for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design, you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his

mind ; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction, you hate him, as you love death, Prov. viii. 36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John, ii. 15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever ; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing ; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, v. 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And here-upon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, James, iv. 4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it ? Know you not your own selves ? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge ! What is so near you as yourselves ? Do you not know your own minds ? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven ? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth ? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it ? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year ? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls ? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly ? Trace your own hearts : how canst thou say, I am not polluted ? see thy way (Jer. ii. 23), mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the gospel ; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world ; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul ! And if all the neglects of his

warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God ; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, Now, Lord, I yield to conviction ; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before. And know that till then the gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good, thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days ; all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician, to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner, to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy ; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled,

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account ? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be more wicked, than to hate the God of thy life ! even him who is love and goodness itself in highest perfection ! What to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth ! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul in the mirror of that most righteous law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind. And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up, in thy soul, the room and place of love ! that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst

take no pleasure to think of God ! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust ; but canst not love thy God ! How fearful a case ! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity ; yea even most hateful, as sin and iniquity ; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of Father of spirits.* How monstrous a deformity is this ! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit ! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing, in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcilableness to thyself, as thou art in this state ; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God (Rom. viii. 7 ; Jam. iv. 4), with a kind, self-indulgent eye any more ; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit, is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed and most holy God of heaven ! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this ; and have expressly charged himself with it, before the throne of the Most High. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that any thing so bad is to be charged upon them ; take so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more to

* So some heathens have conceived of God, as the *νοῦς πατρικός*, the *paternal mind*, Hierocl. And so the apostle quotes a heathen poet, speaking of ourselves as God's offspring. And thereupon adds that the Godhead is not like silver and gold, whereas he is like our minds or spirits ; whence he might collect how unreasonable it is not only to love silver and gold, which is unlike him, but even sin, which is most contrary, and hateful to him.

bring them to it ; because the whole business of your peace and reconciliation with God depends upon it. You can never be reconciled, till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity is a thing not to be endured : that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father or mother, or wife or child, or thy prince or country ; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul, till thou feel the weight and burden of it ; and that now at length thou art brought to say, I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed, and the case be altered with me in this respect. If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it, or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled, may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness, in other respects. And for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation, which you are to endeavour and seek after, a deep sense of sin, in the full extent of it. As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered, not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty ; so enmity is to be looked upon not as one single sin only, but as the spring and fountain of all other sin. Therefore when you are convinced, and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been, or must be, led on, from this fountain to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it ; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness, in the larger extent and compass of it ; and that in such respects, whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

1. You have had or must have a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of

the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above and against the supreme will of the Most High. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days, how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

2. You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your nature, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity, Psal. lviii. 3. Psal. li. 5. Hence you are to bethink yourself, "What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! What a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!" Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion and self-abhorrence!

3. Of such sinful inclinations and actions, as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour, that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives, by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as without God in the world; and as if they had been made to please and serve themselves, and not him.

4. But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that if they

cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the meantime they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves, but as we forgive others. And that he that hates his brother, abides in death, 1 John, iii. 14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity, and as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him; otherwise thy righteous Judge will reckon that thou hatest him in thy heart, Lev. xix. 17.

5. And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour; but such as is subordinate to the one, and co-ordinate with the other. Consider, therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself: against thy body, in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lusts of it: against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities; in ignorance, worldliness, carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it?

6. And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God him-

self; because he is the supreme Lawgiver, and 'tis he, who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: Against thee, thee only have I sinned (Psal. li. 4), reflecting upon the transgressions by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver (James, iv. 12), by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the object, God's law was the rule, sinned against.

7. You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

8. And (amongst them) of the sins of your heart, and inward man, evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations; as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

9. Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done, but the good that you might and ought to have done, which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Matt. xxv. from ver. 31 to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in opposition to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable servant, ver. 30, that is, a wicked and slothful servant, as he is called, ver. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so; yet we ought, and are capable, to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God

we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master ; “ I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house ;” when yet he never did him real service ? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose !

10. You must have been, or will yet be, deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy, righteous law of God, but against the gospel of his Son ; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you, and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God’s creatures, and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice ; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the gospel, neglected the great salvation that was wrought out, and began to be spoken by the Lord himself, Heb. ii. 3, 4. Consider, were you never in dread, did you never cry out affrighted, “ How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation, such a Saviour ?” It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls, to think how many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements have I withstood ! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified, dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy, and have refused ! The heavy yoke and burden of sin and guilt have been more tolerable to me, than his easy yoke and light burden. I have more busied myself to increase my interest and share in this present world, than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life which is treasured up in him. Your reconciliation can never be brought about, but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unreconciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about, in you, a thorough re-

conciliation to God, this further belongs to the history of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience ; or if he have not yet reconciled you, 'tis that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect ; viz. a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadfulfulness and dueness of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against him, and for all the other wickedness that hath accompanied it.

1. Of the dreadfulfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be angry with the wicked every day, Ps. vii. 11, and to hate all the workers of iniquity, Ps. v. 5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it, Heb. v. 30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him, as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever ; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. You must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, who knows the power of his anger ! Ps. xc. 11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance ; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment, Rom. ii. 4, 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you ! Destruction from the Almighty ! What a terror must that be to you ! Job, xxxi. 23. To eat and drink under wrath ! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath ! and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you

do, and whatsoever you enjoy ! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for ought you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath, between you and eternal wo's and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come ! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

2. The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you ; that how terrible soever it is, 'tis all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, " Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion ; to me an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days ; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, " Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job, xxi. 14, 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments, so my enmity against him hath made me break them all ; so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord), to be reconciled to God ; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all.

5. Such as have been reconciled, have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcilableness to them, in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them, that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage that live under the gospel, that therein they behold God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. This is the sum of the gospel, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlasting.

ing, John, iii. 16. Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them, 1 John, iv. 16. And that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcilable. This is the gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies, and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John, v. 10. And therefore notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof, and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, viz. by this discovery of his good-will, believed; for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the gospel is his power to salvation, to every one that believes (Rom. i. 16), and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men appears, *i. e.* so as that they believe it, he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. And then he makes them know it is not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity or mercy, his compassionate love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his gospel declares it: and by the belief hereof, he conquers their enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth, as his name signifies (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7), though he will by no means clear the guilty; *i. e.* the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the

grace of God can find no entrance, sinner, into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and, Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven; this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, as Jer. ii. 25, There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. Therefore if ever thou hast been or shalt be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcilableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word, Psalm cxix. 58. When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy; then didst thou, or yet wilt, set thyself in good earnest to supplicate, and cry mightily for pardoning and heart-renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer, and prayer to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to take away the stony heart, and give the new one, the heart of flesh; he declares that even for this he will be inquired of, and sought unto, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37. Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy, according to God's word and promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged, all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein stands thy life (Ps. xxx. 5), and which is better than life (Ps. lxiii. 3), without it, can be. But then, whereas the gospel under which thou livest informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful

creature, as men are, and as thou must own thyself to be, but through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men ; and that thou canst not approach him in and by Christ, if thou be not in him.

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul (John, i. 12, Rom. x. 10), and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him (2 Cor. viii. 5), not knowing in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest (Matt. xi. 28), and assuring thee, that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in nowise cast out, John, vi. 37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart, art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his ; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great peace-maker between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ, to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. lvi. 2. Thou hast come to God the Judge of all, having come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 23, 24. And been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant ; that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion (Ps. xvi. 5, 6), whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth (Ps. lxxiii. 25), and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judges fittest and best ; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support, and future blessedness. And to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other. And to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities ; and by it

as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations, and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely and entirely to him, to be of his people, to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee (as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live); but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for thyself (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down, by Mr Joseph Allen, in a little treatise called "Self-dedication," and in another of "Yielding Ourselves to God," I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them; and he that will be a friend of this world, is the enemy of God, Rom. viii. 7; 1 John, ii. 15; Jam. iv. 4. But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy? And how canst thou not be an

enemy, when not in this or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course walkest contrary to him ?

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards, which includes two things.—1. Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach. 2. There must be much uneasiness of spirit, if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

1. Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways ; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce ; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more ; not deliberately to do any thing, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job, xxxiv. 32. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more. And again, thou must take great heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him ; for when he inquires, “ Can two walk together if they be not agreed ? ” he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered, that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him ; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

2. But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing any thing that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him, or by estranging thy-

self from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless, till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, not to give sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids, till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon, by faith in the blood of his Son ; with a resolution, in dependence on his grace and Spirit, to walk more carefully and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life. Such things as these, if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection, or at least, when thou readest it thus put down to thy hand, thou canst say these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee. Though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind in the same order wherein they are here set down, which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee, for the bringing about this reconciliation. But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet say, such and such of these things are still wanting in me ; I have not yet found them, my heart agrees not in such and such points with this narrative ; I can give no such account of myself. But wait and strive, in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist, and do not grow negligent and indifferent, whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,

2. God's reconciliation to thee ; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul ; therefore the account hereof is not to be carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so

is the matter of thy faith, not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed, and without wavering, as a sure part of the true and faithful sayings of God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed, with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee, as thy reconciled God; according as thou findest thy own soul thus truly reconciled to him. For though thy reconciliation to him be no cause of his reconciliation to thee, yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise,

1. You would be beforehand with him in love, when as his word expressly says, he loves us first, 1 John, iv. 19.

2. It would be true, that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; when as the same word says, we love him, because he first loved us; viz. with that compassionate love whereof you formerly heard.

3. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him than he is towards you.

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God, that hath said, the things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God (1 Cor. ii. 9), and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him, Jam. i. 12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore having so sure a ground, upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general must be understood to be included

in God's being reconciled to us—1. His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him : 2. His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these ! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you ; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly belonging to their state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state ; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

1. Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you, includes his forgiving you all the sins of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein ! when you consider what you were doing, and what manner of life you led all that time ; always sinning from morning to night, either by acting against him, or by not living with him, and to him ! not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify him in any thing you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him ! And that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him, were all summed up in enmity ! And how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever blessed God ! And to have all this forgiven ! So his own word plainly speaks : Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isa. lv. 7.

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive ; which you must conceive of, by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another ; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both

right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to! even an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Whereupon consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words, Blessed is the man; or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read, O the blessednesses of him, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessednesses of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity! Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy! But I forgive thee: now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee. What rock would not this melt! what stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces! And what! canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy, to such a sin-pardoning God? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

1. The properties of it, as that,

1. It is most compassionate, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. viii. 12. In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them, Isa. lxiii. 9. And being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity, Ps. lxxviii. 38. For he remembered they were but flesh, ver. 39.

2. It is perfectly free, and of mere grace. We are justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. He invites sinners to come to him, even without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand, as we shall shew when we come to the second head, the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation, in the body of his flesh through death. But no price is expected from us, he doth it for his own sake, as Isa. xliiii. 25.

3. It is full and entire. And that both in respect of the object, the sin forgiven : All manner of sin (that can be repented of) shall be forgiven unto men, Matt. xii. 31. I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, Jer. xxxiii. 8. And in respect of the act of forgiving, it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind : for (as he speaks) I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and there is not so much as a remembrance left ; I will not remember thy sins, Isa. xliiii. 25. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, Heb. viii. 12.

4. 'Tis often repeated. He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity—yea many a time turned he his anger away, Ps. lxxviii. 38.

2. The consequences of this forgiveness.

1. Cessation of all acts, that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principle. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones ; yea the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares, that if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments ; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes ; but that, nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant, Ps. lxxxix. 31–34, implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms,

but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares : I will not punish your daughters, Hos. iv. 14. And why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. And they themselves own; It was good for them to have been afflicted, Psal. cxix. 71, and that he had done it in very faithfulness, ver. 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for 'tis said, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, Heb. xii.

And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. xxvii. 7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore 'tis not strange, if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real and final hurt no more.

2. A second consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And may not on a sudden put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in shewing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth shew

mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season ; therefore are they blessed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. Assurance is the privilege not of all his children, but of them that are come to a more grown stature ; but in the mean time he sustains you, by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you. And when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you, which he hath enabled you to receive ; and speaks that peace to you, which is the fruit of his lips, and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create ; that peace which passes all understanding, Isa. lvii. 18 ; Phil. iv. 7, and which belongs to his kingdom in you ; with joy in the Holy Ghost, when once the foundation is laid in righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17.

2. This reconciliation, on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were ; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate ; and yet not take him for a favourite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends ; though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct ; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God, Isa. xli. 8, *i. e.* not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God ; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account ? Some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. ii. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God ; this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer ; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every

one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common : Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John, xv. 14. And—I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (ver. 15), which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

1. Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness towards them that are his : As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love, ver. 9. And the height of that love, ver. 13, Greater love than that hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends ; though 'tis elsewhere further heightened, from our having been sinners and enemies, Rom. v. 8, 10 ; though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, viz. friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after-reconciliation, there mentioned, ver. 10.

2. A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another ; as if he had said, " Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love, which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, Cant. ii. 14. O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely : and that book abounds with expressions of that import : Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love ! chap. iv. 7, 9, 10, &c. But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes ; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

1. How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he

should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of ; how admirable ! much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures ! such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship !

According to the usual measures of friendship, 'tis with those that are like, yea with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious and abject as thou wast ! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should dwell (which dwelling signifies friendly society), saith he, In very deed will God dwell with men ! such creatures as men are now become ! and with men on earth ! in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot ; when even the bright and spacious heavens, yea the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him, 2 Chron. vi. 18. How wonderful a thing is this ! and even surpassing all wonders ! Is it after the manner of men ? how far, herein, are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts ! even as the heavens are above the earth, Isa. lv. 8. Consider,

2. How beneficial this his friendship to us is ! Many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom nor power really to befriend them ; but his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom 'tis placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

3. How conversable he is with these his friends, being,

1. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him.

2. Being intimately present, with our minds and spirits. The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit, 2 Tim. iv. 22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one another's spirits ; but this

is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls ; nothing is shut up from him.

4. How constant is God's friendship ! He loves with an everlasting love, and to the end (Jer. xxxi. 3 ; Isa. liv. 8 ; John, xiii. 1), when other friendships are upon slight grounds, easily, and often broken off. Thus far we have seen what this mutual recollection imports, on our part, towards God ; and on God's part towards us. We now come to consider,

2. The way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation ; viz. In the body of his flesh through death. The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by his making peace by the blood of his cross, or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he brought about this reconciliation, by suffering death for us upon the cross. Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes both God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God ; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us ; we are to shew how each of these are brought about this way.

1. How God's reconciliation to us is wrought, by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us ? for you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so, without letting his Son die for it ? There are, indeed, difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this ; but I shall here say nothing about it but what is plain, and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend, that God saw it was necessary his Son should die, in order to the saving of sinners ; for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary ? Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men de-

served eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death but eternal death can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. v. 21; vi. 23), and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Matt. xxv. ult.

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses, appointed to make atonement for sin, and that without shedding of blood there could be no remission, Heb. ix. 22.

4. 'Tis easy to be understood, that the blood of those sacrifices could not take away sin, as is expressly said (Heb. x. 4), and therefore that they could not otherwise signify any thing, to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice, that once for all was to be offered up for that purpose. Once in, or towards the end of, the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26.

5. You can understand that as this could never have been, without the consent of the Father and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent; God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have life everlasting, John, iii. 16. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, no man could take his life from him, *i. e.* against his will, for he could have twelve legions of angels to defend it; but he did lay it down (John, x. 18), and gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28.

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him.

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompense made to him; but of his own

providing, and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins—that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, 26.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent and believe), in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him, and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing. Most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us, but punished in his own Son, who consented to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Most becoming the truth of his word, for, as that said, without shedding of blood there could be no remission; the most precious blood was shed that ever was, in order to our remission. Most becoming his infinite wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 6–8.

2. We come now (having thus far seen how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to shew also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this two-fold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition on our parts to such a reconciliation. And that

being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be ; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about our reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways :—

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified ; which must first be, or have been resolved on, before there could be any gospel to reveal it. In this gospel Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart, sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou hast pierced, is that thou mayest mourn over him, Zech. xii. 10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee yield to the terms of reconciliation ? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon ; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 23, 24), the most powerful and the wisest method ; and which God hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the gospel, who have Christ set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them (Gal. iii. 1), which setting forth could not be otherwise, than in the gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem ; therefore, saith our Lord himself, But I, if I be lifted up from the-earth, will draw all men unto me, John, xii. 32. This was said (as it follows), signifying what death he should die, *i. e.* by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means ; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an agent able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effec-

tual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ on the cross was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins, it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both (*i. e.* Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him, they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him, whom they had pierced; if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. xii. 10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning; if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls, if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain (Gal. iii. 13, 14), Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree), that the blessing of Abraham might reach further, come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Or in their being made to believe the ever-blessed One was so far made a curse, that you might be capable of this blessing; and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him (Luke, xi. 13), as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, in the body of his flesh

through death, work out this two-fold reconciliation, both of God to you, and of you to God.

And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—1. To the mutual reconciliation itself, You hath he now reconciled ; and—2. To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about, In the body of his flesh through death. The use we shall make of the former will be two-fold (according as this reconciliation itself is two-fold, viz. God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God), viz. to persuade us from sundry considerations,—

1. To believe God's reconcilableness to us.—2. To be willing, hereupon, to be actually and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

1. For the use of the former, the doctrine of the reconciliation itself. Inasmuch as we have shewn that it contains reconciliation, on God's part towards us, and on our part towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions ; and whom he had before described as converts, saints faithful in Christ (ch. i. 1), that Christ had reconciled them, *i. e.* restored them into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them ; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcilable. The plain use to be made of this is, that we be persuaded to *believe* God's reconcilableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies ; whatsoever bar was in the way, is so far removed (as we shall shew from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the gospel, which thou art to believe upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here ; as,

1. This gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all, for Englishmen? Yea, when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe, 1 Tim. i. 16. You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

2. This is the gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without accepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come (Isa. lv.), Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price, ver. 1. Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, ver. 3. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways; ver. 7, 8. So the tenor of his word hath always run, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you," 2 Chron. xxx. 6; Jer. iii. 12; Zech. i. 3; Mal. iii. 7. And is it not to be believed?

3. It is the gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath (as I live, saith the Lord), having plainly propounded it (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 23, 31, 32.) He swears to it (chap. xxxiii. 11), and wilt thou not yet believe him?

4. When after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed, that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the gospel which he himself preached (Mark, i. 14, 15), and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world, Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

5. It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, Acts, xx. 21.

6. It is the everlasting gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25.

7. It is this gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual

to this purpose. When, herein, the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness which they have done) but of his mercy he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. 4, 5. His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great and precious promises, contained in this gospel, they are made partakers of a divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

8. But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes (Rom. i. 16), but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually on every one that believes (1 Thess. ii. 13), but hath no efficacy when it is not believed. Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord (Acts, xi. 23), but where there is no believing there is no turning.

9. Where it is not believed it hardens. We are therefore warned to take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened (Heb. iii. 12, 13), and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness, were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) because of unbelief (ver. 18, 19), and that the gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, chap. iv. 2.

10. It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation (Heb. iii. 15), and referring to the same time, the great God says; How long will this people provoke? how long ere they believe me? (Numb. xiv. 11), when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

11. The not believing of this gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie (1 John, v. 10), as believing it is setting to our seal that he is true, John, iii. 33. But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient, and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying

sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcilableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy *belief* of God's reconcilableness to thee, from the

2. Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, viz. in the body of his flesh through death. And here his reconcilableness must be understood to signify two things:—the possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners,—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross, in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing, which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb. ix. 22), and that it was impossible the blood of bulls and goats should take it away (ch. x. 4), and that, therefore, our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him (ver. 5, 6), he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing, indeed, being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was, therefore, not possible upon other terms (Heb. ii. 10), but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring:

1. The rich and infinite value and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God (Acts, xx. 28; 1 John, iii. 16), a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

2. He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same (Heb. ii. 14, 15); therefore, as man did offend, man suffered for it.

3. He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. ii. 6-8; John, x. 18.

4. He had no sin of his own to suffer for, 2 Cor. v. 21, and as many other Scriptures speak.

5. He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it from the Father, John, x. 18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. xl. 6-8.

6. He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet-smelling odour with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love, Eph. v. 2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee, upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, John, iii. 16. Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was not willing of? his only-begotten Son! his very image! (Heb. i. 2) the Son of his delights, always dear to him! (Prov. viii. 30) and who was especially dear to him for this very reason! John, x. 17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross, O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son! And yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son, to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy

against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an enemy, thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words (2 Cor. v. 20), We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you (without which it had been impossible), and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, You hath he reconciled; and the way of it, In the body of his flesh, through death.

1. Some have been reconciled, that have been alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Whereupon bethink yourselves,

1. Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? why should you be more wicked enemies?

2. Can you better maintain your cause against God? are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath, which you so little know? Psal. xc. 11.

3. Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? to have the great God for your friend? to whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? upon whom you may cast all your cares? with whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

4. Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? and afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcilable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? and then to have no advocate, no intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge, and shall only say, O that thou

hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thy eyes, Luke, xix. 42, 44.

2. But we are further to persuade this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it : In the body of his flesh, through death, or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will you not yet be reconciled to him ? Consider,

1. You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. God so loved the world, &c. (John, iii. 16), and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love ? For greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friends, John, xv. 13. Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies ; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom. v. 8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love ?

2. And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee ? They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me ; which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift up on the cross, John, xii. 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee ? An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7 ; James, iv. 4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ ! Phil. iii. 18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross ! and who even by that itself are not overcome !

3. If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain, thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood (infinitely exceeding

the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19), should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good!

4. If thou continue to the last unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry and plead most terribly against thee. Blood-guiltiness is a fearful thing! What must it be to be guilty of such blood! If thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the innocent blood that ever was shed, since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22-24. O the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

6. And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy, and unblamable, and unprovable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; This my son was lost, and is found. And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

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